

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 2

By **Rev. Samuel Rutherford**

“And he went into a house, and would that no man should know it.”

THIS will, according to which, it is said, “he would that no man should know it,” was his human will, according to which, the Lord Jesus was a man as we are, yet without sin; which was not always fulfilled. For his divine will, being backed with omnipotency, can never be resisted; it overcometh all, and can be resisted by none.

Consider what a Christ we have; one who as God, hath a standing will that cannot fail. (Isa. 14:24.) “He doth all his pleasure.” His pleasure and his work are commensurable. (Isa. 46:10,11; Psalm 135:6; Psalm 115:3.) Yet this Lord did stoop so low, as to take to himself man’s will, to submit to God and law. And see how Christ, for our instruction, is content that God should break his will, and lay it below providence, (Matt. 26:39.) Oh! so little and low as great Jesus Christ is! All is come to this, “O my Father, remove the cup; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Christ and his Father have but one will between them both: “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father that sent me.” (John 5:30.) “For even Christ pleased not himself.” (Rom. 15:3.) It is a sign of conformity with Christ, when we have a will so mortified, as it doth lie level with God’s providence. Aaron’s sons are killed, and that by God immediately from heaven with fire, a judgment very hell-like; (Lev. 10:3,) and Aaron held his peace. A will lying in the dust under God’s feet, so as I can say, “Let his will, whose I am, enact to throw me in hell, he shall have my vote,” is very like the mother-rule of all sanctified wills, even like Christ’s pliable will. There is no iron sinew in Christ’s will, it was easily broken; the tip of God’s finger, with one touch, broke Christ’s will: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” (Heb. 10:9.)

Oh, but there is a hard stone in our will: the stony heart is the stony will; hell cannot break the rock and the adamant, and the flint in our will: (1 Sam. 8:19,) “Nay, but we will have a king,” whether God will or no. God’s will standeth in the people’s way, bidding them return. They answer, “There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices.” (Jer. 18:12.) Hell, vengeance, omnipotency, crossed Pharaoh’s will, but it would neither bow nor break. “But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he would not let the people go.” (Exod. 9:27.)

There be two things in our will, (1.) The natural frame and constitution of it. (2.) The goodness of it. The will of angels and of sinless Adam is not essentially good, for then, angels could never have turned devils; therefore, the constitution of the will needeth supervenient goodness, and confirming grace, even when will is at its best. Grace, grace now is the only oil to our wheels. Christ hath taken the castle, both in-works and out-works, when he hath taken the will, the proudest enemy that Christ hath out of hell. When Saul renders his will, he renders his weapon. This is mortification, when Christ runneth away with your will; as Christ was like a man that had not a man's will. So Saul, (Acts 9:6,) "trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" It is good when the Lord trampleth upon Ephraim's fair neck. (Hosea 10:11.)

There is no goodness in our will now, but what it hath from grace; and to turn the will from evil to good, is no more nature's work, than we can turn the wind from the east to the west. When the wheels of the clock are broken and rusted, it cannot go. When the bird's wing is broken, it cannot fly. When there is a stone in the srent and in-work of the lock, the key cannot open the door. Christ must oil the wheels of misordered will, and heal them, and remove the stone, and infuse grace (which is wings to the bird): if not, the motions of will are all hell-ward.

"But he could not be hid, for a certain woman," etc. Christ sometimes would be hid, because he hath a spirit above the people's windy air, and their hosanna. It is a spirit of straw, naughty and base, that is burnt up with that which hindered Themistocles to sleep. "Honour me before the people," was cold comfort to Saul, when the prophet told him God had rejected him. But Christ desired not to be hid from this woman; he was seeking her, and yet he flieth from her. Christ, in this, is such a flier as would gladly have a pursuer.

2. Faith findeth Christ out when he is hid. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself;" (Isa. 45:15.) But faith seeth God under his mask, and through the cloud; and, therefore, faith addeth, "O God of Israel, the Saviour!" Thou hidest thyself, O God, from Israel, but Israel findeth thee, (ver. 17,) "Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation." God casteth a cloud of anger about himself, he maketh darkness his pavilion, and will not look out; yet Job seeth God, and findeth him out many hundred miles, (chap. 19:26,) "Yet in my flesh shall I see God."

3. Reason, sense, nay, angels, seeing Christ between two thieves dying, and going out of this world, bleeding to death, naked, forsaken of friend and lover, they may wonder and say, "O Lord, what dost thou here?" Yet the faith of the thief found him there, as a king, who had the keys of Paradise; and he said in faith, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." (Luke 23:42.)

4. Faith seeth him as a witness, and a record in heaven, as Job, (16:19,20,) even when God cleaveth his reins asunder, and poureth out his gall upon the ground, ver. 13. Believe then, that Christ gloometh, that he may kiss; that he cuts, that he

may cure; that he maketh the living believer's grave before his eyes, and hath no mind to bury him alive. He breatheth the smoke and the heat of the furnace of hell on the soul, when peace, grace, and heaven is in his heart. He breaketh the hollow of Jacob's thigh, so as he must go halting all his days, and it is his purpose to bless him. Whereas we should walk by faith, we walk much, even in our spiritual walk, by feeling and sense; we have these errors in our faith, we make not the word of promise the rule of our faith, but only God's dispensation.

Now, God's dispensation is spotless, and innocent, and white, yet it is not Scripture to me; nor all that dispensation and providence seemeth to speak, the word of God. Ram-horns speak no taking of towns in an ordinary providence, as spear and shield and a host of fighting men do. "Killed all the day long, and estimated as sheep for the slaughter," speaketh not to me, that God's people are "more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:36,37.)

Our faith, in reference to dispensation, is to do two things: 1st, To believe in general, though dispensation be rough, stormy, black, yet Christ is fair, sweet, gracious; and, that hell and death are servants to God's dispensation toward the children of God. Abraham must kill Isaac; yet in Isaac, as in the promised seed, all the nations of the earth are blessed. Israel is foiled, and falleth before the men of Ai; yet Israel shall be saved by the Lord. Judah shall go into captivity, but the dead bones shall live again. Read the promise in general, engraved upon the dispensation of God. Garments are rolled in blood in Scotland and England. The wheels of Christ's chariot, in this reformation, go with a slow pace: the prince is averse to peace, many worthies are killed, a foreign nation cometh against us; yet all worketh for the best to those that love God. (2.) Hope biddeth us to await the Lord's event. We see God's work, it cometh to our senses; but the event that God bringeth out of his work lieth under ground. Dispensation is as a woman travailing in birth, and crying out for pain; but she shall be delivered of two men-children,—Mercy to the people of God, Justice to Babylon. Wait on till the woman bring forth, though you see not the children.

2. We trust possession in our part, more than law, and the fidelity of the promise on God's part. Feeling is of more credit to us than faith; sense is surer to us than the word of faith. Many weak ones believe not life eternal, because they feel it not: heaven is a thing unseen, and they find no consolation and comfort, and so, are disquieted. If we knew that believing is a bargaining and a buying, we should see the weakness of many. Should any buy a field of land, and refuse to tell down the money, except the party should lay all the ridges, acres, meadows, and mountains on the buyer's shoulders, that he might carry them home to his house, he should be incredulously unjust. If any should buy a ship, and think it no bargain at all, except he might carry away the ship on his back, should not this make him a ridiculous merchant? God's law of faith, Christ's concluded atonement, is better and surer than your feeling. All that sense and comfort saith, is not canonic Scripture; it is adultery to seek a sign, because we cannot rest on our husband's word.

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