

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

### **SERMON 11**

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

“But he answered her not a word: And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.”—MATTHEW 15:23-25.

WE now enter into the dialogue between the woman and Christ. The first trial is, The woman crieth, but Christ answereth not a word. I show first, Wherein the temptation standeth. 2nd, The reasons of it; and in what cases Christ answereth not. 3rd, Bring the uses.

For the first,—God’s temptations, and Satan’s, and the flesh’s agree in this, that all temptations are of one colour, viz., white, and seeming good. Even when the skin of temptation is black as hell, yet there is white in it; as “curse God and die,” that thou mayest be hidden in the grave from misery. The reason is, temptation were not temptation, if it had not a taking power to break in upon reason. This is clear in Satan’s temptations: he knows man is a fallen and broken creature like himself; yet that there is reason left, and that must have a fair object. The first black apple must be good to the eye, so the devil suiteth a wife ever in his whites; though, if you should wash the devil and the lie, the bones are always black. Now, this woman seeth that which she looked not for, and the affections must be stirred. Is this the Lord, the hearer of prayers? 2nd, Is this he that biddeth us pray, and promiseth to hear? 3rd, Is this the meek Lamb of God, of whom it is said, “He shall carry the lambs in his bosom;” and “A bruised reed he shall not break, a smoking flax he shall not quench”? He answereth me not one word; yea, he denieth me to be his; as it is hereafter, he reproacheth me with the name of a dog. Nature would say, I repent that ever I came to him; let my daughter suffer twenty, one hundred, a legion of devils; I have done with Christ; I come no more to him; especially, supposing what was true, that she had a great faith, and faith cannot be but loving and kind to Christ. “What? my heart saddened and broken; my daughter vexed with a devil! But oh, alas, my Saviour answereth not one word! Sweet Jesus rejecteth me; how can I stand under so many hells? He cureth all that come unto him: I am the first that ever this King sent away with a sad heart. He casteth none away that cometh, he welcometh all; only he will not look on me, poor and miserable. Oh, what can I now do?”

You may know a mother's heart to her tormented child, and a believer's bowels to a Saviour; here is a burden above a load. But why answereth he all sinners, but not one word to me? Answer. 1. Few or none are tempted, but the upshot of the temptation is, to beget big apprehensions of the temptation. Never was man in the condition I am in. Christ answereth the devils when they cry; he will not give me one look, one cast of his eye, not one half word. The temptation must represent Christ as a nonsuch for rough dealing, and the tempted a nonsuch for misery. Elias must say, "I, even I only, am left alone, and they seek my life," (1 Kings 19:10). "Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and were delivered." (Psalm 22:4.) But I am nobody: "But I am a worm and no man." (verse 6.) "O passers by, hear, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow!" etc. (Lam. 1:12.) "We are made a theatre, a spectacle to men and angels." (1 Cor. 4:9.) The temptation must put on the face of hell to drive at this, to cause the child of God put himself out of the kalendar and society of God's children. Hence that—"No, there was never a soul since the world was, like me,—I am alone." (1.) Christ once, first or last, must be no Christ, and God not God, to the tempted, "Hath he forgotten to be gracious?" (Psalm 77:9.) A forgetting God, a changed God is not God; stick by this principle; yet he is Christ, and my Christ too. (2.) It is said, he answered her not a word; but it is not said, he heard not one word: these two differ much. Christ often heareth when he doth not answer; his not answering is an answer, and speaks thus, Pray on, go on, and cry; for the Lord holdeth his door fast bolted, not to keep out, but that you may knock and knock. Prayer is to God, worship; to us, often, it is but a servant upon mere necessity sent on a business. The father will cause his child say over again, what he once heard him say, because he delighteth to hear him speak; so God heareth and layeth by him an answer for Ephraim: "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," (Jer. 31:18;) but Ephraim heard not, knew not, that God told all Ephraim's prayer over again behind his back. (3.) No answer from Christ is hell to a believer, but to kiss and embrace hell, because it is Christ's hell, is a work of much acceptance;—when you say, I will pray, and die praying, though I be never heard, because praying is my duty, and God's glory, let me die in a duty that glorifieth him. (4.) Wrestling addeth strength to arms and body; praying, and praying again, strengtheneth faith; customary running lengtheneth the breath; by much praying faith is well breathed; Jacob is stronger in the morning, when he hath prayed a whole night, than at bed-time, "The angel said, Let me go, for the day breaketh: And he said, I will not let thee go till thou bless me." (Gen. 32:26.) Then in the dawning he hath prayed harder, and used his arms with greater violence than before; by this, hunger groweth fatter, sense stronger; it is here, "eat and be hungry; pray, and desire more strongly to pray."

