

OF TEMPTATION

by John Owen

Owen examines the nature, methods, and dangers of temptation, along with the spiritual defenses available to believers against yielding to it. Drawing from Christ's warning to watch and pray, he equips Christians to recognize temptation's subtle approaches and resist through faith in Christ's provision.

14 Chapters

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00.1. JOHN OWEN

JOHN OWEN OF TEMPTATION: 1658 THE NATURE AND POWER OF IT; THE DANGER OF ENTERING INTO IT; AND THE MEANS OF PREVENTING THAT DANGER: with A RESOLUTION OF VARIOUS CASES BELONGING TO IT.

“Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” - Revelation 3:10 from THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN edited by WILLIAM H. GOOLD

VOLUME 6 This Edition of THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN first published by Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-53 Alt. Source: <https://archive.org/details/ontemptationmort00owenuoft> (Wm. Goold edition of 1850-53, sep. pub. c. 1890) Modernized, formatted, and annotated (in blue) by William H. Gross www.onthewing.org © March 2015 Scripture quotations taken from the NKJV © Thomas Nelson Pub., 1982 Last updated: 4/2/2015 The text of this module was taken from a PDF created by Monergism ©For more free books like this, and other theological literature, please visit www.monergism.com

00.3. Editor's Note

Editor's Note

Why another digital edition of this book? First of all, this includes corrections to the widely used digitized version done by Ages Software.¹ Second, while this is a restatement and simplification of Owen's original work; it is not a paraphrase or condensed version. The old English wording has been updated, so that "thee" and "thou" are now "you" and "yours." The difficult structure and syntax have been simplified. Obscure passages have been reworded as necessary to clarify his ideas – which other modernizations may have left unattended. Little-used words have been replaced with simpler ones as well. Sentences have been shortened, and in many cases split into several sentences for clarity. Parallelism has been employed to maintain rhythm and clarity. Unreferenced pronouns have been made explicit, as have "understood" words. The passive voice has been changed to active in most places. Again, this is not a synopsis, but the entire treatise presented in the original work. As a result, the expository style remains. The old King James passages of Scripture have often been employed and modernized. This was to ensure that Owen's rendering of the biblical text would be largely maintained, as well as the textual basis for his statements. Where Owen cites the original Greek, it has been footnoted and Anglicized, with bracketed Strong's numbers [NT:xxxx]. Referenced but unquoted scriptures are often quoted in footnotes for your convenience; and many unreferenced verses have been referenced in superscripts. My purpose is to preserve Owen's original text as much as possible, but more importantly, to make his teaching and wisdom more accessible to a modern audience. It would be a shame if that modern audience could not benefit from his labors because the language was too complex or arcane to comprehend.

I hope the restatement of this small work leads you to discover the means and methods of temptation, the dangers of allowing it a foothold, and the defenses that are available to you, so you will not "enter into temptation."

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00.4. PREFATORY NOTE.

PREFATORY NOTE. BY THE REV. W. H. GOOLD, EDINBURGH. This small work of Dr. Owen on "Temptation" appeared in 1658. He had been urged to publish it by the solicitations of friends to whose opinion he paid deference. The probability is that they had already heard the substance of it in discourses from the pulpit; and from an expression in the closing exhortation,² the discourses must have been delivered in Oxford. The motives of the author in committing it to the press are still further evinced in some allusions to the character of the times, which will be found both in the preface and in the treatise itself. The vigilant eye of Owen detected certain mischievous effects accruing from the eminent success which had attended previously the efforts of the party with whom he acted. The fear of a common danger had formerly kept them united in their views and movements, while it led them to depend upon the true source of all strength and hope. They were now sinking into those strifes and divisions which paved the way for the restoration of monarchy; and Owen speaks of "a visible declension from reformation seizing upon the professing party of these nations." There is a tone of indignant and yet sympathetic faithfulness in his language, as he recurs to the subject of this declension in the body of the treatise: "Someone seeing the prevailing party of these nations (many of those in rule, power, and favour, with all their adherents) — remembering that they were a colony of Puritans, those whose habitation was in a 'low place,' as the prophet speaks of the city of God — now translated by a high hand to the mountains they currently possess, cannot help but wonder how soon they have forgotten the customs, manners, and ways, of their forbears, and how they have been cast into the mould of those who went before them in the high places to which they are now translated." Owen may have feared the issue of prevailing divisions, and anticipated the revival of the intolerant system which the patriotism of the Long Parliament and the military genius of Cromwell overthrew. Under the impression that an hour of temptation had come, and that the best security for religious principles was the advancement of personal godliness, he published the following treatise.

Whatever motives incited him to the preparation of it, the whole work, with the exception of a few paragraphs, might have been written with set purpose for the people of God in every age. In no work is the sound judgment of our author more conspicuous. He avoids all fanciful speculations into the mysteries of satanic agency, such as were too common on this theme. He is too much in earnest that his readers should be brought into a condition of safety against the wiles of the devil, to break the force of his warnings and entreaties by ingenious speculations and irrelevant learning. The deep solicitude of Owen for the spiritual welfare of his readers appears not merely in the warm appeals interspersed with his expositions, but in the patient care with which no nook of the heart is left unsearched. To one who reads the treatise in the spirit with which the author wrote it — simply that he may judge his own heart, and know what temptation means, and be fully on his guard against it — the effect is far beyond what the mere wealth of fancy or the arts of rhetoric could produce. From the text, Matthew 26:41, the author considers in succession three topics deduced from it: — temptation, the means by which it prevails, and the way of preventing it. Most of the treatise is occupied with the last topic — the means of prevention. It is subdivided into inquiries —

as to the evidence by which a man may know that he has entered into temptation, the directions requisite to prevent him entering into it, and the seasons when temptation may be apprehended. The discussion of this last inquiry merges very much into an illustration of the Christian duty of watchfulness; and the treatise is closed by a general exhortation to this duty. Slight defects in the arrangement, the renewed discussion of a point after it had been quit, and the disproportionate space accorded to some parts of the subject, are explained perhaps by the circumstance that the treatise was originally a series of discourses.

00.5. TO THE READER.

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER —

If you are in any measure awake in these days in which we live, and have taken notice of the manifold, great, and various temptations with which all sorts of people who know the Lord and profess his name are beset, and to which they are continually exposed, with what success those temptations have met to the unspeakable scandal of the gospel — with the wounding and ruin of innumerable souls — I suppose you will not inquire any further as to other reasons for publishing the ensuing warnings and directions. They are suited to the times that pass over us, and to your own concern in them. I will only say this to those who think it fit to persist in any such inquiry: my first engagement for exposing these meditations to public view arose from the desires of some who affirm the interest of Christ in the world by personal holiness and constant adhering to everything that is made precious by its relation to him. This has given them power over me to require services of greater importance any time they desire. Yet I dare not lay my doing it on that account, if it would intimate in the least that, with respect to the general state of things mentioned, I did not also esteem it timely and necessary myself. The variety of outward providences and dispensations with which I myself have been exercised in this world, along with the inward trials which attended them, added to the observation that I have had the advantages of the ways and walks of others — their beginnings, progressions, and endings, their risings and falls, in their profession and conversation, in darkness and light. These have left such a constant sense and impression of the power and danger of temptations on my mind and spirit, that without other pleas and pretences, I cannot help but own a serious call to men to beware. And to do so with a discovery of some of the most eminent ways and means by which these present temptations prevail. In my own judgement, this has been necessary in this season. But now, reader, if you are among those who take no notice of these things, or do not care for them — if you have no sense of the efficacy and dangers of temptations in your own walk and profession, and have not observed their power upon others — if you do not discern the manifold advantages that these temptations have in these days in which all things are being shaken — and if you have not been troubled or moved by the sad successes they have had among professors of Christ — but you suppose that all things are well both indoors and out, and would be better if you could obtain fuller satisfaction of some of your lusts in the pleasures or profits of the world — then I desire you to know that I do not write for you, nor do I esteem you a fit reader or judge of what is written here. While all the issues of providential dispensations in reference to the public concerns of these nations are perplexed and entangled, the footsteps of God are lying in the deep, where his paths are not known — while in particular, unparalleled distress and strange prosperities are measured out to men, yes, to professors of Christ — while a spirit of error, giddiness, and delusion goes forth with such strength and efficacy, as if it received a commission to go and prosper — while there are such divisions, strifes, and emulations, attended with such evil surmises, wrath, and revenge, found among brethren — while the desperate results and products of men's temptations are seen daily in partial

and total apostasy, in the decay of love and overthrow of faith — while our days are being filled with fearful examples of backsliding such as former ages never knew — while there is a visible declension from reformation seizing upon the professing party of these nations, both as to personal holiness and zeal for the interest of Christ, anyone who does not understand that an “hour of temptation” has come upon the world, to “test those who dwell upon the earth,” Revelation 3:10 is doubtless presently captivated under the power of some woeful lust, corruption, or temptation, or else he is indeed stark blind, and does not know at all what it means to serve God in temptations. I am not dealing with such men at present. The ensuing warning is intended for those who have in general, a sense of these things — who also in some measure are able to consider that the plague has begun — so that they may be further awakened to look around them, lest the infection has approached nearer to them by some secret and imperceptible ways, than they apprehended; or lest they be surprised unawares hereafter by any of those temptations that in these days either waste at noon, or else walk in darkness. The ensuing directions are proposed for consideration by, and for the sake of, those who mourn in secret for all the abominations that are found among and upon those who profess the gospel — those who are, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, fighting and resisting the power of temptations, from whatever spring they arise in themselves.

