

## The Trial & Triumph of Faith

### SERMON 15

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

*“Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” vs.25.*

CHRIST had denied her to be his, but she will not deny but Christ is her's: see how a believer is to carry himself towards Christ deserting, frowning. Christ, (1.) Answered her not one word. (2.) He gave an answer but to the disciples, not to the woman. Oh dreadful! Christ refuseth to give her one word that may go between her, and hell and despair. (3.) The answer that he giveth is sadder and heavier than no answer; it is as much as, Woman, I have nothing to do with thee; I quit my part of thee. Yet, (1.) She is patient. (2.) She believeth. (3.) She waiteth on a better answer. (4.) She continueth in praying. (5.) Her love is not abated; she cometh and adoreth. (6.) Acknowledgeth her own misery; “Lord, help me,” and putteth Christ as God in his own room to be adored. (7.) She taketh Christ aright up, and seeth the temptation to be a temptation. (8.) She runneth to Christ; she came nearer to him, and runneth not from him; she clingeth to Christ, though Christ had cast her off.

1. Patient submission to God under desertion, is sweet. What though I saw no reason why I cry and shout, and God answereth not? (1.) His comforts and his answers are his own free graces; he may do with his own what he thinks good, and grace is no debt. “Hear, O Lord, for thy own sake.” (Dan. 9:19.) (2.) Infinite sovereignty may lay silence upon all hearts: good Hezekiah, “What shall I say? He hath spoken unto me, and himself hath done it.” (Isa. 38:15.) It is an act of Heaven; I bear it with silence.

2. She believeth. There is a high and noble commandment laid upon the sad spirit: “He that walketh in darkness, and seeth no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” (Isa. 50:10.) (2.) Fill the field with faith, double or frequent acts of faith: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1). Two faiths are a double breastwork against the forts of hell. (Eph. 6:16; 1 Thes. 5:8.) (3.) In the greatest extremity believe, even as David in the borders of hell: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” (Psalm 23:4.) It is a litote; I will believe good. It is a cold and a dark shadow to walk at death's right side, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” (Job 13:15.) See Stephen dying and believing both at once: Christ's very dead corpse and his grave in a sort believing: “My flesh also shall rest in hope.”

(Psalm 16:9.) How sweet to take faith's back band, subscribed by God's own hand, into the cold grave with thee, as Christ did; "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave." (verse 10.) (4.) Faith saith, sense is a liar: fancy, sense, the flesh will say, "His archers compassed me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare, and poureth out my gall on the ground:" (Job 16:13:) but faith saith, "I have a friend in heaven; also, now, my witness is in heaven." (verse 19.) Sense maketh a lie of God; "He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and taketh me for his enemy." (Job 19:11.) No, Job, thou art the friend of God: see how his faith cometh above the water, "I know that my friend by blood, or my Redeemer liveth." (verse 25.)

3. She waits in hope, and took not the first nor second answer: hope is long breathed, and at midnight prophesieth good of God: "Though I fall, I shall rise again:" (Mic. 7:9). "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look toward thy holy temple." (Jonah 2:4.) There is a seed of heaven in hope. When God did hide his face from Job, (Job 13:24;) yet, "He also shall be my salvation." (verse 16). There is a negative, and over-clouded hope in the soul at the saddest time; the believer dares not say, Christ will never come again: if he say it, it is in hot blood, and in haste, and he will take his word again. (Isa. 8:17.)

4. She continueth in praying: she cried, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy upon me;" she has no answer; she crieth again, till the disciples are troubled with her shouts: she getteth a worse answer than no answer, yet she cometh and prayeth. We know the holy willfulness of Jacob, "I will not let thee go till thou bless me." (Gen. 32:26.) Rain calmeth the stormy wind: to vent out words in a sad time, is the way of God's children: "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me: My eye mourneth by reason of mine affliction." (Psalm 88:7,9.) And what then? "Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands to thee." (Psalm 22:2.) Christ in the borders of hell, prayed, and prayed again, and died praying.

5. She hath still love to Christ, and is not put from the duty of adoring. "Whom having not seen, yet ye love." (1 Pet. 1:8.) The deserted soul seeth little: there must be love to Christ, where there is, (1.) Faith in the dark; faith is with child of love. (2.) Where the believer is willing that his pain and his hell may be matter of praising God: "Who is so great a god as our God?" (Psalm 77:13). The church was then deserted, as the psalm cleareth.

6. She putteth Christ in his chair of state, and adoreth him: the deserted soul saith, Be I what I will, He is Jehovah the Lord. Confession is good in saddest desertion, "I have sinned; what shall I do to thee, O preserver of man?" (Job 7:20). The seed of Jacob is in a hard case before God, (Lam. 1:17,) and under wrath, (verses 12-14). Yet, "The Lord is righteous, for I have sinned:" (verse 16:) this maketh the soul charitable of God, how sad soever the dispensation be.

