

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 13

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

“OF ISRAEL.” It was then a privileged mercy, that Christ was sent to the Jews. (1.) The Jew is the elder brother, and the native heir of Christ. Christ is of their blood and house. (Rom. 1:2,3, and 9:3.) They were Christ’s first bride. Alas! they killed their husband. There is a born Jew in heaven, in soul and body: it is sweet to have any relation to Christ. (2.) The catholic covenant of grace made with the great sister, the Church Universal, was first laid down in pawn in their hand; they put their hand first to the contract, in subscribing the marriage contract, (Jer. chapters 2 and 3). Israel was holy to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. Oh, sweet! the fallen race of mankind was Christ’s corn-field, and his wheat. The Jews were the first sheaf of the field, (Deut. 7:6). They got Christ’s young love, and, (to speak so,) the first handsel of free grace in a church-way. (3.) Christ, in the Jewish flesh, (yet not excluding Ruth, Rahab, and other Gentiles of the blood-royal,) acted the whole gospel. A born Jew redeemed the lost world, offered a sacrifice to God for sinners: a born Jew is heir of all things, is exalted a prince to guide and rule all, and shall judge men and angels. (4.) The Lord Christ, in the flesh, was first offered to them; they had the first gospel-love, (Matt. 10:5,6; Acts 13:46). (5.) The oracles of God were committed to them, (Romans 3:1; 9:4); the testator Christ’s written will, was in their keeping. (6.) God was their first crowned King. He gave Ethiopia, and Egypt, and Zeba, a ransom for them, and was their lawgiver. (7.) Every male child among the Jews did bear somewhat of Christ in his flesh, (Col. 2:11,) when all the world was without Christ. (8.) Their land was Christ’s by a special typical right. God saith of it, “It is my land.” Christ was their sovereign landlord, and they the great King’s freeholders. (9.) The Lord never dwelt in a house made with hands, in a temple, as amongst them, having special respect to the true Temple, Jesus Christ, (John 2:19).

USE 1. Let us pray our elder sister home to Christ. They said, “We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day that she shall be spoken for?” (Cant. 8:8.) Now, we have a greater sister, what shall we, the Gentiles, do for her? There is a day when “ten men shall take hold, out of all nations, of the skirt of a Jew, saying, We will go with you; we have heard that God is with you.” (Zech. 8:23.)

USE 2. It is the happiness of our land, that we have a three-fold relation to Christ,—I mean these two nations—that we have avowed the Lord by a national testimony; and the nations are public martyrs and witnesses of Christ, in that they

are made a field of blood, for no other quarrel, but because they desire to stand for Christ's truth against Antichrist. Surely in the intention of Papists, now in arms against us, there is no cause of war but this only. (2.) That we have sworn that the Lord shall be our God in a solemn covenant. (3.) That we are honoured to build the Temple of the Lord, and reform religion. Oh, that we could see our debt and be thankful!

USE 3. The Jews had the morning market of Christ, and they would not pay the rent of the vineyard to the Lord thereof. We have the afternoon of Christ; and know we what a mercy it is, that "our Beloved feedeth amongst the lilies, till the day break, and the shadows fly away;" and that "the voice of the turtle is heard in our land"? God, for our abuse of the gospel, hath sent among us the bloody pursuivants, and officers of his wrath, men skilful to destroy; God is now in three kingdoms, arresting the carcasses of men. We are owing much to God; he will now have husbands and sons from us, and legs and arms of wounded and slain men from us, for that rent we owe to the Lord of the vineyard,—for our contempt of the gospel.

"Sheep,"—first a word of sheep, then of "lost sheep." I take no other reasons why the redeemed of the Lord are called sheep, than are obvious in Scripture. (1.) The sheep are passive creatures, and can do little for themselves; so can believers in the work of their salvation: as,

1. They have not of themselves more knowledge of the saving way than sheep, and so cannot walk, but as they are taught and led. "Teach me, O Lord." (Psalm 119:33.) "Lead me in thy truth." (Psalm 25:5.) (1.) Like a blind man holding out his hand to his guide, so they: "Lord, lead me in thy righteousness." (Psalm 5:8.) (2.) It is not common leading, but the leading of children learning to go by a hold. "When Ephraim was a child, I loved him." (Hosea 11:1.) "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms;" but Ephraim, like a child, knew not his leader: "But they know not," saith the Lord, "that I healed them." (verse 8.) (3.) Leading may suppose some willingness; but we must be drawn: "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him," (John 6:44). "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Cant. 1:4.) (4.) There is a word of special grace, which is more than teaching, leading, drawing; and that is, Leaning: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" (Cant. 8:5.) (5.) There is a word yet more, and that is Bearing: when the good shepherd hath found the lost sheep, "He layeth it on his shoulders with joy." (Luke 15:5.) "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born (by me) from the belly and carried from the grey hairs:" (Isa. 46:3:) So also, "God beareth them on eagles' wings." (Deut. 32:11.) Grace, grace is a noble guide and tutor.