It is the prayer of him who received this handful of seed from Christ’s storehouse and treasury, that our faithful and merciful High Priest, who both suffered and was tempted, and on that account is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Hebrews 4:15 would accompany this small discourse with timely supplies of his Spirit, and suitable mercy, for those who will consider it — so that it may be useful to his servants for the ends to which it is designed.

John Owen.

01. CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 1

The words of the text that are the foundation of the ensuing discourse — The occasion of the words, with their dependence — The things specially aimed at in them — Things that are considerable in the words as to the general purpose in hand — What the general nature of temptation consists in — The special nature of temptation — Temptation taken actively and passively — How God tempts anyone — His ends in doing so — The way by which he does it — Of temptation in the special nature of its actions — The true nature of temptation stated “Watch and pray, that you do not enter into temptation.” —Matthew 26:41

These words of our Savior are repeated with very little alteration in three of the evangelists; whereas Matthew and Mark recorded them as written above, Luke reports them thus: “Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation;” so that the whole of his caution seems to have been, “Arise, watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation.”

Solomon tells us of some who “lie down at the top of a mast in the midst of the sea,” Proverbs 23:34 — men overborne by security in the mouth of destruction. If ever poor souls lay down on top of a mast in the midst of the sea, these disciples with our Savior in the garden did so. Their Master, at a little distance from them, was “offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears,” Hebrews 5:7, then taking into his hand and beginning to taste that cup which was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins — on the other hand, the Jews, armed for his and their destruction, were but a little distance from them. Our Savior had only shortly before informed them that he would be betrayed that night, and be delivered up to be slain; they saw that he was “sorrowful, and very heavy,” Matthew 26:37; no, he told them plainly that his “soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,” verse 38; and therefore he entreated them to wait and watch with him, now that he was dying, and that was for them. In this condition, leaving them but a little space, like men forsaken of all love towards him or care for themselves, they fall fast asleep! Even the best of saints, left to themselves, will quickly appear to be less than men — to be nothing. All our own strength is weakness, and all our wisdom is folly. Peter was one of them. Just a little before he had, with so much self-confidence, affirmed that even if all men forsook him, he never would. Our Savior argues the matter in particular with him: verse 40, “He says to Peter, Could you not watch with me one hour?” as if he had said, “Are you Peter, the one who just now boasted of your resolution never to forsake me? Is it likely that you would hold out in this when you cannot watch with me one hour? Is this your dying for me, to be dead in security, when I am dying for you?” And indeed it would be an amazing thing to consider that Peter would make so high a promise, and be immediately so careless and remiss in the pursuit of it, if we did not find the root of the same treachery abiding and working in our own hearts, and see the fruit of it brought forth every day — the most noble engagements to obedience quickly end in deplorable negligence, Romans 7:18.4 In this estate, our Savior admonishes them about their condition, their weakness, their danger, and he stirs them up to prevent that ruin which lay at the door: he says, “Arise, watch and pray.”

I will not insist on the particular that was aimed at here by our Savior, in this caution to those who were then present with him — the great temptation that was coming on them from the scandal of the cross, was doubtless in his eye. Rather, I will consider the words as containing a general direction to all the disciples of Christ, in their following him throughout all generations.

There are three things in the words: —

- I. The evil cautioned against — temptation.
- II. The means of its prevalence (Chap. 2) — by our entering into it.
- III. The way of preventing it (Chap. 2) — watch and pray.

It is not in my thoughts to handle the common place of temptations, but only the danger of them in general, with the means of preventing that danger; yet, so that we may know what we affirm, and of what we speak, some concerns of the general nature of temptation may be premised.

I. First, the general nature of tempting and temptation lies among indifferent things. To test, to experiment, to prove, and to pierce a vessel so that the liquor in it may be known, is as much as temptation signifies.

Hence God is sometimes said to tempt; and we are commanded as our duty to tempt, or test, or search ourselves, to know what is in us, and to pray that God would do so also. So temptation is like a knife that may either cut the meat, or cut the throat of a man; it may be his food or his poison, his exercise or his destruction.

Secondly, temptation in its special nature, as it denotes any evil, is considered either actively (as it leads to evil), or passively (as it has evil and suffering in it): so temptation means affliction in James 1:2; for in that sense, we are to “count it all joy when we fall into temptation;” and in the other, that we “do not enter into it.”

Again, actively considered, it either denotes an intention in the tempter to bring about the special end of temptation — namely, leading someone into evil; thus it is said that “God tempts no man” with a design for sin as such, James 1:13. Or else it denotes the general nature and end of temptation, which is trial; thus “God tempted Abraham,” Genesis 22:1. And he proves or tempts men by false prophets, Deuteronomy 13:3.5 Now, as to God’s tempting anyone, two things are to be considered: —

1. The end for which he does it;
 2. The way by which he does it.
1. For the first, his general ends are two: —

(1.) He does it to show man what is in him — that is, in the man himself; and that is either as to his grace, or his corruption. (I am not now speaking of it as it may have a place or bear a part in judicial hardening.) Grace and corruption lie deep in the heart; men often deceive themselves in searching after one or the other. When we give vent to the soul, to test what grace is there, corruption comes out; and when we search for corruption, grace appears. Thus the soul is kept in uncertainty, and we fail in our trials. God comes with a gauge that goes to the bottom of it. He

sends his instruments of trial into the bowels and the inmost parts of the soul, and lets man see what is in him, and of what metal he is constituted. Thus he tempted Abraham to show him his faith. Abraham did not know what faith he had (I mean, what power and vigor was in his faith) until God drew it out by that great trial and temptation. When God says he knew it, he made Abraham know it.⁶ In the same way, he tried Hezekiah to reveal his pride;⁷ God left him that he might see what was in his heart: so apt to be lifted up, as he appeared to be, until God tried him, and thus let out his filth, and poured it out before his face. I will not address the results of such revelations to the saints, in the thankfulness, humiliation, and treasuring up of experiences.

(2.) God does it to show himself to man, and that is done —

[1.] In a way of preventing grace. A man will see that it is God alone who keeps him from all sin. Until we are tempted, we think we live on our own strength. Though all men do this or that, we will not.⁸ When the trial comes, we quickly see where our preservation comes from, by standing or falling. So it was in the case of Abimelech, Genesis 20:6, “I withheld you.”⁹

[2.] In a way of renewing grace. He would have the temptation continue with St. Paul, so that he might reveal Himself to Paul in the sufficiency of His renewing grace, 2 Corinthians 12:9.¹⁰ We do not know the power and strength that God puts forth in our behalf, nor the sufficiency of his grace, until comparing the temptation with our own weakness, it appears to us. The efficacy of an antidote is found when the poison has been taken; and the preciousness of medicines is made known by diseases. We will never know what strength there is in grace if we do not know what strength there is in temptation. We must be tried, so that we may be made sensible of being preserved. And God has many other good and gracious ends that he accomplishes towards his saints by trials and temptations, which will not be insisted on now.

2. As for the ways by which God accomplishes his search, trial, or temptation, here are some of them: —

(1.) He assigns men such great duties that they cannot apprehend they have any strength for, nor indeed do they. Thus he tempted Abraham by calling him to that duty of sacrificing his son — a thing that was absurd to his reason, bitter to his nature, and grievous to him on all accounts. Many men do not know what is in them, or rather what is ready for them, until they are put to what seems utterly above their strength — indeed, upon what really is above their strength. The duties that God, in an ordinary way, requires at our hands, are not proportioned to what strength we have in ourselves, but to what help and relief is laid up for us in Christ. And we are to address ourselves to the greatest performances with a settled persuasion that we do not have the least ability for them. This is the law of grace; yet when any duty is required that is extraordinary, that is a secret not often revealed in the yoke of Christ: it is a trial, a temptation.

(2.) By putting them to great sufferings. How many have unexpectedly found strength to die at a stake, to endure tortures for Christ, yet their call to it was a trial. Peter tells us this is one way by which we are brought into trying temptations, 1 Peter 1:6-7. Our temptations arise from the “fiery trial;”¹¹ and yet the end is but a trial of our faith.

(3.) By providentially disposing things so that occasions for sin will be administered to men, which is the case mentioned in Deuteronomy 13:3; and innumerable other instances may be adjoined. Now, they are not properly the temptations of God that are intended here, as coming from him with

his end upon them; therefore I will set these apart from our present consideration. What I intend then, is temptation in its special nature, as it denotes an active efficiency towards sinning (as it is managed with evil unto evil). In this sense, temptation may proceed either singly from Satan, or from the world, or from other men in the world, or from ourselves, or jointly from all or some of them, in their several combinations: —

(1.) Satan tempts sometimes singly by himself, without taking advantage from the world, the things or persons of it, or ourselves. This is how he deals in his injection of evil and blasphemous thoughts of God into the hearts of the saints; this is his work alone, without any advantage from the world or our own hearts: for nature will contribute nothing to it, nor anything that is in the world, nor any man of the world. For none can conceive of God and conceive evil of him. In this, Satan is alone in the sin, and will be alone in the punishment. These fiery darts are prepared in the forge of his own malice, and with all their venom and poison, they will be returned back into his own heart forever.

(2.) Sometimes he makes use of the world, and joins forces against us, without any helps from within. So he tempted our Savior by “showing him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.” Matthew 4:8 And the variety of assistance he finds from the world are inexpressible, in persons and things (which I must not insist on) — the innumerable instruments and weapons he takes from there, of all sorts, and at all seasons.

