

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

### **SERMON 26**

By [Rev. Samuel Rutherford](#)

“BE it unto thee as thou wilt.”—We see what power Christ hath over the devils: Christ sent him an invisible summons, ‘Let Satan be gone,’ and he must be gone. It is a proper work of Christ to oppose Satan. “He took part of flesh and blood,” Ina katargese, that he might make Satan unprofitable, and idle, and fruitless, (Heb. 2:14,) as the word is used, ‘Why doth this fruitless tree keep the ground sapless and barren?’ (Luke 13:7.) So is the word taken, ‘to make a thing of no effect,’ (Rom. 3:3). Things that make sport to children, as nuts, feathers, toys, are called, ‘Things of infants to be put away,’ (1 Cor. 13:11). So hath Christ taken bones, and sap, and strength, from the devil, and made him as fruitless as the feathers that serve to sport children, (1 John 3:8). “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, (ina lyse) that he might dissolve the works of the devil.” The word in Scripture is ascribed to the casting down of a house, (John 2:19,) to the breaking of a ship, (Acts 27:41,) to the loosing any out of chains, (Acts 22:30). The truth is, Satan’s works of sin and hell, in the which he had involved the redeemed world, was a prison house, and a castle of strength, and a strong war-ship, and many strong chains of sin and misery. Christ was manifested to break down and dissolve the house, to break his war-ship, and to set the captives at liberty, (Isa. 61:1,2; John 14:30). “And now cometh the prince of this world, and hath nothing in me.” He had much in Christ, he had all his redeemed ones by reason of sin; but Christ took all from him. Since Christ came in the play, and was master of the fields, Satan never did prosper. And consider how easily Christ doth it, with a mere word, “Let it be.” How was this? Christ sent an immediate mandate of dominion; he hath an immediate operation upon these invisible spirits of darkness: it is no matter how Christ do it, so it be done. Christ-God is a spirit, and how a spirit acts upon a spirit, is to be believed, rather than searched; but Christ hath these relations to Satan: (1.) As God to all creatures, and thus, Satan is the workmanship of God, as he is a spirit; so whatever partaketh of being, is the adequate and consummate effect of Omnipotency—I mean, being either possible or actual; and so the motions of angels from place to place, and of devils, must be under a chain of Omnipotency, as all other things, motions, and actions of the creature are: let Satan go whither he please, Christ traceth him. (2.) Christ hath the relation of a judge to Satan, and so he is tied in an invisible chain of justice: and as malefactors that are permitted to go abroad, but always with attendance, so do devils trail about with them everlasting chains of blackness of darkness, (Jude, verse 6). Whithersoever the devil go, Christ hath a

keeper at his back. (3.) Christ hath the relation of a conqueror to Satan, and Satan is his taken captive, (Col. 2:15); he cannot be loosed from under Christ, either by ransom, or change of prisoner with prisoner. (4.) Christ, as “the heir of all things, beareth up all by his mighty word,” (Heb. 1:2,3,) and is he in whom “all things consist,” (Col. 1:17;) and so, by reason that the world, by a new gift of redemption, is subjected to Jesus Christ, there is a special and particular providence of Christ upon Satan. It concerneth the redeemed not a little, that Christ keep a strong and watchful guard upon the black camp out of which he hath redeemed us, and that “the seven eyes that are before the throne,” take special notice of hell, who come in, and come out, for there is deep counsel there against us. In this consideration, Christ numbers all the footsteps of devils. Satan hath not a general warrant to tempt the saints; but to every new act against Job, (chap 1:12, and Job 2:6,) against Peter, ere he can put him upon one single blast, to cast him but once through his sieve, (Luke 22:31,) yea, against one sow, or a bristle of a sow, (Mat. 8:31,32,) he must have a new signed commission. Christ’s general pass, that Satan be suffered, as any other subject, to pass through Christ’s bounds and kingdom, is not enough.