2. Reasons of God's not hearing prayer, are, (1.) Superstitious and false worship. "Moab wearied of his high places, comes to his sanctuary to pray, but prevaieth not." (Isa. 16:12.) Wild-fire cannot roast raw flesh. (2.) God hears not sinners, (John 9:31.) "Let his prayer be sin." (Psalm 109:7.) Yea, the prayers of Britain are not heard, nor their solemn fasts accepted, "For iniquity hath separated between God and us," (Isa. 59:2). (3.) God heareth not, when there is a heart-love to

vanity, (Psalm 66:18; Job 35:45). (4.) God heareth not malignants, nor us, when many are heart-enemies to the cause, (Psalm 18:41). (5.) He heareth not bloody men, (Isaiah 1:15). Now for the saints, sense maketh non-answering a merciful judgment; it is here as in riches; he is rich who thinketh himself rich and desireth no more: so, not to be answered is a plague; but to find you are not answered, and be sad for it, hath much of Christ. The saints are heavier, because God answereth not, than because the mercy is denied.

Question.—How shall we know we are answered? Answer. Hannah knew it, by peace after prayer. (2.) Paul knew it, by receiving new supply to bear the want of that he sought in prayer; he is answered that is more heavenly after prayer. (3.) Liberty and boldness of faith, is a sign of an answered prayer. The Intercessor at the right hand of God cannot lose his own work; his Spirit groaneth in the saints. Doth not my head accept what I set my heart on work to do? (Rom. 8:23,26,27, compared with Rev. 8:3.) (4.) We are heard and answered of God, when we are not heard and answered of God. I pray for a temporal favour—victory to God’s people in this battle; they lose the day. Yet I am heard and answered, because I prayed for that victory, not under the notion of victory, but as linked with mercy to the church, and the honour of Christ. So, the formal object of my prayers, was a spiritual mercy to the church, and the honour of Jesus Christ. Now, the Lord, by the loss of the day, hath shown mercy to his people in humbling them, and glorifieth his Son, in preserving a fallen people. So he heareth that which is spiritual in my prayers; he is not to hear the errors of them. Christ putteth not dross in his censer of gold. (5.) We are heard, whenever we ask in faith; but let faith reach no further than God’s will. When we make God’s will our rule, he will do his own will; if he do not my will, it is to be noted, that the creature’s will, divided from God’s will, in things not necessary for salvation and God’s glory, is no part of God’s will, and no asking of faith. Therefore, faith frequently, in the Psalms, prayeth, and answereth, “Attend unto me, and hear me.” (Psalm 6 verse 4, compared with verse 9; Psalm 55:2.) “God shall hear and afflict them.” (verse 19.) “Be merciful unto me, O God,” etc. (Psalm 57:1.) “He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.” (verse 3.) “Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God.” (Psalm 59:1.) “Deliver me from the workers of iniquity.” (verse 2.) “The God of mercy shall prevent me, God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.” (verse 10.) “O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us,” etc. (Psalm 60:1.) But in the end, “Through God shall we do valiantly.” (verse 12.) The prophesying of faith is not dead with the prophets. Faith seeth afar off as yet. To see things that God shall do, either by himself or by angels, is an act of prophecy, and differeth not in nature from the prophetic light of the prophets. Now, the light of faith seeth as yet the same, viz., that Christ shall raise the dead, and send his angels to gather in his wheat into his barn. Especially hope of glory is prophetic. (6.) Patience to wait on, till the vision speak, is an answer. (7.) Some letters require no answer, but are mere expressions of the desires of the friend. The general prayers of the saints, that the Lord would gather in his elect, that Christ would come and marry the bride,

and consummate the nuptials, do refer to a real answer, when our husband, the King, shall come in person at his second appearance.

USE 1.—You take it hard, that you are not answered, and that Christ's door is not opened at your first knock. David must knock, "O my God, I cry by day, and thou hearest not, and in the night season I am not silent." (Psalm 22:2.) The Lord's church, "And when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." (Lam. 3:8.) Sweet Jesus, the heir of all, prayed with tears and strong cries, once, "O my Father," again, "O my Father," and the third time, "O my Father," ere he was heard. Wait on, die praying, faint not.

USE 2.—It is good to have the heart stored with sweet principles of Christ, when he heareth not at the first. It is Christ, he will answer. It is but Christ's outside that is unkind.

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