(3.) Sometimes he also employs assistance from ourselves. It is not with us as it was with Christ when Satan came to tempt him. Christ declares that Satan “had nothing in him,” John 14:30.¹² It is otherwise with us: To accomplish most of his ends, Satan has a sure party within our own breasts, James 1:14, 15.¹³ Thus he tempted Judas, who was at work himself; Satan put it into Judas’ heart to betray Christ; Luke 22:3, “he entered into him” for that purpose. And he sets the things of the world to work, providing for Judas “thirty pieces of silver” (verse 5, “They covenanted to give him money”); and the men of the world, even the priests and the Pharisees; and Satan calls in the assistance of Judas’ own corruption — he was covetous, “a thief, and he had the [money] bag.”

I might also show how, in this business of temptation, the world and our own corruptions act singly by themselves, and jointly in conjunction with Satan and one another. But the truth is, the principles, ways, and means of temptations, the kinds, degrees, efficacy, and causes of temptations, are so inexpressibly large and various — from their circumstances, providence, natures, conditions, both spiritual and natural, with the particular cases arising from them — are so innumerable and impossible to comprise within any bound or order, that to attempt to give an account of them would be an endless undertaking. I will content myself to give a description of the general nature of what we are to watch against, which will make way for what I aim at.

Temptation then, in general is any thing, state, way, or condition that, on any account whatever, has a force or efficacy to seduce — to draw the mind and heart of a man away from the obedience which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree whatever. In particular, a temptation is that which causes or occasions any man to sin, or to go away from his duty in anything, either by bringing evil into his heart, or by drawing out the evil that is in his heart, or in any other way diverting him from communion with God, and from that constant, equal, universal obedience, in matter and manner, which is required of him. To clarify this description, I will only observe that,

although temptation seems to be of a more active importance, and so it denotes only the power of seduction to sin itself, yet in Scripture it is commonly taken in a neuter sense: it denotes the matter of the temptation, or the thing by which we are tempted. And this is a ground of the description that I have given it. Whatever it is, within us or without us, that has an advantage to hinder us in our duty, or to provoke us to sin, or in any way occasions sin — that is a temptation, and so it is to be taken. Whether it is business, employment, course of life, company, affections, nature, or corrupt design, relations, delights, name, reputation, esteem, abilities, parts or excellencies of body or mind, place, dignity, art — to the extent these further or occasion the promotion of the ends mentioned before, they are all of them, no less truly temptations than the most violent solicitations of Satan, or the allurements of the world. And that soul lies at the brink of ruin who does not discern it. This will be further revealed in our process.

02. CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2

What it is to “enter into temptation” — Not barely being tempted — Not to be conquered by it — To fall into it — The force of that expression — Things required for entering into temptation — Satan or lust that is more than ordinarily importunate — The soul’s entanglement — Seasons of such entanglements revealed — The “hour of temptation,” in Revelation 3:10, what it is — How any temptation comes to its hour — How it may be known when its hour has come — The means of prevention prescribed by our Savior — Of watching, and what is intended by it — Of prayer.

II. Having shown what temptation is, I come secondly to manifest what it means to enter into temptation.

1. This is not merely to be tempted. It is impossible for us to be so freed from temptation that we are not tempted at all. While Satan continues in his power and malice, while the world and lust exist, we shall be tempted. “Christ,” says one, “was made like us, that he might be tempted; and we are tempted that we may be made like Christ.” Temptation in general comprehends our whole warfare — just as our Savior calls the time of his ministry the time of his “temptations,” Luke 22:28. We have no promise that we will not be tempted at all; nor are we to pray for an absolute freedom from temptations, because we have no such promise of being heard in this. The direction we have for our prayers is, “Lead us not into temptation,” Matthew 6:13; it is “entering into temptation” that we are to pray against. We may be tempted, and yet not to enter into temptation. So that —

2. Something more is intended by this expression than the ordinary work of Satan and our own lusts, which will be sure to tempt us every day. There is something signal in this entering into temptation, which is not the saints’ daily work. It is something that befalls them specifically in reference to seduction to sin, on one account or another, by way of allurement or fright.

3. It is not to be conquered by a temptation that is opposed, nor to fall down under it, nor to commit the sin or evil that we are tempted to, nor to omit the duties that are opposed to it. A man may “enter into temptation,” and yet not fall under temptation.

God can make a way for a man to escape;¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13 when he is in it, God can break the snare, tread down Satan, and make the soul more than a conqueror,² Romans 8:37 even though it has entered into temptation. Christ entered into it, but he was not in the least foiled by it. But —

4. It is, as the apostle expresses it in 1 Timothy 6:9, “to fall into temptation,”¹⁴ as a man falls into a pit or a deep place where there are traps or snares with which he is entangled; the man is not quickly killed and destroyed, but he is entangled and detained — he does not know how to get free or to be at liberty. So it is expressed again to the same purpose in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you;” that is, to be taken by a temptation and to be tangled with it, held in its cords, not finding at present a way to escape. From there, says Peter, 2 Peter 2:9, “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” They are entangled with them; God knows how

to deliver them out of them. When we allow a temptation to enter into us, then we “enter into temptation.” While it knocks at the door, we are at liberty. But when any temptation comes in and parleys with the heart, reasons with the mind, entices and allures the affections, whether a long or a short time, whether it does this insensibly and imperceptibly, or the soul takes notice of it, we “enter into temptation.” So then, for our entering into temptation, it is required: —

(1.) That by some advantage, or on some occasion, Satan is more earnest than ordinarily in his solicitations to sin, whether by frights or allurements, by persecutions or seductions, by himself or by others. Or it may be that some lust or corruption agitates more than ordinarily within us, by Satan’s instigation and the advantages of outward objects that provoke us (as in prosperity), or terrify us (as in trouble). This requires a special acting of the author and principles of temptation.

(2.) That the heart is so far entangled with it as to be made to dispute and argue in its own defense; and yet it is not wholly able to eject or push out the poison and leaven that have been injected; but it is surprised, however little off its watch, into an entanglement that is not easily avoided: so that the soul may cry, and pray, and cry again, and yet not be delivered — just as Paul “beseeched the Lord” three times to remove his temptation, and did not prevail. The entanglement continues. And this usually falls out in one of these two seasons: —

[1.] When Satan, by the permission of God, for ends best known to himself, has gotten some unique advantage against the soul — as in the case of Peter, Satan sought to winnow him, and prevailed. Luke 22:31

[2.] When a man’s lusts and corruptions meet with unusually provoking objects and occasions, through the condition of life in which a man finds himself, with its circumstances — as it was with David: about both of these afterward. In this state, a man has entered into temptation; and this is called the “hour of temptation,” Revelation 3:10 — the season in which it grows to a head: the discovery of which will give further light into the present inquiry about what it means to “enter into temptation;” for when the hour of temptation has come upon us, we have entered into it. Every great and pressing temptation has its hour: a season in which it grows to a head, in which it is most vigorous, active, operative, and prevalent. It may be long in rising, it may be long in urging, more or less; but it has a season in which it has a dangerous hour, from the conjunction of other occurrences, such as those mentioned, outward or inward. And then, for the most part, men enter into it.

Hence that very temptation which at one time had little or no power over a man — he could despise it, scorn its motions, and easily resist it — at another time, quite bears him away before it. It has gotten new strength and efficacy from other circumstances and occurrences, or the man himself is enervated and weakened: the hour has come, he has entered into it, and it prevails. David probably had temptations to adultery or murder before, in his younger days, as he had in the case of Nabal; but the hour of temptation had not come, it did not have its advantages about it, and so David escaped until afterward. Let men look for it who are exposed to temptations, as who is not? They will have a season in which their solicitations to sin will be more urgent, their reasonings more plausible, pretences more glorious, hopes of recovery more apparent, opportunities broader and more open, the doors of evil made more beautiful than they have ever been. Blessed is he who is prepared for such a season; without such preparation, there is no escaping. As I said, this is the first thing required to enter into temptation; if we stay here, we are

safe.

Before I descend to other particulars, having now entered upon it, I will show in general —

1st. How or by what means commonly any temptation attains its hour;

2dly. How we may know when any temptation has come to its high noon, and is in its hour.

1st. It does the first by several ways: —

(1st.) By long solicitations that cause the mind to frequently converse with the evil solicited; this begets extenuating thoughts of it. If it makes this process, then it is coming towards its hour. It may be that when it first began to press upon the soul, the soul was shocked by the ugly appearance of what it aimed at, and cried, “Am I a dog?” 2Kng 8:13 If this indignation is not daily heightened, but the soul, by conversing with the evil, begins to grow familiar with it, as it were, so as not to be startled as formerly, but is rather inclined to cry, “Is it not a little one?” then the temptation is coming towards its high noon. Lust has then enticed and entangled, and it is ready to “conceive,” James 1:15 — more about this afterward, in our inquiry as to how we may know whether we have entered into temptation or not; our present inquest is about the hour and power of temptation itself.

(2dly.) When it has prevailed on others, and the soul is not filled with dislike and abhorrence of them and their ways, nor with pity and prayer for their deliverance. This proves an advantage to it, and raises it towards its height. When that temptation which has possessed and prevailed with many, sets upon anyone at the same time, it has gained so great and so many advantages over him by it, that it is surely growing towards its hour. Prevailing with others is a means to give it its hour against us. The falling off of Hymeneus and Philetus is said to “overthrow the faith of some,” 2 Timothy 2:17-18.

(3dly.) By complicating itself with many considerations that perhaps are not absolutely evil. So the temptation of the Galatians to fall from the purity of the gospel, was complicated by freedom from persecution, through union and consent with the Jews. Things were pleaded in it that were good in themselves, and gave life to the temptation itself. But I will not now insist on the several advantages that any temptation has to heighten and greaten itself, to make itself prevalent and effectual, with the contribution that it receives for this purpose from various circumstances, opportunities, specious pleas and pretences, necessities for doing what cannot be done without responding to the temptation, and the like; because I must speak to some of them afterward.