7. She seeth it is a trial, as is clear by her instant pursuing after Christ, after many repulses. It is great mercy, that God cometh not behind backs, and striketh

not in the dark. "And I said, this is my infirmity:" (Psalm 77:10:) he gathereth his scattered thoughts, and taketh himself in the temptation. It is mercy, (1.) To see the temptation in the face. Some lie under a dumb and a deaf temptation that wanteth all the five senses; Cain is murdered in the dark at midnight, with the temptation, and he knoweth not what it meaneth. (2.) God's immediate hand is more to be looked at, than all other temptation. (3.) Hence the conscience is timorous, and traverseth its ways under the trial. When a night traveler dare not trust the ground he walketh on, he is in a sad condition; he is under two evils, and hath neither comfort nor confidence. "He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light," (but some glimmering of star-light, or half moon under the earth, and knoweth not the ground he walketh on,) "let him trust in the name of the Lord." (Isa. 50:10.)

8. She runneth not away from Christ under desertion; but (1.) She cometh to him. It is a question what deserted souls shall do in that case. See, (2,) that you run not from Christ. It was a desertion that Saul was under, and a sad one we read of; but he maketh confession of his condition to the devil; a sad word; "I am sore distressed:" (1 Sam. 28:15,) there is a heavy and lamentable reason given why; "the Philistines make war against me." Why, that is not much; they make war always against the people of God: Nay, but here is the marrow and the soul of all vengeance, "God is departed from me." Why, foolish man, what availeth it thee to tell the devil, God is departed from thee? Judas was under a total desertion; he went not to Christ, but to the murderers of Christ, to open his wound. "I have sinned:" fool! say that to the Saviour of sinners. The Church deserted, betaketh herself to Christ, and searcheth him out: "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" (Cant. 1:5). It is a bad token, when men, conceiving themselves to be in calamity, make lies and policy their refuge.

Objection. But it is a greater sin to go to Christ, being in a state of sin: What have I to do, to go to him whom I have offended so highly? Answer. (1.) To run from Christ under desertion, is two deaths. [1.] Desertion is one, and if real, the saddest hell out of hell. [2.] To flee from Christ and life, is another death; now to come to him, though he should kill thee for thy presumption, is but one death, and a little one in comparison of the other; and one little death is rather to be chosen, than two great deaths. (2.) Consider how living a death it is, to be killed doing a duty, and aiming to flee into Christ: better die by Christ's own hand (if so it must be) as by another; and better be buried and lie dead at his feet, as to run away from him in a heavy desertion: if the believer must die, it is better his grave to be made under the throne, and under the feet of Jesus Christ, as to die in a state of strangeness and alienation from Christ, not daring to come nigh him. All the deserted ones that we read of, did flee in to himself. (Psalm 34; 39; 88; Job 13:15; Isa. 38.) (3.) It is good to claim him as thy God, though he should deny thee; and creep unto him though he should throw thee out of his sight: better kiss the sword that killeth thee, and be slain with his own hand, as cast away thy confidence.

“But she came and worshipped.” An heavier temptation cannot befall a soul tender of Christ’s love, than to cry to God and not be answered; and to cry, and receive a flat and downright renouncing of the poor supplicant. Yet this doth not thrust her from a duty; she cometh, and worshippeth, and prayeth. It is a blessed mark, when a temptation thrusteth not off a soul from a duty. And (1.) When the danger and sad trial is seen, it is good to go on. Christ knew before, he should suffer; and when they would apprehend him, yet he went to the garden to spend a piece of the night in prayer. It was told Paul by Agabus, if he went to Jerusalem, the Jews should bind him, and deliver him to the Gentiles: it was his duty to go, thither he professeth he will go: “What mean ye to weep and break my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but to die for the name of Jesus.” (Acts 21:13.) Dying could not thrust him from a duty. Esther ran the hazard of death to go in to the king; yet conscience of a duty calling, she goeth on in faith; “If I perish, I perish.” (2.) In the act of suffering: Christ on the cross prayeth and converteth the thief; Paul, with an iron chain upon his body, preacheth Christ before Agrippa and his enemies, and preaching Christ was the crime: Paul and Silas, with bloody shoulders, must sing psalms in the stocks. (3.) Indefinitely. After the trial, and when the temptation is on, yet the saints go on: “All this is come on us,” (Psalm 44:17,) there is the temptation: the duty, “Yet we have not forgotten thee, neither dealt falsely in thy covenant.” “Princes did speak against me,” there is a temptation: yet here is a duty: “But thy servant did meditate on thy statutes.” (Psalm 119:23.) “My soul fainteth for thy salvation, but I hope in thy word.” (verse 81.) “The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts.” (verse 110.) “Many are my persecutors and mine enemies, yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.” (verse 157.) “They fought against me without a cause:” (Psalm 109:3.) “For my love they were my adversaries, but I gave myself to prayer.” (verse 4.)