2. The life of sheep, is the most dependent life in the world: no such dependent creatures as sheep: all their happiness is the goodness, care, and wisdom of their shepherd; wolves, lions, leopards, need none to watch over them. Briers and thorns grow alone; the vine tree, the noble vine, is a tender thing, must be

supported. Christ must bear the weak and lambs in his bosom. (Isa. 40:11.) The shepherd's bosom and his legs, are the legs of the weak lamb. Even the habit of grace is a creature, and no independent thing; and so, in its creation, in its preservation, it dependeth on Christ: grace is as the new born bird; its life is the heat and warmness of the body, and wings of the dam. It is like a chariot; though it have four wheels, yet it moveth only, as drawn by the strength of horses without it. It is a plough of timber only, without iron and steel that breaketh up no earth. The new seed of God acteth, as acted by God: hence repenting Ephraim, "Turn thou me and I shall be turned." (Jer. 31:18.) Renewed David is often at this: "Quicken me, quicken me:" the swooning Church; "Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples." (Cant. 2:5.)

3. Sheep are docile creatures. "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27.) There is a controversy with Papists, how we know Scripture to be the word of God. There are two things here considerable; one within, and another without. How knoweth the lamb its mother amongst a thousand of the flock? Natural instinct teacheth it. From what teacher or art is it, that the swallow buildeth its clay house and nest, and every bee knoweth its own cell and waxen house? So the instinct of grace knoweth the voice of the Beloved amongst many voices, (Cant. 2:8). And this discerning power is in the subject. There is another power in the object. Of many thousand millions of men, since the creation, not one, in figure and shape, is altogether like another; some visible difference there is: amongst many voices, no voice like man's tongue: amongst millions of divers tongues of men, every voice hath an audible difference printed on it, by which it is discerned from all other. To the new creature, there is in Christ's word some character, some sound of heaven, that is in no voice in the world, but in his only: in Christ represented to a believer's eye of faith, there is a shape, and a stamp of divine majesty: no man knoweth it but the believer; and in heaven and earth Christ hath not a marrow [match] like himself. Suppose there were an hundred counterfeit moons, or fancied suns in the heaven; a natural eye can discern the true moon, and the natural sun from them all. The eye knoweth white, not to be black nor green. Christ offered to the eye of faith, stampeth on faith's eye, little images of Christ, that the soul dare go to death and to hell with it, that this, this only was Christ, and none other but he only.

4. Sheep are simple: fancy leadeth them much, therefore they are straying creatures. (Isa. 53:6; Psalm 119:176; 1 Peter 2:25.) There is nothing of the notion of death, or of another life in the fancy of sheep; a mouthful of green grass carrieth the sheep on upon a pit, and the mouth and teeth of lions and wolves. Fancy is often the guide of weak believers, rather than faith: little care we by nature, what we shall be in the next generation. Fancy and nature cannot out-see time, nor see over or beyond death. Fair green-like hopes of gain, are to us hopes of real good: we think we see two moons in one heaven. There is a way good-seeming that deceiveth us; but black death is the night lodging of it. Alas! we are journeying, and know not our night-inns, and where we shall lodge when the sun is going down: poor soul! where shall you be all night?