2dly. For the second, it may be known whether it is in its hour —

(1st.) By its restless urgency and arguing. When a temptation is in its hour, it is restless; it is the time of battle, and it gives the soul no rest. Satan sees his advantage, considers his conjunction of forces, and knows that he must now prevail or be hopeless forever. Here are opportunities, here are advantages, here are specious pleas and pretences; some ground has already been gained by former arguings; here are extenuations of the evil, hopes of pardon by later endeavors — all are in readiness: if he can do nothing now, Satan must sit down lost in his undertakings. Thus when he had all things ready against Christ, he made it the “hour of darkness.” When a temptation discovers “mille nocendi artes,”¹⁵ it presses within by imaginations and reasonings, and without by solicitations, advantages, and opportunities, then the soul may know that its hour has come — and the glory of God, with its own welfare, depends on the soul’s behavior in this trial; as we will

see in the particular cases following.

(2dly.) When it makes a conjunction of frights and allurements, these two comprise the whole force of temptation. When both are brought together, temptation is in its hour.¹⁶ In David's case, as to the murder of Uriah, there was both the fear of his revenge on his wife (and possibly on himself), and fear at least of the publication of his sin; and there was the allurement of his present enjoyment of Bathsheba whom he lusted after. Men are sometimes carried into sin by love for it, and they continue in sin by fear of what will ensue from it. But in any case, where these two meet, something allures us, something frightens us, and the reasonings that run between them are ready to entangle us — then is the hour of temptation. This then, is to “enter into temptation;” this is the “hour” of it, of which more will be said in the process of our discourse.

III. There are two means of prevention prescribed by our Savior:— 1. “Watch;” 2. “Pray.”

1. Watch. The first is a general expression by no means limited to its native signification of waking from sleep; to watch means to be on our guard, as much as it means to take heed, or to consider all ways and means by which an enemy may approach us: so the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 16:13. This is what it means to “watch” in this business, or to “stand fast in the faith” as good soldiers, or to “quit¹⁷ ourselves like men.” It is as the same as to “take heed,”¹⁸ or to look to ourselves, as our Savior often expressed it; so it is in Revelation 3:2.¹⁹ What is pressed on us in this word, is a universal carefulness and diligence, exercising itself in and by all the ways and means prescribed by God, over our hearts and ways, over the baits and methods of Satan, over the occasions and advantages of sin in the world, so that we will not be entangled by them.

2. Pray. For the second direction, of prayer, I do not need to address it. The duty and its concerns are known to all.

I will only add that these two means, watch and pray, comprise the whole endeavor of faith for the soul's preservation from temptation.

03. CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

The doctrine — The grounds of it; our Savior's direction in this case — His promise of preservation — Issues of men entering into temptation — 1. Of ungrounded professors — 2. Of the choicest saints, Adam, Abraham, David — Self-consideration as to our own weakness — The power of a man's heart to withstand temptation — The considerations it uses for that purpose — The power of temptation; the several ways by which it darkens the mind — 1. By fixing the imaginations — 2. By entangling the affections — 3. Temptations give fuel to lust — The end of temptation; the consequences of former temptations — Objections answered

HAVING opened the words in the foregoing chapters so far as necessary to discover the foundation of the truth to be insisted on and improved, I will lay it down in this observation: —

It is the great duty of all believers, to use all diligence in the ways Christ has appointed, so that they may not fall into temptation.

I know God is "able to deliver the godly out of temptations;" I know he is "faithful not to allow us to be tempted above what we are able, but will make a way for our escape;" yet I dare say, I will convince all those who will attend to what is delivered and written, that it is our great duty and concern to use all diligence, watchfulness, and care, so that we do not enter into temptation; and I will demonstrate it with the ensuing considerations: —

1. In that brief instruction given to us by our Savior concerning what we ought to pray for, this one, of not entering into temptation, is expressly one topic. Our Savior knew what concern it was to us not to "enter into temptation," when he gave us this one special subject of our daily dealing with God, Matthew 6:13. And the order of the words shows us what importance it has: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." If we are led into temptation, evil will befall us, whether more or less. How God may be said to tempt us, or to "lead us into temptation," I showed before. In this direction, what is intended, is not so much not giving us up to it, as powerfully keeping us from it. The last words are, as it were, exegetical, or expository of the former: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" — "Deal with us in such a way that we may be powerfully delivered from that evil which attends our entering into temptation." Our blessed Savior knows full well our state and condition; he knows the power of temptations, having experienced it himself, Hebrews 2:18;20 he not only knows our vain confidence, and the stock we place in our ability to deal with temptations, as he found it in Peter; but he knows our weakness and folly, and how soon we are thrown to the ground. And therefore he lays in this provision for instruction at the entrance of his ministry, to make us heedful, if possible, of what is of such great concern to us. If then, we would place any confidence in the wisdom, love, and care of Jesus Christ towards us, we must grant the truth pleaded for.

2. Christ promises this freedom and deliverance as a great reward for our most acceptable obedience, Revelation 3:10.21 This is the great promise made to the church of Philadelphia, in

which Christ found nothing that he would blame: "You shall be kept from the hour of temptation." He does not promise, "You shall be preserved in it," but he goes higher: "You shall be kept from it." "There is," says our Savior, "an hour of temptation coming; a season that will make havoc in the world: multitudes will then fall from the faith; they will deny and blaspheme me. Oh, how few will be able to stand and to hold out! Some will be utterly destroyed and perish forever. Some will get wounds to their souls that will never be well-healed while they live in this world; some will have their bones broken, so as to go haltingly all their days. But, he says, "because you have kept the word of my patience," I will be tender towards you, and "keep you from this hour of temptation." Certainly what Christ thus promises to his beloved church, as a reward for her service, love, and obedience, is no light thing. Whatever Christ promises to his spouse is a fruit of unspeakable love; that which is promised as a reward for special obedience, is so in a special way.

3. Let us consider to this purpose, the general issues concerning men's entering into temptation, of both bad and good men, of ungrounded professors, and of the choicest saints.

(1.) For the first, I will offer but one or two texts of Scripture.

Luke 8:13, "The ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, and have no root, but believe only for a while, and in time of temptation, fall away."

Well! How long do they believe? They are affected by the preaching of the word, and believe on it; they make profession, and bring forth some fruits; but until when do they abide? He says, "In the time of temptation, they fall away." Once they enter into temptation, they are gone forever. Temptation withers all their profession; it slays their souls. We see this accomplished every day. Men may have attended to the preaching of the gospel, been affected and delighted by it, made a profession of it, and perhaps have been looked at as believers; and they have continued this way for some years. But no sooner does temptation befall those who have vigor and permanence in their profession, than they are turned out of the way, and are gone forever. They fall into hating the word they have delighted in, despise its professors, and are hardened by sin. So it says,

Matthew 7:26 : "He that hears these sayings of mine, and does not do them, is like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." But what does this house of profession do for him? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and it stands for a while. But Christ says in verse 27, "When the rain descends, when temptation comes, the house falls utterly, and its fall is great." Judas follows our Savior three years, and all goes well with him. But he no sooner enters into temptation, than Satan has him and winnows him, and he is gone. Demas preaches the gospel until the love of the world befalls him, and he is utterly turned aside.² Timothy 4:10 To give instances of this would be endless. With this sort of men, entrance into temptation is an entrance into apostasy, more or less, whether in part or in whole; it does not fail.

(2.) For the saints of God themselves, let us see by some instances what results they have had by entering into temptation. I will name a few: —

Adam was the "son of God," Luke 3:38, created in the image of God, full of that integrity, righteousness, and holiness, which might be and was an eminent resemblance of the holiness of God. He had a far greater inherent stock of ability than we do, and had nothing in him to entice or seduce him. Yet this Adam no sooner enters into temptation than he is gone, lost, and ruined — he and all his posterity with him. Romans 5:12 What can we expect in a similar condition, if we

have in our temptations, as he had, not only a cunning devil to deal with, but a cursed world and a corrupt heart also?

Abraham was the father of the faithful; his faith is proposed as a pattern to all those who will believe; yet entering twice into the same temptation — namely, fear about his wife — he was twice overpowered by it, to the dishonor of God, and no doubt the disquietment of his own soul, Genesis 12:12-13, 20:2.22

David is called a “man after God’s own heart” by God himself; Acts 13:22 yet what a dreadful thing is the story of his entering into temptation! He is no sooner entangled, than he is plunged into adultery; from there, seeking deliverance by his own invention, like a poor creature in a snare, he is entangled more and more, until he lies like one dead, under the power of sin and folly.

I might mention Noah, Lot, Hezekiah, Peter, and the rest, whose falls into temptation are on record for our instruction. Certainly whoever has any heart in these things cannot help but say, as the inhabitants of Samaria said upon receiving the letter from Jehu, “Behold, two kings could not stand before him; how shall we stand?” 2Kng 10.4 O Lord, if such mighty pillars have been thrown to the ground, if such cedars have been blown down, then how shall I stand before temptations? Oh, keep me, that I do not enter in!” “Vestigia terrent.”²³ Behold the footsteps of those who have gone in. Whom do you see retiring without a wound, or at least a mark? On this account, the apostle would have us exercise tenderness towards those who have fallen into sin:

Galatians 6:1, “Considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.”

