

Soul Trouble: Part I

by Samuel Rutherford

Christ's soul was troubled due to the weight of sin, but he prayed to the Father for deliverance and glorified the Father's name.

Topics: "Christ's Suffering", "Spiritual Trials"

Description

Samuel Rutherford delves into the deep anguish and troubled soul of Christ as He faced the impending suffering and death on the cross, highlighting the profound love and sacrifice for sinners. Rutherford emphasizes the need for believers to anticipate and prepare for trials and suffering, echoing Christ's example of prayer and submission in the face of extreme challenges. He contrasts the pure and sinless affections of Christ with the tainted nature of human emotions, urging for a transformation by God's grace. Rutherford draws attention to the profound mystery of God's soul being troubled for sinners, underscoring the immense value of Christ's sacrifice and the necessity for believers to find rest and hope in Him amidst life's troubles.

Transcript

Excerpts from Samuel Rutherford, *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself*, London 1647, pp. 1-19.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." John 12:27-28.

Suppose it were revealed to a godly man that he were to suffer an extreme, violent, and painful death, and, withal, some fearful soul desertion, as an image of the second death. It should much affright him to remember this, and he might pray that the Lord would either save him from that sad hour, or then give him grace with faith and courage in the Lord to endure it. So here, Christ, God and man, knowing that he was to bear the terrors of the first and second death, doth act over aforehand (the time being near) the sorrow and anguish of heart that he was to suffer in his extreme sufferings.

As it were, ere the cross come, to act it in our mind, and take an essay and a lift of Christ's cross ere we bear it, to try how handsomely we would set back and shoulders under the Lord's cross, we are to lay the supposition, what if it so fall out (as Christ being persuaded his suffering was to come, acted sorrow, trouble of soul and prayer beforehand), and to resolve the saddest, and antedate the cross, and say with our own hearts, Let the worst come. Or to suffer our fear to prophecy, as Job did (Job 3:25): Yet suppose the hardest befall me, I know what to do; as the unjust steward resolveth on a way, beforehand, how to

swim through his necessities, Luke 16:4. Grace is a well-advised and resolute thing, and has the eyes of providence to say in possible events, What if my scarlet embrace the dunghill, and providence turn the tables. It is like wisdom (grace is wise to see afar off) to foreact faith, and resolve to lie under God's feet, and intend humble yielding to God, as II Samuel 15:25-26.

What they shall pray in the time of their extremity, who now spit at all praying and religion! They shall be religious in their kind, when they shall cry (Revelation 6:16), Mountains and rocks fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. You cannot believe that a Lamb shall chase the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich man, and every bondman, and every free man, into the dens and rocks of the mountains, to hide themselves. But the Lord acteth wrath and judgment before your eyes. Men will not suppose the real story of hell. Say but with thyself, Oh! shall I weep, and gnaw my tongue for pain, in a sea of fire and brimstone? Do but forefancy, I pray you, how you shall look on it, what thoughts you will have, what you shall do, when you shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, II Thessalonians 1:9.

In the complaint, we have the Lord's troubled soul. This holy soul thus troubled was like the earth before the fall, out of which grew roses without thorns, or thistles, before it was cursed. Christ's anger, his sorrow, were flowers that smelled of heaven, and not of sin. All his affections of fear, sorrow, sadness, hope, joy, love, desire, were like the fountain of a liquid and melted silver, of which the banks, the head spring, are all as clear from dross as pure crystal. Such a fountain can cast out no clay, no mud, no dirt. When his affections did rise and swell in their acts, every drop of the fountain was sinless, perfumed and adorned with grace; so as the more you stir or trouble a well of rose water, or some precious liquor, the more sweet a smell it casts out; or, as when a summer soft wind bloweth on a field of sweet roses, it difuseth precious and delicious smells through the air.

There is such mud and dregs in the bottom and banks of our affections, that when our anger, sorrow, sadness, fear, does arise in their acts, our fountain casteth out sin. We cannot love, but we lust; nor fear, but we despair; nor rejoice, but we are wanton and vain and gaudy; nor believe, but we presume. We reft up, we breath out sin, we cast out a smell of hell, when the wind bloweth on our field of weeds and thistles. Our soul is all but a plat of wild corn, the imaginations of our heart being only evil from our youth. Oh that Christ would plant some of his flowers in our soul, and bless the soil, that they might grow kindly there, being warmed and nourished with his grace! If grace be within, in sad pressures it comes out. A saint is a saint in affliction, as a hypocrite is an hypocrite; and every man is himself, and casts a smell like himself, when he is in the furnace. Troubled Christ prays. Tempted Job believes, Job 19:25. The scourged apostles rejoice, Acts 5:41. Drowned Jonah looks to the holy temple, Jonah 2:4.