1. If believers be such dependent creatures, what do libertines and Antinomians teach us?—that the soul need not go out to Christ, for fresh supply, but is acted by the spirit inhabiting and dwelling in us: also, that it is the way of the law, not of the gospel, that we act in the strength of Christ. Both these are against the gospel: (1.) We are commanded to pray, even the sons who in faith call God, “Our Father which is in heaven; lead us not into temptation;” which God doth no other way, than by giving us new supply of grace to actual resistance. And Christ will have us to pray, “Lord, increase our faith.” The virgins in love with Christ, pray “draw us.” Paul prayeth, that the God of peace would sanctify the Thessalonians wholly; (1 Thess. 5:23;) and for this, he boweth his knee, that the believing Ephesians may be strengthened, “according to the riches of his glory, with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; and that, with all the saints, they may be able to comprehend the transcendent love of God in Christ,” (Eph. 3:15-19.) And that author, “That the God of peace may make the saints perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight.” (Heb. 13:20,21.) (2.) It is against Christ’s intercession, whose it is to keep the faith of the saints from falling, (Luke 22:32,) and who “finisheth our faith,” (Heb. 12:2,) “confirmeth us to the end,” (1 Cor. 1:8,) advocateth for new grace, (1 John 2:1,2,) “appeareth in the presence of God for us,” (Heb. 9:24). (3.) This cannot stand with the promise of perseverance, made in the covenant of grace, (Jer. 32:40,41; Isa. 59:21-24; Ezek. 36:27; John 6:39,40; and 4:13,14). Nor, (4.) with the faith of persuasion of perseverance, (Rom. 8:38,39; Jude 24,25; Psalm 23:6; 2 Tim. 4:18). And (5.) This must infer, either that the regenerate do not, and cannot sin, by not believing and persevering in faith, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God, (which is blasphemy); or that the saints may finally fall from grace; or that the use of grace, and willing and doing in the saints, is not of, or from confirming and assisting grace. (6.) This putteth our stock of grace in our own hand: as if Christ did literally only reveal to us the way to heaven, and leave it to our own free will, to guide well or ill.

USE 1.—And so [according to this false opinion], we are to thank Christ for beginning in the spirit, and to thank ourselves that we go on, and grow in grace, or end not in the flesh? Nay, but Christ’s dispensation, in whose grace we are strong, (Eph. 4:10,) and “can do all things,” (Phil. 4:13,) is nothing but one continued act of free grace, or a long cord or chain of dependency on Christ: yea, grace is glory on the wheels; it is glory like wheat in the blade, in the way in the flux and tendency to the ear and harvest, depending on the continued aspect of the summer Sun of Righteousness. The new creature is the iron in the fire of heaven in the moulding and framing, and under the hammer and tools of Christ, and a rose in the opening, before it cast out its leaves. And in this, we are to have these considerations:

1. Faith is leisurely to look to Christ, in bringing his work out of the mould, and taking the new ship off the stocks as a perfected vessel. We conceive

erroneously that faith only eyeth Christ as pardoning; and that it hath no eye, no activity and influence on our own gracious acts wrought in us by Christ. But faith is an agent, as it is a patient, and joineth with Christ and with free will, to an active purifying of the heart: it believeth heaven, and worketh heaven.

2. We often go on, imagining that we are in a way of backsliding. Deserted souls not conscious of the reflex acts of believing and longing for Christ, think themselves apostates, when they are advancing in their way. In great water-works, where there be a great multitude of wheels, the standing of some five or six is the advancing of the work in other twenty, or forty wheels. In desertion, some wheels are at a stand, and move not; as often acts of feeling, joy, self-delight in the actual beholding of Christ, are at a stand; and then it is thus:—"I said, I am cast out of his sight;" yet other wheels are moving, as (1.) Humble and base thoughts of himself. (2.) Broad and large thoughts of Christ, and his grace. (3.) Hunger and longing for Christ. (4.) Self-diffidence is much. (5.) Care and love-sickness: "Saw you him whom my soul loveth?" is vehement. (6.) Sense of sin, and of wants and spiritual poverty, increaseth now. (7.) Sense of the misery of the combat, is much more than before: "O miserable man that I am!" (8.) Believing under hope, and against hope, is strongest now. (9.) There is more tenderness and humble fear now than before. (10.) A stronger resolution to entertain Christ more kindly, when he shall return again in his fullness of presence. (11.) Sorrow, that remembering, he said, "My head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of the night," (Cant. 5:6,) yet the sleeping soul kept him at the door.

3. We are to adore that dispensation, which will have us not stepping one foot to heaven, but upon grace, and upon grace's charges. He could make saints to be sinless angels: but what haste? We should then, not yet being habituated with glory, nor confirmed in heaven, think little of Christ.

USE 2.—If we be so dependent on Christ, we have not ended with all law-directions: the law standeth us yet in good use; I mean, when Christ hath made us and the law friends, and hath removed the curse, and made the believer say, "O how love I thy law!"

Objection 1.—Can you (saith M. Towne) "separate the directing or commanding power of the law, from the condemning power of the law? Can the law speak to any but to those who are under the law? is it law at all if it condemn not?"