He does not say, “Lest you also sin, or fall, or be overtaken with a fault;” but, “lest you also be tempted.” “You see the power of temptation in others, and do not know how soon you may be tempted; 24 nor what will be the state and condition of your soul with that.” Assuredly, someone who has seen so many better, stronger men than himself fail, and thrown down in the trial, will think it incumbent on himself to remember the battle, and if it is possible, to come there no more. Is it not a madness for a man who can scarcely crawl up and down because he is so weak (which is the case with most of us), if he does not avoid what he has seen giants foiled by in undertaking it? You are still whole and sound; take heed of temptation, lest it be with you as it was with Abraham, David, Lot, Peter, Hezekiah, and the Galatians, who all fell in the time of trial. In the days in which we live, the folly of the hearts of men openly shows itself in nothing, more than in this cursed boldness: of running into and putting themselves upon temptations — after having so many warnings from God, and so many sad experiences every day before their eyes. They are ready for any society, any company, any conditions of outward advantage, without once weighing what their own strength is, or what the concern of their poor souls is. Though they go over the dead and the slain that lie in those ways and paths, that even now fall down before them, yet they go on without regard or trembling. Hundreds, thousands of professors of Christ, have gone out at this door, within a few years. But —

4. Let us consider ourselves — what our weakness is; and what temptation is — its power and efficacy, along with what it leads to: —

(1.) For ourselves, we are weakness itself. We have no strength, no power to withstand. Confidence from any strength that is in us, is one great part of our weakness; it was so in Peter. He that says he can do anything, can do nothing as he should. And what is worse, it is the worst

kind of weakness that is in us — a weakness from treachery — a weakness arising from that conspirator which every temptation has in us. If a castle or fort is ever so strong and well fortified, yet there is a treacherous party within that is ready to betray it at every opportunity, there is no preserving the castle from the enemy. There are traitors in our hearts, ready to take part, to close and side with every temptation, and to surrender all to them — indeed, to solicit and bribe temptations to do the work, just as traitors incite an enemy. Do not flatter yourselves that you would hold out; there are secret lusts that lie lurking in your hearts, which perhaps do not stir now, but which, as soon as any temptation befalls you, will rise, agitate, cry, disquiet, seduce, and never give up until they are either killed or satisfied. The one who promises himself that the frame of his heart will be the same under a temptation as it was before the temptation, will be woefully mistaken. “Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?” says Hazeal.²⁵ Yes, you will be such a dog if ever you are king of Syria; temptation from your interest will unman you. Someone who now abhors thoughts of such and such a thing, once he enters into temptation, will find his heart inflamed towards it, and all contrary reasonings will be overborne and silenced. He will deride his former fears, throw out his scruples, and despise the consideration he lived on. Little did Peter think he would deny and forswear his Master as soon as he was asked whether he knew him or not. It was no better when the hour of temptation came: all resolutions were forgotten, all love for Christ was buried; and the present temptation, closing with his carnal fear, swept all before it. To handle this a little more distinctly, I will consider the means of safety from the power of temptation (if we enter into it) that may be expected from ourselves; and in general that will be as to the spring and rise of those means, and in particular as to the ways of exerting the strength that we have, or seem to have: —

[1.] In general, all we can look for is from our hearts. What a man's heart is, is what he is; but what is the heart of a man in such a time of temptation?

1st. Suppose a man is not a believer, but only a professor of the gospel, what can the heart of such a man do? Proverbs 10:20, “The heart of the wicked is of little worth;” and surely what is of little worth in anything else, is not of much worth in this. A wicked man may in outward things be of great use; but when it comes to his heart, that is false, and a thing of no value. Now, withstanding temptation is heart-work; and when it comes like a flood, can such a rotten trifle as a wicked man's heart stand before it? But these were addressed before.²⁶ Entering into temptation, and entering into apostasy, is the same thing with them.

2dly. No matter whose heart it is, Proverbs 28:26, “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool;” he that does so, whatever else he may be, in that he is foolish. Peter did so in his temptation; he trusted in his own heart: “Though all men forsake you, I will not.” It was his folly; but why was it his folly? Because he will not be delivered; it will not preserve him in snares; it will not deliver him in temptations. The heart of a man will promise him very fair things before a temptation comes. “Am I a dog,” says Hazeal, “that I should do this thing?” “Though all men should deny you,” says Peter, “I will not. Shall I do this evil? It cannot be.” All the arguments that are suited to check the heart in such a condition are mustered up. Do you think Peter did not do so? “What! Deny my Master, the Son of God, my Redeemer, who loves me? Can such ingratitude, unbelief, and rebellion befall me? I will not do it.” Shall a man then rest in thinking that his heart will be steadfast? Let the wise man answer: “He that trusts in his own heart is a fool.” Proverbs 28:26 “The heart is deceitful,” Jeremiah 17:9. We should not willingly trust anything in which there is any deceit or guile; here the

heart is “deceitful above all things.” It has a thousand shifts and treacheries that it will use to deal with; and when it comes to the trial, every temptation will steal it away, Hosea 4:11.²⁷ Generally men’s hearts deceive them no more often than they trust in them; and then they never fail to deceive them.

[2.] If one considers the particular ways and means that such a heart has (or can use) to safeguard itself in the hour of temptation, their insufficiency for that purpose will quickly appear. I will instance only a few: —

1st. Love of honor in the world. Reputation and esteem in the church, obtained by a former profession and godly walk, is one of the heart’s own weapons to defend itself in the hour of temptation. “Shall I flee from who I am? Having had such a reputation in the church of God, shall I now lose it by giving way to this lust, to this temptation, by engaging with this or that public evil?” This consideration has such an influence on the spirits of some, that they think it will be a shield and buckler against any assaults that may befall them. They will die a thousand times before they will forfeit that repute they have in the church of God! But, alas! This is but twigs,²⁸ or a new cord, with which to bind a giant temptation. What do you think of the “third part of the stars of heaven?” Revelation 12:4.²⁹ Had they not shone in the firmament of the church? Were they not more than sensible enough of their own honor, height, usefulness, and reputation? But when the dragon comes with his temptations, he throws them down to the earth. Yes, great temptations will make men who do not have a better defense, insensibly fortify themselves against that dishonor and bad repute that attend their ways. “Populus sibilet, at mihi plaudo.”³⁰ Do we not know instances of some yet living who have risked compliance with wicked men, after the glory of a long and useful profession? In a while, they find themselves thrown down by it from their reputation with the saints, and have hardened themselves against it, and ended in apostasy? As we are warned in John 15:6,³¹ this love of honor did not keep Judas; it did not keep Hymeneus nor Philetus; it did not keep the stars of heaven; nor will it keep you. On the other side, there is,

2dly. The consideration of shame, reproach, loss, and the like. Men may also put their trust in this as a defense against temptations, and not fear it will fail to safeguard and preserve them. They would not for the world bring that shame and reproach upon themselves that attend such and such miscarriages! Now, besides that, this consideration extends itself only to open sins — those which the world takes notice of and abhors. And so it is of no use at all in those cases in which pretences and appearances may be invented and used; nor in public temptations to loose and careless walking, like those in our days; nor in cases that may be disputable in themselves, though expressly sinful to the consciences of persons who are under temptations; nor in heart-sins. In all of these and most other cases of temptation, there are innumerable reliefs ready to be offered to the heart against this consideration. And besides all this, I say, we see by experience how easily this cord is broken once the heart begins to be entangled. Each corner of the land is full of examples to this purpose. They still have what outweighs these lesser considerations — namely,

3dly. They will not wound their own consciences, and disturb their peace, and put themselves in danger of hell fire. Surely this, if anything, will preserve men in the hour of temptation. Surely they would not lavish away their peace, nor risk their souls by attacking God and the thick bosses of his buckler! What can be of more efficacy and prevalence? I confess this is of great importance; and oh, if it were more pondered than it is! Oh, that we laid more weight on the preservation of our

peace with God than we do! Yet I say that even this consideration, in someone who is elsewhere from his watch, and does not make it his work to follow the other rules insisted on, conscience will not preserve him; for —

(1st.) The peace of such a person may be a false peace or security that is made up of presumption and false hopes; yes, even though he is a believer, it may be so.

Such was David's peace after his sin, before Nathan came to him; such was Laodicea's peace when it was ready to perish; Revelation 3:16 and Sardis' peace when it was dying. Revelation 3:1 What should convince a soul that it is true peace, seeing (it is supposed) that it does not universally labor to keep the word of Christ's patience, and to be watchful in all things? Do you think that the peace of many in these days will be found to be true peace in the end? Not at all. They will go alive down to hell, and death will have dominion over them in the morning. Now, if a man's peace is such, do you think that what cannot preserve itself, can preserve him? It will give way at the first vigorous assault of a temptation in its height and hour. Like a broken reed, it will puncture the hand of the one that leans on it. But —

(2dly.) Suppose the peace that is cared for and proposed to safeguard the soul, is true and good — yet when all is laid upon this one basis, and the hour of temptation comes, so many easements will be offered against this consideration, that they will make it useless. We say to ourselves, "This evil is small; it is questionable; it doesn't fall openly and directly upon my conscience; I only fear the consequences of it. Maybe I can keep my peace despite this evil. Other people of God have fallen, and yet they have kept or recovered their peace. If it is lost for a season, it may be obtained again; I will not solicit its station any more.³² Or even if peace is lost, safety may remain."³³ And there are a thousand such pleas which are all planted like batteries³⁴ against this fort, so that it cannot hold out long.

(3dly.) Fixing on this particular alone is to make good one passage or entrance, while the enemy assaults us all around. It is true that a little armor would serve to defend a man if he could choose where his enemy would strike him; but we are commanded to take the "whole armor of God" if we intend to resist and stand, Ephesians 6:11.