Christ's affections were rational; reason startled at fear, but reason and affection did not outrun one another. Grace did so accompany nature that he could not fear more than the object required. Neither were his affections above banks. He saw the blackest and darkest hour that ever any saw. Suppose all the sufferings of the damned, for eternity, were before them in one sight, or came on them at once, it should annihilate all that are now, or shall be in hell. Christ now saw, or foresaw, as great sufferings as these, and yet 1. believed, 2. prayed, 3. hoped, 4. was encouraged under it, 5. suffered them to the bottom with all patience, 6. rejoiced in hope, Psalm 16:9. Now our affections rise and swell before reason. 1. They are often imaginary, and are on horseback and in arms at the stirring of a straw. 2. They want that clearness and serenity of grace that Christ had, through habitual grace following nature from the womb. 3. We can raise our affections, but cannot allay them, as some can make war, and cannot create peace. It is a

calumny of Papists that say that Calvin did teach there was despair, or any distemper of reason, in Christ, when as Calvin saith, He still believed with full assurance.

Christ had now and always the grace of peace, as peace is opposed to culpable raging of conscience. First, he never could want faith, which is a serenity, quietness, and silence of the soul and assurance of the love of God. Secondly, he could have no doubting, or sinful disturbance of mind, because he could have no conscience of guilt, which could overcloud the love and tenderest favor of his Father to him. Christ never needed pardon; he needed never the grace of forgiveness, nor grace to be spared. God spared him not. God could exact no less blood of him than he shed; but he received an acquittance of justification, never a pardon of grace. But concerning the peace which is opposed to pain, and sense of wrath and punishment for the guilt of our sins, so he wanted peace, and was now under penal disturbance and disquietness of soul.

Can God, can the soul of God be troubled? It must be, first, because the loss of heaven is the greatest loss. To ransom a king requireth more millions, than pence to ransom slaves. When we were cast and forfeited, more than an hundred and forty-four thousand kings (in the Lord's decree they were kings) were cast out of heaven. Where was there gold on earth to buy heaven and so many kings? And yet Justice must have payment; a God-troubled Savior, and a soul-troubled God, was little enough. Oh, saith Love to infinite Justice, What will you give for me? Will you buy me? My dear children, the heirs of eternal grace? A price below the worth of so many kings, Justice cannot hear of; equal it must be, or more. Secondly, Law cannot sleep satisfied with a man's soul trouble. For as sin troubles an infinite God's soul, so far as our darts can fly up against the sun, so must the soul trouble of him who is God expiate sin.

Thirdly, heaven is not only a transcendent jewel, dear in itself, but our Father would propine rebels with a sonship and a kingdom. What standeth my crown to God? Why it could not possibly be dearer. The soul of God was weighed for it: that not only freedom, but the dearest of prices, might commend and cry up, above all heavens, Christ's love. Fourth, if my soul, or your souls, O redeemed of the Lord, could be valued every one of them worth ten thousand millions of souls, and as many heavens, they could not overweigh the soul of God. The soul that lodges in a glorious union with God, and the loss of heaven to the troubled soul of this noble, and high and lofty one, though but for a time, was more, and infinitely greater, than my loss of heaven, and the loss of all the elect for eternity.

Now this must be a mystery, for though the essence of God, and more of God than can be in a creature, were in Christ, and in the most noble manner of union, which is personal, yet, as our soul doth not grow, sleep or eat, though united to a vegetive body which doth grow, sleep, eat, drink, and as fire is mixed or united with an hot iron, in which is density and weight, and yet there's neither density nor weight in the fire, so here. Though the Godhead in its fullness was united, in a most strict union, with a troubled and perplexed soul, and the suffering nature of man, yet is the Godhead still free of suffering or any penal infirmities of the soul. The vigor and color of a fair rose may suffer by the extreme heat of the sun, when yet the sweet smell doth not suffer, but is rather enlarged by exhalation. Yet is there great halting in these comparisons, because there is such alliance and entire society between the soul and the body that the soul, through concomitance and sympathy, does suffer, as the indweller is put to the worse if the house be rainy and dropping. The soul findeth smoke and leakings of pain, in that it's pinned in a lodging of sick clay, and so put to wish an hole in the wall, or to escape out at door or window, as often our spirits are overswayed so with distaste of life, because of the sour accidents that do convey it, that they think the gain of life not so sweet as it can quit the cost. But the blessed Godhead united to the manhood cannot so much as for company's cause be sick, pained or suffer; nor can the Godhead be weary of an union with a

troubled soul. We conceive, in the grave and death that glorious fellowship was never dissolved.