USE 1.—It is much for our faith and comfort, that our Mediator is a God of gods, a God above the “god of this world,” a prince more mighty than “the prince of the air, who ruleth in the children of disobedience.” Yea, now we have a greater victory over Satan, than we know: Satan is so totally routed, put off the fields, and Christ so strong, that the weakest of saints is stronger than the world, and the spirit Satan that dwelleth in the world. Christ’s strength of faith, is stronger than Adam’s strength of innocency, (1 John 2:13,14; 1 John 5:5); the weakest measure of saving grace, is stronger than the highest measure of malice in all hell. When Satan tempteth you, fear him not, resist him in the faith; but be watchful, for he hath a pass from Christ, else he could not come so far as the court of guard, to dally with the senses, to hold out an apple to Eve, a world of kingdoms and glory to Christ. Satan hath a warrant to bid, when he cannot buy; his pass will bear him to go to the more inner works than the senses, even to the chamber of the fancy, to send a trumpeter to the understanding: (1.) Yea, to work mediately upon the will and the heart of a Judas, and to act, but in a way of distance, upon David to number the people. But a counterfeit pass with a false subscription, cannot permit Satan to go on in real motions against the will: the chain holdeth him back; there is a restraining link that all the powers in hell cannot break. A moral tie and link of the law of nature in the breast of devils, Satan can, and doth daily break, “because he sinned from the beginning;” but the other link of real acting against the dominion of Providence, is impossible to the strongest of devils or of creatures. (2.) We ourselves may put in execution a conditional pass of the devil; for certain it is, Satan could but knock at Eve’s door, and play the orator and sophist, to delude mind and affections; but he could not make the king’s keys (as we say) and violently break up the door, or force the will, but upon condition that Eve should consent to eat the forbidden fruit: by necessity of divine justice, she must turn the first and oldest devil in the flesh that ever was, to tempt Adam to sin, and to eat; and therefore, if we be not careful to

resist, we may sign the devil's pass of Providence with our moral consent. Yield once to Satan's first demand of the treaty, and you shall see you are ensnared by a necessity of God's spotless justice, who punisheth sin by sin, because you go one mile with the devil, to go with him two miles.

USE. 2. If Christ at a nod have such a dominion over devils, we are under Satan's power in being tempted, more than we need. Certain it is, we improve not Christ's power of dominion over Satan to the utmost. "Christ can save to the utmost;" (Heb. 7:25,) then he can sanctify "to the utmost," for Christ is a Saviour, not only by merit, but also by efficacy, as our divines hold, against Socinians and Arminians; and therefore he should give actual strength against temptations, if we should not so carelessly improve that power Christ hath over Satan. I do not mean, as Arminians do, that free-will, by order of nature, beginneth, first, to resist Satan, and then God's grace followeth, as a handmaid; but I intend this, that because Peter is self-strong, and his flesh saith to Christ, that Christ is mistaken, and looketh beside the spirit of prophecy;—for Matt. 26:35, he saith, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;"—belike, if he had been diffident of his own strength, and watched, and trusted in the strength of an Intercessor, he should not have been deserted, so as to deny his Lord. We put not Christ to it, to put forth his omnipotency in every act, to save us that we yield not. I deny not, but there is a necessity in regard of God's wise providence, that the saints must sin, and that they be passive vessels to carry the lustre, and hold forth the rays and beams of pardoning grace. Yet certain it is, there be hypothetical connections of supernatural providence in God's eternal decree, never put forth in action, because of our laziness: (As if God shall suffer Job to be tempted, and he by grace sin not; as Job 1:22, the Lord shall also strengthen him when he is tempted the second time, not to sin) and (if Abraham be tempted to offer up his only son for God, and if he yield obedience, God shall surely bless him with the blessing of sanctification, promised in the Covenant) as is clear, Gen. 22:16,17; Heb. 6:12-14, for we see these connections sometimes put forth in acts. But other connections are not put forth in acts, (Matt. 11:21; Luke 16:31; 1 Sam. 23:12,) such as these; if David be tempted by Satan, he shall not resist, but shall number the people: if Peter be tempted, he shall not stand out in confessing his master. Certain it is, that as we come short of these comforts of a communion with God, which we might enjoy, by our loose walking; so, upon the same reason, we fall short of many victories over Satan, which we might have, if we should improve the dominion and kingly power of Christ over that restless spirit.

"As thou wilt."—As thou desirest. God maketh of his free dispensation, a sanctified will and affection in prayer, the measure of his gifts to us. A word, then, (1.) Of a sanctified will and affections; (2.) How these are the measure of God's goodness towards us, in these positions,

POSITION 1. The soul is never renewed, till the will be renewed; for the will is the heart of the heart, and the new heart is the new man, (Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6). For the heart is the king and sovereign of obedience, (Deut. 30:19).

POSITION 2. All sanctified affections are threaded upon the will; saving grace can lodge nowhere but in the centre of the heart, and that is the renewed will, presupposing new light in the mind: Grace taketh this first castle.

POSITION 3. Hence, how many grains of sanctified will, as many grains of new obedience; so love is the fire of our obedience, and willingness the fat of obedience, which is set on fire by love.

POSITION 4. A civil will, is not a sanctified will; in some men, the will is more moral, less raging, the motions of it being less tumultuous; as in some carnal spirits, the wheels go with less noise. All rivers make not a like action and stirring on their banks; but that taketh nothing from either their nature or deepness, or occasional overswelling.