What we speak of here is but one piece of armor; and when our eye is only on that, temptation may enter and prevail twenty other ways. For instance, a man may be tempted to worldliness, unjust gain, revenge, vainglory, or the like. If he fortifies himself with this consideration alone — that he will not do this thing, wound his conscience, and lose his peace — fixing his eye on this particular, and counting himself safe while he is not overcome on that one hand, then maybe neglect of his private communion with God, sensuality, and the like, will creep in, and he is not one jot better in his condition than if he had fallen under the power of that part of the temptation which was most visibly pressing on him.

Experience tells us that this does and will fail also. There is no saint of God that does not value the peace he has; yet how many of them fail in the day of temptation!

(4thly.) Yet they have another consideration also, and that is, the vileness of sinning against God. How shall they do this thing, and sin against God, Genesis 39:9 the God of their mercies and of their salvation? How shall they wound Jesus Christ, who died for them? This surely cannot help but preserve them. I answer —

First, Every day we see this consideration failing also. There is no child of God that is overcome by temptation, who has not first overcome this consideration. So then, it is not a sure and infallible defense.

Secondly, This consideration is twofold: either it expresses the thoughts of the soul with particular reference to the temptation contended with, and it will not then preserve the soul; or else it expresses the universal, habitual frame of heart that is in us, on all accounts; and it then falls in with what I will propose, in the process of this discourse, as the universal medicine and remedy in this case, of which more will be said afterward.

(2.) Consider the power of temptation, partly from what was shown before, from its effects and fruits in the saints of old, and partly from other general effects that we find ascribed to it; such as —

[1.] It will darken the mind, so that a man will not be able to make a right judgement of things as he did before he entered into it. The god of this world blinds the minds of worldly men so that they should not see the glory of Christ in the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:4,35 and so “whoredom, wine, and new wine enslave their hearts,” Hosea 4:11; so too, it is in the nature of every temptation, more or less, to enslave the heart, or to darken the understanding of the person tempted. And it does this in diverse ways: —

1st. By fixing the imagination and thoughts upon the object to which it inclines; so that the mind will be diverted from considering the things that would relieve and help it in the state in which it finds itself. A man is tempted to apprehend that he is forsaken by God, that he is an object of God’s hatred, and that he has no portion in Christ. By the craft of Satan, the mind will be so fixed upon the consideration of this state and condition of separation, with its distress, that he will not be able to manage any of the reliefs that are suggested and offered to him against it. Rather, following the fullness of his own thoughts, he will walk on in darkness and have no light. I say, a temptation will so possess and fill the mind with thoughts of it and the matter of it, that it will remove that clear consideration of things which otherwise it might and would have had. And those things of which the mind would usually have a vigorous sense, to keep it from sin, will by this means come to have no force or efficacy at all. Indeed, it will commonly bring men to such a state and condition that when others, who know of their estate, are speaking to them about things that concern their deliverance and peace, their minds will be so possessed with the matter of their temptation, as not to understand at all — they scarcely hear one word that is spoken to them.

2dly. By woeful entangling of the affections; when they are engaged, it is known what an influence the affections have in blinding the mind and darkening the understanding. If anyone does not know this, let him but open his eyes these days, and he will quickly learn it. I will not declare right now by what ways and means it is, that engaged affections will cloud the mind and darken it. I will only say, give me a man engaged in the affections of hope, love, and fear, in reference to any particulars in which he ought not to hope, love, and fear, and I will quickly show you in what he is darkened and blinded. If you enter into temptation, then, you will fail in this: — The present judgment you have of things will not be utterly altered, but it will be darkened and rendered infirm to influence the will and master the affections. These, being set at liberty by temptation, will run on in madness. Instantly, detestation of sin, abhorring it, the terrors of the Lord, the sense of love, the presence of Christ crucified, will all depart, and leave the heart a prey to its enemy.

3dly. Temptation will give oil and fuel to our lusts — it will incite, provoke, and make them agitate and rage beyond measure. Offering a lust or corruption a suitable object, advantage, or occasion, will heighten and exaggerate it, and make it wholly predominant for a season. This is how temptation dealt with carnal fear in Peter, with pride in Hezekiah, with covetousness in Achan, with uncleanness in David, with worldliness in Demas, and with ambition in Diotrephes. It will let out the reins on the neck of a lust, and put spurs to the sides of it, so that it may rush forward like a horse into battle. A man does not know the pride, fury, and madness of a corruption, until it meets with a suitable temptation. And what now will a poor soul think to do? His mind is darkened, his affections entangled, his lusts inflamed and provoked, and his relief defeated; what will be the outcome of such a condition?

(3.) Consider that temptations are either public or private; let us view a little the efficacy and power of each separately: —

[1.] There are public temptations; such as that mentioned in Revelation 3:10,36 which was to come upon the world “to try those who dwell upon the earth;” or a combination of persecution and seduction for the trial of a careless generation of professors of Christ. Now, concerning such a temptation, consider that —

1st. It has efficacy in respect to God, who sends it to revenge the neglect and contempt of the gospel on one hand, and the treachery of false professors on the other. Hence it will certainly accomplish what it receives a commission from him to do. When Satan offered his service to go and seduce Ahab so that he might fall, God says to him, 1Kng 22:22, “You shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.”³⁷

Satan is permitted as to his wickedness, and commissioned as to the event and punishment intended by God. When the Christian world was to be given up to folly and false worship for their neglect of the truth, and for their naked, barren, fruitless, Christ-dishonoring profession, it is said about the temptation that befell them, 2 Thessalonians 2:11, “God sent them a strong delusion, so that they would believe a lie.” As it comes from God in so judiciary a manner, it has power with it, and it shall prevail. That selfish, spiritually-slothful, careless, and worldly frame of spirit,³⁸ has in these days infected almost the entire body of professors. If it has a commission from God to kill hypocrites, wound negligent saints, break their bones, and make them scandalous so that they may be ashamed, will it not have the power and efficacy needed to do so? What work the spirit of error has made among us! Is it not from this: that as some men delighted not to retain God in their hearts, so God has “given them up to a reprobate mind?” Romans 1:28. A man would think it strange, indeed, it would be a matter of amazement, to see persons of a sober spirit, who pretend to great things in the ways of God, who are yet overcome, captivated, ensnared, and destroyed by such weak means, drunken opinions, and foolish imaginations — the kind a man would think it impossible that these would ever lay hold on sensible or rational men, much less professors of the gospel! But what God would have strong, let us not think it is weak. No strength but the strength of God can stand in the way of the weakest things of the world, that are commissioned by God for any end or purpose whatsoever.

2dly. There is, in such temptations, the secret insinuation of examples in those who are considered godly, and professors of Christ:

Matthew 24:12, “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold,” etc. The abounding of iniquity in some will insensibly throw water on the zeal and love of others, so that little by little, their love grows cold. Some begin to grow negligent, careless, worldly, and wanton. They break the ice towards pleasing the flesh. At first others blame, judge, and perhaps reprove them.³⁹ Shortly their love also grows cold; and the brunt of it being over, they also conform to those abounding in iniquity, and are cast into the same mould with them. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Paul repeats this saying twice in 1 Corinthians 5:6, and Galatians 5:9. He would have us take notice of it. He speaks of the danger of infecting the whole body from the bad examples of some. We know how insensibly leaven proceeds to give savor to the whole; so it is termed a “root of bitterness” that “springs up and defiles many,” Hebrews 12:15. If one little piece of leaven, if one bitter root, may endanger the whole, then how much more when there are many roots of that nature, and much leaven is scattered abroad! Following a multitude, it is easy to do evil, and to say “A conspiracy” with others who say “A conspiracy.”⁴⁰ Would anyone have thought it possible that such and such professors in our own days would have fallen into the ways of self, flesh, and the world? To play at cards and dice, to revel and dance? To neglect their family and private duties? To be proud, haughty, ambitious, worldly, covetous, and oppressive? Or that they would be turned to foolish, vain, and ridiculous opinions, deserting the gospel of Christ? In these two⁴¹ lies the great temptation that has come upon us, the inhabitants of this world, to test us. But does not every man see that this has come to pass? And may we not see how it has come to pass? Some loose, empty professors, who never had more than a form of godliness, once they had served their turn at that, began on the way to these things; and then others began to comply a little, and to please the flesh in doing so. Little by little, this reached even the top boughs and branches of our profession, until now almost all flesh has corrupted its way. And one who departs from these iniquities makes his name a prey, if not his person.

3dly. Public temptations are usually accompanied with strong reasons and pretences that are too hard for men, or at least that insensibly prevail upon them to undervalue the evil to which the temptation leads — to give strength to that complicated temptation which in these days has even thrown down the people of God from their excellence — it has “cut their locks,” Judges 16:19 and made them become like other men. How full the world is of specious pretences and pleadings! Such as, there is the liberty and freedom of Christians, delivered from a frame of bondage. This is a door that, in my own observation, I have seen all kinds of people go through, into sensuality and apostasy. They begin with frivolous conversation, proceed to a neglect of the Sabbath, and of public and private duties, and end in dissoluteness and profaneness. And then there is leaving public things to Providence, being contented with what is⁴² — things good in themselves, but turned into wretched, carnal compliance, and the utter ruin of all zeal for God, and for the interest of Christ or his people in the world.

