

THE SAINTS HIDING PLACE IN THE EVIL DAY

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit their souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator”—1 Peter 4:19.

I am now to treat of that attribute of God, which should move us to trust in Him, namely, as He is a **faithful Creator**. Now God is faithful, **1. In His nature.** He is I AM, always like Himself, immutable and unchangeable. **2. In His word.** He expresseth Himself as He is. The word that comes from God is an expression of the faithfulness of His nature. **3. In His works.** “Thou art good, and dost good,” as the psalmist saith (Psa 119:68). God being faithful in Himself, all must needs be so that proceeds from Him. Whatsoever relation God takes upon Him, He is faithful therein. As He is a Creator, so He preserves and maintains His own work. As He is a Father, He is faithful in discharging that duty to the full, for His children’s good. As He is our Friend, He likewise performs all the duties of that relation. And why doth God stoop so low to take these relations upon Him, but only to shew that He will certainly accomplish the same to the utmost? Whence is it that men are faithful in their relations one towards another, that the father is faithful to his child? Is it not from God, the chief Father? That a friend should be faithful to his friend, is it not from God, the great Friend?

All His ways are mercy and truth. They are not only merciful and good and gracious, but mercy and truth itself. If He shew Himself to be a Father, He is a true father, a true friend, a true creator and protector. As one saith, “Shall I cause others to fear, and be a tyrant myself?” All other faithfulness is but a beam of that which is in God. Shall not He be most faithful that makes other things faithful?

Now, this faithfulness of God is here a ground of this duty of committing ourselves to Him; and we may well trust Him whose word hath been seven times tried in the fire (Psa 12:6). There is no dross in it. Every word of God is a sure word; His truth is a shield and buckler; we may well trust in it. Therefore, when you read of any singular promise in the New Testament, it is said, “This is a faithful saying,” &c. (1Ti 1:15); that is, this is such a speech as we may trust to; it is the speech of a faithful Creator. Considering, therefore, that God is so faithful every way in His promises and in His deeds, let us make especial use of it. Treasure up all the promises we can of the forgiveness of sins, of protection and preservation; that He will never leave us, but be our God to death, &c., and then consider withal that He is faithful in performing the same. When we are affrighted by His majesty and His justice, and other attributes, then think of His mercy and truth. He hath

clothed Himself with faithfulness, as the psalmist saith. In all the unfaithfulness of men whom thou trustest, depend upon this, that God is still the same, and will not deceive thee.

When we have man's word, we have his sufficiency in mind, for men's words are as themselves are. What will not the word of a king do? If a man be mighty and great, his word is answerable. This is the reason why we should make so much of the word of God, because it is the word of Jehovah, a mighty Creator, Who gives a being to all things, and can only be Lord and Master of His word. We know God's meaning in no other way than by His word. Till we come to the knowledge of vision in heaven, we must be content with the knowledge of revelation in the word.

And in every promise, single out that which best suiteth with thy present condition. If thou art in any great distress, think upon the almighty power of God. Lord, thou hast made me of nothing, and canst deliver me out of this estate. Behold, I fly unto thee for succour. If thou art in perplexity for want of direction, and knowest not what to do, single out the attribute of God's wisdom, and desire Him to teach thee the way that thou shouldst go. If thou art wronged, fly to His justice, and say, O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, hear and help Thy servant. If thou be surprised with distrust and staggering, then go to His truth and faithfulness. Thou shalt always find in God something to support thy soul in the greatest extremity that can befall thee; for if there were not in God a fulness to supply every pressing need that we are in, He were not to be worshipped, He were not to be trusted.

Man is lighter than vanity in the balance. Every man is a liar, that is, he is false. We may be so, and yet be men too, but God is essentially true. He cannot deceive and be God too. Therefore ever, when thou art disappointed with men, retire to God and to His promises, and build upon this, that the Lord will not be wanting in anything that may do thee good. With men there is breach of covenant, nation with nation, and man with man. There is little trust to be had in any; but in all confusions here is comfort. A religious person may cast himself boldly into the arms of the Almighty, and go to Him in any distress, as to a **faithful Creator** that will not forsake him.

Oh, let us be ashamed that we should dishonour Him Who is ready to pawn His faithfulness and truth for us. If we confess our sins, "God is faithful to forgive them" (1Jo 1:9). He will not suffer us to be tempted "above that which we are able" (1Co 10:13). When we perplex ourselves with doubts and fears whether He will make good His promise or not, we disable His Majesty. Do we not think God stands upon His truth and faithfulness? Undoubtedly He doth, and we cannot dishonour Him more than to distrust Him, especially in His evangelical promises. We make Him a liar, and rob Him of that which He most glories in, His mercy and faithfulness, if we rest not securely upon Him.

See the baseness of man's nature. God hath made all other things faithful that are so, and we can trust them; but are ever and anon questioning the truth of His promise. We may justly take up Salvian's complaint in his time, "Who hath made the earth faithful to bring forth fruit," saith he, "but God? Yet we can trust the ground with sowing our seed. Who makes man faithful, who is by nature the most slippery and unconstant creature of all other, but God only? Yet we can trust a vain man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and look for great matters at his hands, before an all-sufficient God, that changeth not. Who makes the seas and the winds faithful, that they do not hurt us, but God? And yet we are apt to trust the wind and weather sooner than God, as we see many seamen that will thrust forth their goods into the wide ocean in a small bark, to shift any way, rather than trust God with them."

Yea, let Satan, by his wicked instruments, draw a man to some cursed politic reasons, for the devil doth not immediately converse with the world, but in his instruments, and he will sooner trust him than God Himself. So prone are our hearts to distrust the Almighty, to call His truth in question, and to trust the lies of our own hearts and other men's, before Him. Let us, therefore, lament our infidelity, that having such an omnipotent and faithful Creator to rely upon, yet we cannot bring our hearts to trust in Him.

There are two main pillars of a Christian's faith: *The power of God and the goodness of God*. These two, like Aaron and Hur, hold up the arms of our prayers. Let our estate be never so desperate, yet God is a Creator still. Let our sins and infirmities be never so great, yet He hath power to heal them. Oh, how should this cheer up our souls, and support our drooping spirits in all our strivings and conflicts with sin and Satan, that we yield not to the least temptation, having such an almighty God to fly unto for succour.

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635): was lecturer at Holy Trinity Cambridge, 1610-1615, preacher at Gray's Inn, London, from 1617, and Master of St. Catherine's Hall, Cambridge, 1626 until his death. He was one of the most significant preachers of the Puritan period.