

## **The Trial & Triumph of Faith**

### **SERMON 3**

By **Rev. Samuel Rutherford**

QUESTION. But cannot Christ be hid? Answer. Not of himself. It is hard to hide a great fire, or to cast a covering upon sweet odours, that they smell not. Christ's name is as a sweet ointment poured out: he is a mountain of spices, and he is a strong savour of heaven, and of the higher paradise. You may hide the man, that he shall not see the sun: but you cannot cast a garment over the body of the sun, and hide day-light.

From which it appeareth, that Christ cannot be hid,

1. In his cause and truth. The gospel is scourged and imprisoned, when the apostles are so served; yet it cometh to light, and filleth Jerusalem, and filleth all the world. What was done to hide Christ? When he and his gospel are buried under a great stone, yet his fame goeth abroad. Death is no covering to Christ. Papists burn all the books of Protestants; they kill and slay the witnesses. Antiochus and the persecuting emperors throw all the Bibles in the fire; but this truth cannot be hid, it triumpheth. As soon pull down Jesus from his royal seat at the right hand of God, as Babylon, prelates, papists, malignants, in these three kingdoms, can extinguish the people and truth of Christ.

2. Believers cannot hide and dissemble a good or an ill condition in the soul; the well-beloved is away, and the church's bed cannot keep her: all the watchmen, all the streets, all the daughters of Jerusalem, yea, heaven and Christ must hear of it: (Cant. 3:1-3; 5:6-8.) Mary Magdalene's bed, and a morning sleep, and the company of angels and apostles, cannot dry her cheeks. "Woman, what ails thee?" saith the angel. "Oh," she weepeth, "Oh, what aileth me? They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. O apostles! where is he? O Sir, angel, tell me if you saw him? O grave! O death! Show me, is my Lord with you?" The love of Christ is no hypocrite. I grant, some can for a time put a fair face on it, when Christ is absent; but most of the saints look as a bird fallen from the raven; as a lamb fallen out of the lion's mouth; as one too soon out of bed in the morning. Oh, sick of love! Oh, show him! I charge you tell him, watchmen, daughters of Jerusalem, that I am sick of love. Love is a paining, feverous, tormenting sickness: grace cannot put on a laughing mask, when sweet Jesus is hidden; love hath no art to conceal sorrow. The countenance of David, (Psalm 42:5,) is sick; there is death in his face, when God is not the light of his countenance.

3. The joy of his presence cannot be hid: she cannot but tell and cry out, O fair, O white day! He is come again: "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loved." (Cant. 3:4.) She numbered all the miles she had traveled while her Lord was absent: Joy will speak, it is not dumb: "The roof of thy mouth [is] like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak." (Cant. 7:9,) "Can the children of the bed-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?" (Matt. 9:15.) i.e. They cannot choose but rejoice.

4. Grace in a sincere professor, and Christ, cannot be hid. There came a good fair breath, with a blast of a sweet west-wind of heaven, on Joseph of Arimathea: the time was ill, Christ was dead; and he can dissemble no longer. (Mark 15:43.) With much daring and boldness, he went unto Pilate with a petition: "I beseech you, my Lord Governor, let me but have this Jesus his dead body:" There was some fire of heaven in this bold profession. What would this be thought of, to see a noble and honourable Lord-Judge, with a dead and crucified man's body in his arms? But faith knoweth no blushing; grace cannot be ashamed. There was a strait charge laid on the apostles, "Preach no more in the name of Jesus." (Acts. 4:18.) Peter and John boldly say, "We cannot but speak the things we have heard and seen." Lay as heavy weights as death, burning quick [alive], sawing asunder, on the sincerity of faith in the martyrs, it must up the mountain. David's grace was kept in, as with a muzzle put upon the mouths of beasts: (Psalm 39:) it was as coals of fire in his heart, and he behoved to speak even before the wicked: "I believed, therefore I spake." (Psalm 116:10.)

5. When Jeremiah layeth unlawful bands on himself, to speak no more in the name of the Lord, there is a spirit of prophecy lying on him—he is not lord of his own choice. "But his word was in my heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jer. 20:9.) There is a majesty of grace on the conscience of the child of God, that must break out in holy duties: though temptation should hide Christ in his grace, tempted Joseph is overawed with this, "How can I then do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) This awful majesty of the grace of God's fear, causeth Joseph see nothing in harlotry, but pure, unmixed guiltiness against God. There is an overmastering apprehension of Christ's love, (2 Cor. 5:14) that constraineth Paul to own the love of Christ, in dedicating himself to the service of the gospel. Though Paul would not have preached, yet he had a sum to pay; "I am debtor both to the Greeks and the Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise." (Rom. 1:14.) Grace awed him, as a debt layeth fetters on an ingenuous mind; he cannot but relieve his free and honest mind in paying what he oweth.