These and similar considerations — joined with the ease and plenty, the greatness and promotion of professors — have so brought things about that, whereas by Providence we have shifted places with the men of the world, we have by sin shifted spirits with them also. We are like a plantation of men carried into a foreign country. They quickly degenerate from the manners of the people where they came from, and fall into the manners of the country to which they are brought; as if there were something in the soil and the air that transformed them. Let me follow my similitude a little. The prevailing party of these nations, many of those in rule, power, and favor with all their adherents —

and remember that they were a colony of Puritans, those whose habitation was “in a low place,” (as the prophet speaks of the city of God⁴³) — have been translated by a high hand to the mountains they now possess. One cannot help but wonder how soon they have forgotten the customs, manners, and ways of their forbears, and have been cast into the mould of those who went before them in the high places to which they are now translated. I speak of us all, especially those of us who are among the lowest of the people, where perhaps this iniquity most abounds. What were those before us like, that we are not like? What did they do, that we do not do? Prosperity has slain the foolish and wounded the wise.⁴⁴ [2.] Suppose the temptation is private. This has been spoken of before, but I will add two things: —

1st. Its union and incorporation with lust, by which temptation gets within the soul, and lies at the bottom of its actings. John tells us, 1 John 2:16, that the things that are “in the world” are, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” Now, it is evident that all these things are principally in the subject (us), not in the object — they are in our heart, not in the world. But they are said to be “in the world,” because the world gets into them, mixes itself with them, unites and incorporates with them. Just as faith and the promises are said to be “mixed,” Hebrews 4:2, so lust and temptation are mixed: they twine together; they receive mutual improvement from one another; each of them grows higher and higher by the mutual strength they administer to one another. Now, by this means temptation gets so deep into the heart that no contrary reasonings can reach it — only what can kill the lust, can conquer the temptation. Like leprosy that has mingled itself with the wall, the wall itself must be pulled down, or the leprosy will not be cured. Leviticus 14:33-45 Like gangrene that mixes poison with the blood and spirits, and cannot be separated from the place where it festers, both must be cut off together. For instance, in David’s temptation to uncleanness, ten thousand considerations might have been taken to shut the mouth of the temptation; but it had united itself with his lust, and nothing but killing that lust could destroy it, or get him the conquest. This deceives many a believer. They have some pressing temptation which, having gained some advantages, is now urgently upon them. They pray against it, and oppose it with all the powerful considerations they have, each one seemingly sufficient to conquer and destroy it — or at least to overpower it, so that it would never be troublesome any more. But no good is done, no ground is gained or obtained; indeed, it grows on them more and more. What is the reason for it? It has incorporated and united itself with their lust, and it is safe from all the opposition they make to it. If they would make progress indeed, they are to set upon the whole of the lust itself — their ambition, pride, worldliness, sensuality, or whatever it is that the temptation is united with. All other dealings with it are like tampering with a prevailing gangrene: the part or the whole may be preserved a little while, in great torment; but excision or death must come at last. The soul may torment itself for a season with such a procedure; but it must come to this: either its lust must die, or the soul must die.

2dly. In whatever part of the soul the lust is seated, and with which the temptation is united, it draws after it the whole soul by one means or another; and so it prevents or anticipates any opposition. Suppose it is a lust of the mind — there are lusts of the mind and uncleanness of the spirit, such as ambition, vain-glory, and the like. The understanding has a world of ways to bridle the affections, so they will not cling to God so tenaciously, seeing in what it aims at, there is so much to content and satisfy them! This is like a bloody infirmity in the eyes which presents all things to the natural sense and perception in that reddish hue and colour.⁴⁵ It not only prevents all

the reasonings of the mind (which it necessarily does), but it will draw the whole soul, on other accounts and collateral considerations, into the same frame.⁴⁶ It promises the whole a share in the spoil that is aimed at; just as Judas' money, which he first desired out of covetousness, was to be shared among all his lusts. Or the temptation may be in the more sensual part, and it first possesses the affections. It cannot easily be expressed (as shown before) what prejudices the affections will bring to the understanding; how they will bribe it to acquiesce; what arguments or what hopes they will supply it with. In brief, there is no particular temptation, when it is in its hour, that will not have such assistance from things that are good, evil, or indifferent. It is fed by so many considerations that seem most alien and foreign to it, and in some cases, that make such specious pleas and pretences, that its strength will easily be acknowledged.

(4.) Consider the end of any temptation; this is Satan's end and sin's end — which is the dishonor of God and the ruin of our souls.

(5.) Consider what has been the consequence of any former temptations that you have had. Have they not defiled your conscience, disquieted your peace, weakened you in your obedience, and clouded the face of God? Even if you were not prevailed upon to commit the outward evil, or to suffer the utmost consequence of your temptation, yet have you not been foiled? Was your soul not sullied and grievously perplexed by it? Indeed, did you ever in your life come off fairly, without sensible loss, from almost any temptation you had to deal with — and would you willingly be entangled again? If you are at liberty, then take heed; enter no more, if it is possible, lest a worse thing happen to you. John 5:14

These, I say, are some of those many considerations that might be insisted on, to manifest the importance of the truth proposed, and the fullness of our concern in taking care that we “do not enter into temptation.”

Against what has been spoken, some objections are to be considered and removed, that secretly insinuate themselves into the souls of men, and that are effective in making them negligent and careless in this thing which is of such importance to them — a duty of such indispensable necessity to those who intend to walk with God in any peace, or with any faithfulness. And they are these which follow: —

Obj. 1. “Why should we so fear, and labor to avoid temptation? James 1:2, We are commanded to ‘count it all joy when we fall into various temptations.’ Now, certainly I need not solicitously avoid falling into something which, once I have fallen into it, I am to count it all joy.” To which I answer —

1. You would not hold to this rule in all things — namely, that a man need not avoid what he cannot help but fall into, when it is his duty to rejoice in it. The same apostle bids the rich “rejoice that they are made low,” chap. 1:9-10. And without a doubt, to someone who is acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, and love of God in his dispensations, in every condition that is necessary for him, it would be a matter of rejoicing to him. Yet, how few rich, godly men can you persuade not to take heed, and use all lawful means so they are not made poor and low! In most cases, the truth is, that it would be their sin not to do so. It is our business to make good our stations, and to secure ourselves as best we can; if God alters our condition, we are to rejoice in it. If the temptations mentioned here befall us, we may have cause to rejoice; but not if we fall into them by a neglect of duty.

2. Temptations are taken two ways: —

(1.) Passively and merely materially — those things which are, or in some cases may be, temptations.⁴⁷ (2.) Actively — those things which entice us to sin.

James speaks of temptations in the first sense only; for having said, “Count it all joy when you fall into various temptations,” verse 2; he adds in verse 12, “Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he has been tried, he shall receive the crown of life.”

Now a man might say, “If this is so, then temptations are good, and from God;” — “No,” says James; “Taken in such a sense that temptation is a thing which entices and leads us to sin, God tempts no one; rather, every man is tempted by his own lust,” verses 13, 14. “To have such temptations, to be tempted to sin, that is not the blessed thing I mean; but enduring the afflictions that God sends for testing our faith, that is a blessed thing. So that, even though I must count it all joy when, through the will of God, I fall into various afflictions for my trial, which have the matter of temptation in them, yet I am to use all care and diligence so that my lust has no occasions or advantages given to it to tempt me to sin.”

Obj. 2. “But was not our Savior Christ tempted himself; and is it evil to be brought into the same state and condition as him? Indeed, it is not only said that he was tempted, but his being tempted is expressed as an advantageous thing, and conducive to his mercifulness as our priest:

Hebrews 2:17-18, ‘In that he himself having suffered, being tempted, he is able to comfort those who are being tempted.’ And he makes it a ground of a great promise to his disciples, that they ‘abided with him in his temptations,’ Luke 22:28.”

Ans. It is true, our Savior was tempted; yet his temptations are reckoned among the evils that befell him in the days of his flesh — things that came on him through the malice of the world and its prince. He did not wilfully throw himself into temptation, which he said was “to tempt the Lord our God,” Matthew 4:7; indeed, to willingly enter into any temptation is to highly tempt God. Now, our condition is such that we may use the greatest diligence and watchfulness we can, and yet we will be sure to be tempted, and be made like Christ in it. This does not hinder the fact that it is our duty, to the utmost, to keep ourselves from falling into them; and that is namely on this account: — Christ had only the suffering part of temptation when he entered into it; we also have the sinning part. When the prince of this world came to Christ, he had “no part in him;” John 14:30 but when he comes to us, he does. So that, in one effect of temptations, namely trials and disquietness, we are made like Christ, and we are to rejoice as far as that is produced by any means;⁴⁸ yet in another effect, we are made unlike him, which is being defiled and entangled. We are therefore to avoid them by all means. We never come off like Christ. Which of us can “enter into temptation” and not be defiled by it?

Obj. 3. “But what need is there for this great endeavor and carefulness? Is it not said that ‘God is faithful, who will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape?’ 1 Corinthians 10:13; and ‘He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations,’ 2 Peter 2:9. Why then do we need to be solicitous not to enter into them?”

Ans. I greatly question what assistance from God someone will have in his temptation, if he willingly enters into it, because he supposes that God has promised to deliver him out of it. The

Lord knows that through the craft of Satan, the subtlety and malice of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin that so easily besets us, even when we have done our utmost, we will still enter into various temptations. In his love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness, God has provided such a sufficiency of grace for us, that these temptations will not utterly prevail to make an everlasting separation between him and our souls. Yet I have three things to say to this objection:

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(1.) Someone that wilfully or negligently enters into temptation, has no reason in the world to promise himself any assistance from God, or any deliverance from the temptation into which he has entered. The promise is made to those to whom temptations befall them in their way, whether they want them to or not; not to those who wilfully fall into them — those who go out of their way to meet with them. And therefore the devil (as it is usually observed), when he tempted our Savior, left out that expression of the text of Scripture which he twisted to suit his purpose, “All your ways.”⁴⁹ The promise of deliverance is to those who are in their ways, of which this is one principal way: to beware of temptation.