POSITION 5. The special mark of a sanctified will, is, that it is a broken thing, as it were fallen in the midst in two pieces, and yielding to God and saving light. There was a sea of grace and saving light in Christ: no created will stooped to the light of a revealed decree in such a submissive measure, in a hell of fear, sorrow, and anguish for an evil of punishment more than any creature was able to bear, as he did; Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done: far more in other things of less pain should we suffer. Especially in these, the will is to stoop: (1.) In opposing our lusts, as we would testify, that the proudest piece in us, the will, hath felt the influence of Christ's death on it, "That we no longer should live the rest of our time to the lusts of men," (1 Pet. 4:2,) "but to the will of God," (1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 6:6). The dominion of will, is the dominion of sin. (2.) In that the soul speaketh out of the dust, and is put to silence before God, and sitteth alone, as melancholics do, (Lam. 3:28,29). A tamed man is broken in his will, in which the pride of opposing God consisteth: then, "The wolf dwelleth with the lamb." (Isa. 11:6.) (3.) The subordination of the will to God, is a great sign of a subdued spirit: nothing affecteth independency more, than the vain will; "Rest on the Lord," (Psalm 37:7) Hebrew, "Be silent toward the Lord;" Vatablus, "Be quiet, repine not as disobedient, neither answer again," Christ is sent to bind up those that are broken in will or heart, (Isa. 61:1); the Hebrew will include both, "He that hearkeneth to reproof, getteth a heart, possesseth his heart," (Prov. 16:31); so Vatablus. The meek spirit, which in obedience submitteth to rebukes, possesseth his heart, and possesseth his own will: now, the contrary must be in the undaunted man; his will and heart must have dominion over him, and his will must possess him, as Prov. 17:18. The unconverted man, is a man wanting a heart and a will: a will not broken to God is as good as no will, and no heart at all. The broken heart is the heart to God, and the broken will, the will.

POSITION 6. The affections in their naturals being corrupt, grace alone maketh them pure; and when they are purest, they are strongest. It is most of the element of the earth, that is all earth, and wanteth all mixture of other elements; that is most fire, that hath least of earth in it; that is finest gold, that hath in it least

of other metals, least dross, least ore. When affections are most steeled with grace, they have the least mixture in them; love, having much of grace, hath least of lust; zeal, with much grace, hath least of the wild-fire of carnal wrath: and these are known by the swiftness of their motion toward their kindly objects. The more of earth in the body, the swifter is the motion downward toward the earth. Fire worketh most as fire, when it carrieth up in the air nothing but itself, or fire-sparks like itself; but when it ascendeth, and carrieth up with it houses, mountains, and great loads of earth, the motion is the slower. Grace being essential to gracious affections, they run and move kindly and swiftly; therefore is supernatural love, "strong as death, hard as the grave." In the martyrs it was stronger than burning quick, than the wheels, racks, and the most exquisite torments; and Christ's love was stronger than hell. Of all loves, that is the strongest that bringeth sickness, swooning, and death. Gracious love produceth love-sickness, (Cant. 2:5,) swooning, (Cant. 5:6). The martyrs have died to enjoy him, and refused to accept of life, because of the love of a union with him, (Heb. 11:37). How many deserted souls come to this, 'I die if I enjoy not Christ.'

POSITION 7. It is good that the affections be balanced and loaden with heavenly and spiritual light. Lower vaults and under houses, send up smoke to the fair pictures that are in the higher houses; lust's dominion over light, maketh a misty and unbelieving mind. So, when the light is carnal, and nothing but worldly policy, it is like the highest house, which, if ruinous and rainy, sendeth down rain, and continual droppings on the lower house. Mind and affections vitiate and corrupt one another: grace in either, contributes much to the spirituality of the actions one of another. So the mockers of eternity and judgment are ignorant, because they will be ignorant, (2 Pet. 3:5); and Eli's sons will be abominably lustful in their affections, because they know not the Lord, and are ignorant of God, (1 Sam. 2:12). Matthew heareth and seeth Jesus, and he followeth him, (Matt. 9:9). The more that Mary Magdalene followeth and loveth, the more she knoweth and seeth the excellency of Christ, (John 20:1-14, compared with verses 17,18).

POSITION 8. When the desires are natural, then heavenly objects are desired and sorrowed for in a natural way. Balaam desires to die the death of the righteous: but Esau weepeth for the blessing in a carnal way. When the desires are spiritual, earthly objects are desired in a spiritual way—even bread, as it savoureth of Christ, (Matt. 6:9, compared with verses 11,12). And so the woman seeketh deliverance to her daughter, spiritually, and with a great faith.

POSITION 9. The believer saith, 'If the creature will go along with me to my Father's house, welcome; if not, what then? There I must lodge, though gold refuse to go with me.'