Answer. Actual condemnation may well be separated from the law; as a lion is a lion, and yet being chained, cannot actually devour. To condemn, may well be removed from the law; it could not condemn Adam, before sin entered in the world; it cannot condemn the holy, elect, and sinless angels; yet it had, and hath a commanding and obliging power to command and direct both: to condemn, is accidental to the law, as the state of sin is accidental to man. (2.) The law may

speak by way of direction to believers, but cannot speak to them by way of actual condemnation, because Christ hath removed the curse.

Objection 2. Holiness, and walking in the way of holiness, contributeth not one jot to salvation, as causes, or as the way thereto—Christ hath done that perfectly.

Answer. I pray you consider three things here: (1.) The will of God to save; yea, and to justify the ungodly. (2.) The law-right to righteousness and salvation. (3.) Actual salvation.

(1.) Christ's merits are neither cause, nor motive, nor condition moving God to will, to choose, or ordain persons for glory: this is an act of eternal election to glory, which is not from Christ's merits; nor doth any external work or condition, either good or evil, in Jacob or Esau, or in the surety Christ, move God to such an act of free liberty. Libertines are ignorant in so speaking; yea faith is no condition, cause, or motive of such a will. (2.) Christ's merits, not faith, not holiness in us, must be the cause of our law-right to righteousness and glory: Christ alone gave the price of redemption for us; no garments were rolled in blood, for a patent and right to heaven, but his only; he alone trod the wine-press of God's wrath. In these two notions, works of holiness have no footing in the work. But (3.) As touching actual salvation, the way to it is holiness, without which none can see God. It is expressly commanded, "Be ye holy, as I am holy," (1 Pet. 1:19,20). "But being now made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end life everlasting," (Rom. 6:22). "If ye do these things ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, unto the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (2 Pet. 1:10). "To him that overcometh I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," (Rev. 2:7). "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (Rev. 3:21.) They answer, "Overcoming is by faith." But I reply; faith, to libertines, is but a believing that Christ hath overcome in their person and place; for faith is no more to them a condition or way to salvation, than good works: For faith (say they) is not Christ; Christ only is the way to heaven. But this were a vain promise, if overcoming were not, (1.) A duty required of us in time, upon the performance whereof, we have an entrance made to life eternal. (2.) If overcoming be but only believing, and so an act of the soul only, those to whom the promise is made, are to do no more, but believe Christ hath overcome the persecuting world for them, and yield; and in profession deny the faith, and accept of conditions of life, and so be foiled, and yet claim right to the promise, contrary to the intent of Christ, who commendeth Pergamus for not denying the faith. (Rev. 2:13.) Now, in all this, as the walking in the way to a fair palace to dwell in it, in honour and happiness, cannot be the price, the ransom, the sum given to buy right to that place, and to the honour and happiness thereof; so neither can our walking in the way to glory, be the price of glory.

Objection 3. But we are saved by Christ's merits before we can do any good works; then good works come not, to perfect and make up salvation.

Answer. So are we, in regard to right of purchase, saved before we believe; yet that hindereth not, but faith is a way to salvation. (2.) This concludeth, that good works are no cause, or way, or mean of obtaining the right of purchase to redemption, which we yield; but not, that we are actually saved without walking in the way, called the "way of holiness, which the unclean shall not pass over." (Isa. 35:8.)

Objection 4. We are to do good works, from the principle of the love of Christ constraining us, not from the law commanding, or directing us.

Answer 1. These are no way contrary: the regenerate, from both principles, are to walk in love and holiness as Christ did. The law directing is not abolished by grace, or by love to Christ, and this is no other than the reasoning of old libertines. Paul said, "Now we are delivered from the law." (Rom. 7:6.) O, then, said libertines, "we may sin, and fleshly walking shall not prejudge salvation, nor condemn us." "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid;" (verse 7;) and "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom. 5:20.) Then said the libertine, "What shall we then say? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." (Rom. 6:1,2.) Then the law commandeth and directeth not to sin; and Christ and grace being friends, speak with the same mouth, "God forbid that we sin." We are not so freed from the commanding power of the law, as that we sin not. When we do what is contrary to God's law, we are so far under the law, as not to sin, because the rule of the law is removed; nay, the law backs a man till he come to Christ and to glory; and Christ backs the law, and saith, The law forbiddeth you sin; I say, Amen. Grace saith, Sin not; and Christ also layeth new bands of love, and obligation to thankfulness on us, not to sin, but removeth not the ancient bounds. Grace and condemnation are opposite, but not grace and the commanding power of the law.

Objection 5. The law is a letter of death and bondage, and can never convert the soul—only the gospel doth that; for in the gospel, grace is given to obey what is commanded: Therefore, your law-preachers lead men from the foundation, Christ.