(1.) It is a sign of a sweet humbled servant, who can take a buffet, and yet go about his master’s service; and when a soul can pass through fire and water to be at a duty; for then, the conscience of the duty hath more prevailing power to act obedience, than the salt and bitterness of the temptation hath force to subdue and vanquish the spirit: it is likely grace hath the day, and better of corruption. (2.) It argueth a soul well watched, and kept from the incursion of a house-sin, and a home-bred corruption; for the temptation setteth on the nearest corruption, as fire kindleth the nearest powder and dry timber, and so goeth along. “They prevented me in the day of my calamity;” (Psalm 18:18). “I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.” (verse 23.) The devil hath a friend within us: now there be degrees of friends, some nearer of blood than other some; the man’s own predominant is the dearer friend to Satan, than any other sin; if pride be the predominant, it is so Satan’s first-born, he agents his business by pride. (3.) So it may argue that the soul steeled and fortified with grace, taketh occasion from the sinfulness of the temptation, and the edge of it, to be more zealous and active in duties. David scoffed at by Michal, said, “I will be more vile yet.” So, “All that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head,” (Psalm 22:7). “He trusted in the Lord,” (verse 8). See here a heavy

temptation; but his faith diggeth deeper, to the first experience of God's goodness; "But thou art he that took me out of the womb," (verse 9). As the church mocked with this, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," (Psalm 137,) raiseth an higher esteem of Zion, because Zion's songs are scoffed at: Let them mock Zion as they list, "But if I forget Zion," (verse 5,) then I pray God, "my tongue may cleave to the roof of my mouth." (verse 6.) So the thief, hearing Christ blasphemed and railed on by his fellow, doth take more boldness to extol him as a king; "Lord, remember me when thou comest to thy kingdom:" Grace appeareth the more gracious and active, that it hath an adversary; contraries in nature, as fire and water, put forth their greatest strength when they actually conflict together.

USE 1. Antinomians turn grace into a temptation, and then cast off all duties; as, "Christ has pardoned all sin; his righteousness imputed, is mine: What do you speak to me of law-duties?" The way that crieth down duties and sanctification, is not the way of grace; grace is an innocent thing, and will not take men off from duties; grace destroyeth not obedience: Christ hath made faith a friend to the law; the death of Christ destroyeth not grace's activity in duties. It is true, grace trusted in, becomes ourself, not grace; and self cannot storm heaven, and take Christ by violence: grace, though near of kindred to Christ, as it is received in us, is but a creature, and so may be made an idol, when we trust in it, and seek not Christ first, and before created grace: But believing and doing are blood-friends. (John 11:26).

USE 2. This would be heeded, that in difficulties and straits, we keep from wicked ways; and being tempted, that we strive to come near the fore-runner's way. It was peculiar to Christ, to be angry, and not to sin; to be like us, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," (Heb. 4:15,) with this difference, Christ was tempted, but cannot sin; the saints are tempted, but dare not sin. The law of God, honeyed with the love of Christ, hath a majesty and power to keep from sin. So Christ, made under the law for us, (Isa. 53:7,) "was oppressed, he was afflicted," (oppression will make a sinful man mad,) but it could not work upon Christ: "He was oppressed, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." So all Christ's followers did: they are tempted, but grace putteth a power of tenderness on them. Joseph tempted, saith, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). David is reproached by Shimei, but he dares not avenge himself. Job, heavily as any man tempted, yet "In all this, Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly?" (Job 1:22). I deny not, but the temptation doth sometimes obtain half a consent: Nabal tempted David, so that he resolved to be avenged. (2.) It will leave a black and a crook behind it in some, for their whole life. Peter shall be all his life known to be one that once forswore his Lord. But this is fearful, when men both create temptations, by defending a bad cause, (as holy men may have an unholy cause) and then, can find no way to carry it out, but by crooked policy and calumnies. We are now pursued by malignants with an unjust war. To embrace peace upon any dishonourable terms to Christ, is to desert a duty for fear of a temptation: on the

other side, to refuse an offer of peace, because many innocent persons have been killed, is also a yielding to a temptation; for by war, we kill many more innocent ones, and it is against the Lord's counsel, "Seek peace," (Psalm 34:14), that is, as much as we are not to be patients only, but agents, even when we are wronged, in seeking peace. But what if peace flee from me? I confess that this is a temptation; then saith the Lord 'follow after it;' (the word Darash is diokein. Heb. 12:14); the Syro-Chaldee is, 'run after peace,' compel peace and force it, as men follow an enemy: 'Let us pursue after things of peace,' (Rom. 14:19, diokomen).

USE 3. See the sweet use of faith under a sad temptation; faith trafficketh with Christ and Heaven in the dark, upon plain trust and credit, without seeing any surety or pawn; "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," (John 20:29). And the reason is, because faith is sinewed and boned with spiritual courage; so as to keep a barred city against hell, yea, and to stand under impossibilities; and here is a weak woman, though not as a woman, yet as a believer, standing out against him, who is "The mighty God, the Father of ages, the prince of peace," (Isa. 9:6). Faith only standeth out, and overcometh the sword, the world, and all afflictions, (1 John 5:4). This is our victory, whereby one man overcometh the great and vast world.

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