See how God in a manner resigneth his own freedom in giving, and transferreth this honour on the woman's desire. God keeps pace with a sanctified will in satisfying, when the will keeps pace with God in acting, longing, and desiring. (1.) He putteth heaven upon the choice of a sanctified heart: "Choose life, that both

thou and thy seed may live.” (Deut. 30:19.) “Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely.” (Rev. 22:17.) “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” (Isaiah 55:1.) (2.) Heaven is put upon the quality of the will, and what it desires; “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he should have given thee water of life.” (John 4:10.) “I will give unto him that thirsteth, of the fountain of the water of life freely.” (Rev. 21:6.) There is an edge upon the word “fountain;” for the fountain and first spring of the water of life is above the streams; and this is promised to him that hath a heavenly and spiritual thirst for Christ. (3.) God putteth himself, and the measure or compass of heaven, upon the measure and compass of the bent and pitch of heavenly desires: “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. 2:3-5.) There be four words here to express the bent of the will and desire: we are to “cry for wisdom.” The Chaldee reads the other part of the verse, “If thou call understanding thy mother;” that the cry spoken of in the former part, may be such a high cry, as children use when they weep and cry after their mother. The other word is, ‘To give the voice to wisdom.’ The other two words do note sweating, digging in the bowels of the earth, casting up much earth to find a treasure of silver or gold: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” (Psalm 81:10); Vatablus, “Seek what thou wilt, and I will grant it.” It is a doubt, if any man, by enlarged desires, can put God’s giving goodness to the utmost extent. (4.) God maketh his fullness in giving, far beyond our narrowness in seeking: “He is able to do,” (this is as much as “he is willing to do,” Rom. 11:23; Jude 24,) “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Eph. 3:20.) This is considerable, that when Christ shall put the crown of incomparable glory on the head of the glorified soul, there shall be thousand millions of more diamonds, rubies, and jewels of glory on that diadem, than ever your thoughts or imaginations could reach; and more weight of sweetness, delight, joy, and glory in a sight of God, than the seeing eye, the hearing ear, yea, the vast understanding and heart, which can multiply and add to former thoughts, can be able to fathom, (1 Cor. 2:9). When ye seek and ask Christ from the Father, you know not his weight and worth: when you shall enjoy Christ immediately up at the well-head, this shall much fill the soul with admiration: ‘I believed to see much in Christ, having some twilight and afternoon, or moonlight glances of him down in the earth; but, oh! blind I, narrow I, could never have faith, opinion, thought, or imagination, to fathom the thousandth thousandth part of the worth, and incomparable excellency I now see in him.’ You may over-think and over-praise Paradise, Rome, Naples, the isles where there be two summers in one year; but you cannot over-think, or in your thoughts reach Christ and the invisible things of God; only glorified thoughts, not thoughts graced only, are comprehensive in any due measure, of God—of heaven. The glorified soul shall be a far wider and more capacious circle, the diameter of it in length, many thousand cubits larger in mind, thoughts, glorified reason, will, heart, desires, love, joy, reverence, than it is now. We would, in seeking, asking, praying, in adoring God in Christ, enlarge

our own desires, heart, will, and affections, broad and deep, that we may take in more of Christ. Broad prayers flow from broad desires, narrow prayers from niggard and narrow hearts. We may collect the bigness of a ship, from the proportion and quantity of its bottom, in its new framing. If the bottom draw but to the proportion of a small vessel which can endure no more but a pair of oars, the vessel cannot be five hundred tons, or be able to bear sixty pieces of ordnance: Prayer bottomed on deep and broad hunger, and extreme pain of love-sickness for Christ, and great pinching poverty of spirit, must be in proportion wide and deep. Oh! but our vessels are narrow, and our affections ebb and low, the balance that weigheth Christ weak; it is as if we should labour to cast three or four great mountains in a scale of a merchant's ordinary balance. We are proportioned in our spiritual capacities but for drops of grace: Christ is disposed to give grace as a river. It is too little to seek corn, wine, and oil from God; he is more willing to give great things than small things. To ask a feather, a penny, from a mighty prince, when he saith, "Ask what thou wilt, to the half of my kingdom, and it shall be granted to thee," is the undervaluing of the greatness of his royal magnificence. "Ask what you will," saith Christ, "of my Father in my name, and it shall be granted." Men's desires run upon removal of the sword, peace, protection, plenty, trafficking, peaceable seas, liberties of parliament, subjects, peers, cities: little are men's desires employed in seeking Christ to dwell in the land, and that the temple of the Lord be builded. All these suits are below both the goodness of the Lord, and spiritual capacity of sanctified affections; and God giveth to carnal men that which their soul lusteth after, but in his wrath.

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