Answer 1. The letter of the law, without the spirit of Christ, cannot convert any, nor can the letter of the gospel, or gospel threatenings without the spirit of grace, convert any. Both law and gospel, separated from the spirit, are alike in this; and neither law nor gospel, according to this reasoning, should be preached. Antinomians do in downright terms teach this: for they say, (1.) That the due searching and knowledge of the Scriptures, is not a safe and sure way of searching and finding Christ: The word saith the contrary, (Ps. 19:7-9; Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:21; John 5:39; Luke 1:70,71). (2.) To do any thing by virtue of a commandment, is a law-way, not a gospel obedience: this is contrary to Ps.

119:6,11,43,44; and 2 Pet. 1:19,20; 2 Tim. 3:16. (3.) All verbal covenants, and the word written, is but a covenant of works, and taketh men off from Christ; and the whole letter of the Scripture holdeth forth a covenant of works. All doctrines, revelations, and spirits, are to be tried by Christ, rather than by the Word. Those that go from the sun, must at length walk in darkness. Anabaptists of old, said, the covenant of grace was written in the inward parts, and in the heart, and therefore, there was no need of word or ministry: but when Satan knocketh, his knock is dumb and speechless; he bringeth not the word, and speaketh not according to the law and testimony, because he is a dumb devil: Christ bringeth the word with him. To all those, we can say no other, than that they condemn the Scriptures and the preaching of the Word; because nothing can avail us to salvation without the Spirit. This is, (1.) To condemn the wisdom of our Lord, who hath appointed, that faith should come by hearing, and that the things that are written, are written, "that we in believing might have eternal life," (John 20:31). (2.) It is to fetter the free operation of the Spirit, whose wind bloweth when he listeth, to the preaching of the Word. (3.) Yea, to make Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession at the right hand of God, which all must be the marrow of the evangel, things merely legal, and things belonging to the covenant of works; because all those, without the grace of the Spirit, are merely fruitless to many thousands.

Objection 6. But repentance in the New Testament, is nothing else but the change of the mind, and to be of another mind, than to seek righteousness by the works of the law; even to seek it in Christ alone: and mortification, is but the apprehension of sin slain by Christ, and so, repentance is a part of faith, though repentance in the Old Testament was to bewail sin, and forsake it.

Answer. But this is to dally with Christ. All mortification and dominion over our lusts, that fighteth against mercy and justice, and the duties of the second Table, must be, by this means, an act of faith, and the new light of Christ in the mind, believing our righteousness to be in Christ; and so, an act of internal worship belonging to the first Table. Then, as the Scripture saith, the sinner is justified by faith, apprehending Christ's righteousness; so might we well say, that we are justified by repentance and by mortification. (2.) That repentance layeth hold on Christ's righteousness. (3.) That as to believe only, without works, doth justify and save; so to repent only (that is, to change the mind, and apprehend righteousness, not in works, but in Christ) without all holiness and forsaking of sin, should save us. But this is to acquit men from all duties of the second Table, yea, and of all the first Table; loving of God, praying, praising, hearing, etc., except only we are to believe: This is clearly the way of the old Gnostics, who placed all holiness in mere knowledge and apprehension of God's will, without love or obedience. Repentance is sorrow according to God, (1 Cor. 7:9,10; James 4:9,) and eschewing evil, and doing good, (1 Pet. 3:11,) and the "crucifying of the old man, and the lusts thereof, as fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness," (Col. 3:5). And these are commanded in the New Testament, as the very lesson of the grace of God, (Tit.

2:11). It is true, in the Old Testament, the people were under tutors and bondage; but that was in regard of the carnal commandment of ceremonies, the cognisance of our bloody demerit held forth in bloody sacrifices. (2.) In regard, less of Christ and the sweetness of the gospel was then known, and the law chased harder the guilty to Christ. But (1.) Servile obedience, through apprehension of legal terrors, was never commanded in the spiritual law of God to the Jews, more than to us. (2.) The Jews were not justified by the works of the law more than we; but by faith in Christ, as well as we, (Acts 15:11; Acts 10:42,43; Heb. 11; 1 Cor. 10:1-3). Yea, we are justified as David and Abraham were, (Rom. 4:3-8). Yea, the Jews' seeking of righteousness by the works of the law, is a stumbling at the stone laid in Zion, (Rom. 9:31-33). Yea, it is blasphemy to say, repentance in the Old Testament was a sorrow for sin, and a forsaking of it; as if under the New Testament, we were licensed to sin, and turn grace into wantonness.

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