Many things may suffer by invasion of contraries, as shoot an arrow against a wall of brass, some impression may remain in the wall to witness the violence that has been there. But the blessed Godhead in Christ is incapable of an arrow, or of repercussion. There is no action against God. He is here not so much as a coast, a bank or bulwark, capable of receiving one spitting or drop of a sea wave. Only the man Christ, the rose of heaven, had in his bosom, at his root, a fountain, oh how deep and refreshing, that kept the flower green, under death and the grave! When it was plucked up, it was fair, vigorous, green before the sun, and thus plucked up and above earth, blossomed fair! Not only the influence and effects of the glorious Godhead did water the flower and keep strength in Christ, but there was the fullness personal of the Godhead that immediately sustained the man Christ; it was not a delegated comfort, nor sent help, nor a message of created love, nor a borrowed flowing of a sea of sweetness of consolation. But God in proper person, infinite subsistence, the personality of the Son of God bottomed all his sufferings; the manhood was impeded and stocked in the subsistence of the tree of life.

The cause of this soul trouble was for sinners; this was surety suffering. The choicest and most stately piece that ever God created, and dearest to God, being the second to God-man, was the princely soul of Christ. It was a king's soul. Yet death, by reason of sin, passeth upon it; and not a common death, but that which is the marrow of death, the firstborn and the strongest of deaths, the wrath of God, the innocent pain of hell, void of despair and hatred of God. If I had any hell on me, I should choose an innocent hell, like Christ's. Better suffer ill a thousand times than sin; suffering is rather to be chosen than sin. It was pain, and nothing but pain. Damned men, and reprobate devils, are not capable of a godly and innocent hell; they cannot choose to suffer hell, and not spit on fair and spotless justice. Because Christ's blood was to wash away sin, he could not both fully pay, and contract debt also.

But if it be so, that death finding so precious a surety as Christ's princely and sinless soul, did make him obey the law of the land ere he escaped out of that land, what wonder that we die, who are born in the land of death? No creature but it travaileth in pain, with death in its bosom, or an inclination to mother-nothing whence it came. God only goeth between the mightiest angel in heaven, and nothing. All things under the moon must be sick of vanity and death, when the heir of all things, coming in amongst dying creatures, out of dispensation, by law must die. If the Lord's soul, and the soul of such a Lord, die and suffer wrath, then let the fair face of the world, the heavens, look like the face of an old man, full of trembling, white hairs, and wrinkles, Psalm 102:26. Then let man make for his long home; let time itself wax old and gray-haired. Why should I desire to stay here, when Christ could not but pass away?

And if this spotless soul that never sinned was troubled, what wonder, then, many troubles be to the sinner? Our Savior, who promiseth soul rest to others, cannot have soul rest himself: his soul is now on a wheel sore tossed, and all the creatures are upon a wheel, and in motion. There is not a creature since Adam sinned, sleepeth sound. Weariness and motion is laid on moon and sun, and all creatures on this side of the moon. Seas ebb and flow, and that's trouble; winds blow, rivers move, heavens and stars these five thousand years, except one time, have not had six minutes rest. Living creatures walk apace toward death. Kingdoms, cities, are on the wheel of changes, up and down. Mankind run, and the disease of body trouble, and soul trouble on them, they are motion sick, going on their feet, and kings cannot have beds to rest in. The six-days creation hath been travailing and shouting for pain, and the child is not born yet, Romans 8:22. This poor woman hath been groaning under the bondage of vanity, and shall not be brought to bed, while Jesus come the second time to be midwife to the birth. The great all of heaven and earth, since God laid the first stone of this wide Hall, hath been groaning and weeping for the liberty of the sons

of God, Romans 8:21. The figure of the passing-away world, I Corinthians 7:31, is like an old man's face, full of wrinkles, and foul with weeping: we are waiting, when Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, and shall come and wipe the old man's face. Every creature here is on its feet, none of them can sit or lie.

Christ's soul now is above trouble, and rests sweetly in the bosom of God. Troubled souls, Rejoice in hope. Soft and childish saints take it not well that they are not every day feasted with Christ's love, that they lie not all the night between the Redeemer's breasts, and are not dandled on his knee. But when the daintiest piece of the man Jesus, his precious soul, was thus sick of soul trouble, and the noble and celebrated head heir of all, the first of his kingly house, was put to deep groans that pierced skies and heaven, and rent the rocks, why but sinners should be submissive when Christ is pleased to set children down to walk on foot, and hide himself from them? But they forget the difference between the inns of clay and the home of glory. Our fields here are sown with tears, grief grows in every furrow of this lowland. You shall lay soul and head down in the bosom, and between the breasts of Jesus Christ; that bed must be soft and delicious, its perfumed with uncreated glory. The thoughts of all your now soul troubles shall be as shadows that passed away ten thousand years ago, when Christ shall circle his glorious arm about your head, and you rest in an infinite compass of surpassing glory, when glory or ripened grace shall be with you, and without you, above and below, when the feet of clay shall walk upon pure surpassing glory. The street of the city was pure gold: There is no gold there, but glory only; gold is but a shadow to all that is there.

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