6. God's desertion cannot so hide and over-cloud Christ, but against sense, the child of God must believe; yea, and pray in faith, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? O my God, I cry by day." (Psalm 22:1,2.) Though sin over-cloud Christ, and David fall in adultery and blood, there is a seed of Christ that must cast out blossoms; he cannot but repent and sorrow. God's decree of grace

in the execution of it, may be broken in a link by some great sin; but Christ cannot but solder the chain, and raise the fallen sinner.

It shall be useful then for the saints, when the Spirit cometh in his stirrings and impetuous acts, to co-operate with him, and to answer his wind-blowing. It is good to hoist up sail, and make out, when a fair wind and a strong tide calleth. Sometimes grace maketh the heart as a hot iron; it is good then to smite with the hammer. When your spirit is docile, and there cometh a gale of Christ's sweet west-wind, and rusheth in with a warmness of heart, in a praying disposition to retire to a corner, and pour out the soul before the Lord; as we are to take Christ at his word, so are we to take Christ's Spirit at his work. He knocketh; knock thou with him. His fingers make a stirring upon the handles of the bar, and drop down pure myrrh;—let thy heart make a stirring with his fingers also. I grant, wind maketh sailing, and all the powers on earth cannot make wind; yet when God maketh wind, the seamen may draw sails, and launch forth. God preventeth in all these. The spirit beateth fire out of our flint, we are to lay to a match and receive; reach in the heart, under the stirrings of free grace; obey dispositions of grace, as God himself. When the sun riseth, the birds may sing, but their singing is no cause of the sun rising.

It is no truth of God that some teach, that the justified in Christ are of duty always tied to one and the same constant act of rejoicing, without any mixture of sadness and sorrow. For so they cannot, (1.) Obey and follow the various impressions of the Lord's absence and presence of Christ's sea-ebbing and flowing, of his shining and smiling, and his lowring and frowning. (2.) The faith of a justified condition doth not root out all affections; nay, not love, faith, desire, and joy: if there be sin remaining in the justified, there is place of sadness, for fear, for sorrow; for the scum of affections is removed by Christ, not the affections themselves. (3.) Christ for mere trial sometimes, for sin at other times, doth cover himself with a cloud and withdraw the sense of his favour; and it is a cursed joy that is on foot, when the Lord hideth his face. The love of Christ must be sick and sad; I mean, the lover, when the beloved is under a cloud. It is not the new world with the regenerate man here; nor a land where there is nothing but all summer, all sun, neither night nor clouds, nor rain nor storm: that is the condition of the second Paradise, of the better Adam. (4.) It is a just and an innocent sorrow, to be grieved at that which grieveth the Holy Spirit; and when the lion roareth, all the beasts of the field are afraid. Grace maketh not Job a stock, nor Christ a man who cannot weep.

“And behold, a woman of Canaan:” and “A certain woman.” (Matt. 15, Mark 7.) Of the woman: (1.) But one person of all Tyrus and Sidon came to him. (2.) She was a Syrophenician by nation. (3.) Her condition, She had a daughter vexed with a devil. (4.) With an unclean devil. (5.) The nearer occasion, She heard of him. (6.) She adored. (7.) She prayed: and so, way is made to the conference between Christ and her; and to the trial and miracle.

A CERTAIN WOMAN.—There is but one of all Tyrus and Sidon who came to Christ. (1.) It beseemeth the mercy of the good Shepherd, to “leave ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and go after one which is lost.” (Luke 15:4.) And when all is done, alas! he hath but one of a whole hundred. Christ hath not the tithe of mankind. He maketh a journey, till he is wearied and thirsty, through Samaria; yea, and wanteth his dinner, for one woman at that draught of his net, and thinketh he dineth like a king, and above, if he save one. (John 4:33,34.) Oh, sweet husband’s word! “I am married to you, and I will take you, one of a city, and two of a tribe, and I will bring you to Zion.” (Jer. 3:14.) Christ taketh sinners, not by dozens, not by thousands, (it is but once in all the word, (Acts 2) that three thousand are converted at once;) but by ones and twos. “Though Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant shall but be saved;” (Rom. 9:27; Isa. 10:22;) the relics and refuse shall be saved only. (2.) Common love scarce amounteth to grace, because grace is separative and singleth out one of many; all graced persons are privileged persons; heaven is a house of chosen and privileged ones; there are no common stones in the New Jerusalem, but all precious stones; the “foundations sapphires, the windows agates and carbuncles, all the borders of pleasant stones.” (Isa. 54:11,12.) (3.) Christ’s way lieth so, of two grinding at a mill, of two in the field together, of two in one bed, Christ will have but one: Christ often will not have both husband and wife, both father and son; but the one brother, Jacob, not Esau. Of a whole house, Christ cometh to the devil’s fireside, and chooseth one, and draweth him out, and leaveth all the family to the devil. (4.) Christ knoweth them well whom he chooseth: grace is a rare piece of the choice and the flower of the love of heaven: there be many common stones; not many pearls, not many diamonds and sapphires. The multitude be all Arminians from the womb; every heresy is a piece of the old Adam’s wanton wit; thousands go to hell, black heretics and heterodox, as touching the doctrine of themselves; every man hath grace if you believe himself; every man taketh heaven for his home and heritage; dogs think to rest in Christ’s bosom. Men naturally believe, though they be but up and down with Christ, yet Christ doth so bear them at good will, as to give grace and glory.

Objection 1. God’s love is not infinite, if it be limited to a few. Answer. This should conclude, that there be an infinite number of men and angels, to whom God’s love to salvation is betrothed in affection: but his love is infinite in its act, not in its object; the way of carrying on his love is infinite.

Objection 2. To ascribe God’s not loving of men to God’s disposition, heart, will, and pleasure, and not to our defects, is blasphemy. Answer. The Lord ascribeth his having mercy, and his hardening, to his own free-will, (Rom. 9:18; Exod. 33:19;) and his love is as free as his mercy; and by this means, God’s first love to us should arise from our love preventing [leading] his, contrary to his own word, (Deut. 7:7; Eph. 2:4,5; Titus 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:9,) and man should be the first lover of the two. The creature then putteth the Lord in his debt, and giveth first to God, and God cannot but recompense. (Isa. 40:13,14; Rom. 11:34,35.) Now, it is no shame for us to live and die in the debt of Christ; the heaven of angels and men

is an house of the debtors of Christ, eternally engaged to him, and shall stand in his debt-book ages without end.

Objection 3. Infinite goodness may as soon cease to be, as not be good to all, or withhold mercy from any. Answer. Every being of reprobate men and devils, is a fruit of God's goodness, but of free goodness; else God should cease to be, if he should turn his creatures to nothing; for he should cease to be good to things without himself, if these were all turned to their poor mother-nothing. (2.) Mercy floweth not from God essentially, especially the mercy of conversion, remission of sins, eternal life, but of mere grace; for then God could not be God, and deny these favours to reprobates. Freedom of mercy and salvation is as infinitely sweet and admirable in God, as mercy and salvation itself.

Objection 4. But God is so essentially good to all, as he must communicate his goodness by way of justice, in order to free obedience; and that is life eternal, to those who freely believe and obey. Answer. But the great enemy of grace, Arminius, teaches us, that all the freedom of grace, (Rom. 9,) is resolved into the free pleasure of God, in which he freely, and without hire, purposed to reward faith, not the works of the law, with life eternal; whereas it was free to him to keep another order, if so it should seem good to him; and by this means, God is yet freely, and by an act of pure grace, not essentially good to all, even in communicating his goodness by way of justice: for what God doth by necessity of his nature and essence, that he cannot but do. But sure it is, by no necessity of nature doth the Lord reward one's faith, or any obedience in us, with the crown of life eternal: he may give heaven freely without one's obedience at all, as he giveth the first grace freely, (Ezek. 16:6-8; Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:3,4.) But this is surer, the fewer have grace, grace is the more grace, and the more like itself and free.

Objection 5. But I have a good heart to God. Answer. A quiet heart sleeping in a false peace, is a bad heart: most of sinners give their souls to the devil by theft; they think they are sailing to heaven, and know nothing till they shore, sleeping in the land of death. (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 16:27,28.)

Objection 6. Why, but God hath bestowed on me many favours and riches in this world. Answer. God's grace is not graven on gold. It should be but the logic of a beast, if the slaughter ox should say, "The master favoureth me more than any ox in the stall; I am free of the yoke that is upon the neck of others, and my pasture is fatter than their's."

Objection 7. The saints love me. Answer. The saints can mis-father their love, and love where God loveth not.

Objection 8. All the world loveth me. Answer. You are the liker to be a step-child of Jerusalem and of heaven; for, "The world loveth its own." (John 15:19.) Better

it were to have the world a step-mother, than to be no other, but to lie in such a womb, and suck such breasts.

Objection 9. I believe life eternal. Answer. That faith is with child of heaven; but see it be not a false birth. Few or none come to age, and none clothed in white and crowned, but they were jealous of their faith, and feared their own ways. Natural men stand aloof from hell and wrath.

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