(2.) Though there is a sufficiency of grace provided for all the elect, that they shall not fall utterly from God by any temptation, yet it would make any gracious heart tremble to think what a dishonor it is to God, what scandal it is to the gospel, and what woeful darkness and disquietness they may bring upon their own souls, even if they do not perish. Those who are scared by nothing but the fear of hell — on whom other considerations which fall short of that have no influence — in my apprehension, have more reason to fear hell than perhaps they are aware of.

(3.) To enter into temptation on this account is to venture upon sin (which is the same as “continuing in sin”) so “that grace may abound,” Romans 6:1-2 — the apostle rejects thoughts like this with the greatest detestation. Is it not madness for a man to willingly allow the ship in which he is carried, to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, just because he supposes he will swim safely to shore on a plank? 1 Timothy 1:20 Is it any less madness for someone to hazard the shipwreck of all his comfort, peace, joy, and so much of the glory of God and honor of the gospel as he is entrusted with, merely on a supposition that his soul will yet escape? These things, a man would think, did not deserve to be mentioned; and yet poor souls sometimes delude themselves with such things as these.

04. CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 4

Particular cases proposed for consideration — The first, its resolution in various particulars — Several discoveries of the state of a soul entering into temptation

These things being premised in general, I now proceed to the consideration of three particular cases arising from the truth proposed: the first of which relates to the thing itself; the second to its time or season; and the last to our deportment in reference to preventing the evil addressed.

First, then, it may be inquired —

1. How a man may know when he has entered into temptation.
 2. What directions are to be given for preventing our entering into temptation. (Chap. 5)
 3. What seasons there are in which a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand. (Chap. 6)
1. How a man will know whether he has entered into temptation or not, is our first inquiry. I say, then —

(1.) When a man is drawn into any sin, he may be sure that he has entered into temptation. All sin is from temptation, James 1:14. Sin is a fruit that comes only from that root. Though a man is ever so suddenly or violently surprised in or with any sin, it is from some temptation or other that he has been surprised: so the apostle says in Galatians 6:1. If a man is surprised, overtaken with a fault, he was tempted to it; for he says, “Consider yourself, lest you also be tempted,” — that is, when he was so surprised, unawares as it were. Men sometimes take no notice of this, to their great disadvantage. When they are overtaken with a sin, they set themselves to repent of that sin, but they do not consider the temptation that was the cause of it, and to set themselves against that also — to take care that they enter into it no more. Hence they are quickly entangled by it again, even though they have the greatest detestation of the sin itself that can be expressed. To indeed get the conquest over any sin, one must consider his temptations to it, and strike at that root; without deliverance from there, he will not be healed. This is a folly that possesses many who yet have a quick and living sense of sin. They are sensible of their sins, but not of their temptations — they are displeased with the bitter fruit, but they cherish the poisonous root. Hence, in the midst of their humiliation for sin, they will continue in those ways, in those societies, in the pursuit of those ends, which have occasioned that sin — more about this afterward.

(2.) Temptations have several degrees. Some rise to such a height, so press on the soul, so torment and disquiet it, so fight against all opposition that is made to it, that it must be past all doubt to the one who is so assaulted,⁵⁰ that it is a peculiar⁵¹ power of temptation that he is to wrestle with. When a fever rages, a man knows he is sick, unless his distemper has made him mad. The lusts of men, as James tells us, “entice, draw away,” and seduce them to sin; but this they do by themselves, without peculiar instigation, in a more quiet, even, and sedate manner. If these lusts grow violent, if they hurry the soul up and down and give it no rest, the soul may know

they have gotten the help of temptation to assist them.

Take an empty vessel and put it into some stream that is in its course to the sea, and it will infallibly be carried there according to the course and speed of the stream. But let strong winds arise upon it, and it will be driven with violence onto every bank and rock until, being broken in pieces, it is swallowed up by the ocean. Men's lusts will infallibly (if not mortified in the death of Christ) carry them into eternal ruin; but often this is done without much noise, according to the course of the stream of their corruptions. But let the wind of strong temptations befall such men, and they are hurried into innumerable scandalous sins, and so, broken up on all accounts, they are swallowed up in eternity. As it is in general with men, so it is in particular.

Hezekiah had the root of pride in him always; yet it did not make him run up and down to show his treasure and his riches, until he fell into temptation by the ambassadors of the king of Babylon.² Chronicles 32:31 So had David; yet he could keep from numbering the people until Satan stood up and provoked him, and solicited him to do it.¹ Chronicles 21:1 Judas was covetous from the beginning; yet he did not contrive to satisfy this lust by selling his Master, until the devil entered into him, and he thereby he entered into temptation. Luke 22:3 The same may be said of Abraham, Jonah, Peter, and the rest. So that when any lust or corruption agitates and disquiets the soul, and forcefully pushes it to sin, let the soul know that the lust has gotten the advantage of some outward temptation, even though it does not yet perceive in what; or at least it has become itself a peculiar temptation by some incitement or provocation that has befallen it; and it is to be watched more than ordinarily.

(3.) Entering into temptation may be seen in lesser degrees; for instance, when the heart begins to secretly like the matter of the temptation, and it is content to feed it and increase it in any way it might, without downright sinning. In particular, a man begins to gain a repute for piety, wisdom, learning, or the like — he is spoken of much to that purpose; his heart is tickled to hear of it, and his pride and ambition are affected with it. If this man now, with all his strength, plies the things from which his repute, and esteem, and glory among men spring, with a secret eye to have his repute increased, he is entering into temptation. If he does not take heed, this will quickly render him a slave of lust. So was it with Jehu. He perceived that his repute for zeal began to grow abroad, and he got honour by it. Jonadab comes along, a good and holy man. "Now," thinks Jehu, "I have an opportunity to grow in the honor of my zeal." So he calls Jonadab to him, and he goes to work most seriously. The things he did were good in themselves, but he had entered into temptation, and served his lust in all that he did. So it is with many scholars. They find themselves esteemed and favoured for their learning. This takes hold of the pride and ambition of their hearts. Hence they set themselves to study with all diligence day and night — a thing good in itself; but they do it so that they may satisfy the thoughts and words of men, in which they delight: and so in all they do, they make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.

It is true that God often brings light out of this darkness, and turns things to a better outcome. Maybe after a man has studied many years with an eye upon his lusts — upon his ambition, pride, and vain-glory — rising early and going to bed late to satisfy these lusts, God comes in with his grace, turns the soul to himself, robs those Egyptian lusts, and so He consecrates for the use of the tabernacle, what was provided for idols. ⁵² Men may thus be entangled in better things than learning, even in the profession of piety, in their labor in the ministry, and the like. For some men,

their profession is a snare to them. They have a reputation, and are much honored because of their profession and strict walking. This often happens in the days in which we live, in which all things are conducted by parties. Some find themselves, on account of the things mentioned, perhaps to be the darlings and “ingentia decora,” or glory of their party. If thoughts of this secretly insinuate themselves into their hearts, and influence them into more than ordinary diligence and activity in their way and profession, they are entangled. And instead of aiming at more glory, they need to lie in the dust, in a sense of their own vileness. So close is this temptation, that oftentimes it requires no food to feed upon except that the one who is entangled with it, avoids all means and ways of honor and reputation — so that it can but whisper in the heart that such avoidance is honorable. The same may be the condition with men, as was said, in preaching the gospel, in the work of the ministry. Many things in that work may yield esteem for them — their ability, their plainness, their frequency, their success; and all in this sense may be fuel for temptations. Let a man know then, that when he likes what feeds his lust, and he keeps it up by ways that are either good in themselves, or not downright sinful, he has entered into temptation.

(4.) When it comes to pass, by a man's state or condition of life, or by any means whatsoever, that his lust and any temptation meet with occasions and opportunities for the provocation and stirring up of that lust, let that man know that he has certainly entered into temptation, whether he perceives it or not. I told you before, that to enter into temptation is not merely to be tempted, but to be so under its power as to be entangled by it. Now, it is almost impossible for a man to have opportunities, occasions, and advantages suited to his lust and corruption, that he will not be entangled by it. If ambassadors come from the king of Babylon, Hezekiah's pride will throw him into temptation. If Hazael is king of Syria, his cruelty and ambition will make him rage savagely against Israel. If the priests come with their pieces of silver, Judas' covetousness will be instantly at work to sell his Master. Many instances of a similar kind may be given even in the days in which we live. Some men think they can play atop the hole of the asp and not be bitten by it, or touch pitch and not be defiled by it, or set their clothes on fire and not be burnt by it; but they would be mistaken. If your business, course of life, societies, or whatever else it may be of that kind, push you onto those things, ways, or persons which suit your lust or corruption, then know this: you have entered into temptation — how you will come out of it God only knows. Let us imagine a man who has any seeds of filthiness engaged in his heart — consider the course of his life in society, how light, vain, and foolish it is (whatever notice he takes of it himself, little, great, or none at all) — he has undoubtedly entered into temptation. So it is with ambition in high places; with passion in a multitude of perplexing affairs; with polluted, corrupt fancy in vain societies; and with the perusal of idle books, or treatises of vanity and folly. Fire and combustible things may more easily lie together without igniting, than may peculiar lusts and their suitable objects, or occasions for their exercise.

(5.) When a man is weakened, when he becomes negligent or formal in his duty, when he can omit duties or content himself with a careless and lifeless performance of them, without delight, joy, or satisfaction in his soul — and he had another frame of mind formerly — then let him know this: that even though he may not be acquainted with the particular distemper in which it consists, yet in something or other, he has entered into temptation, and at length he will find it evident that it is to his trouble and peril. How many have we seen and known in our own days, who have fallen from a warm profession, to be negligent, careless, and indifferent in praying, reading, hearing, and the like! Give an instance of one in such a state who has come off without a wound, and I dare say

that you may discover a hundred for him who have shown themselves to have been asleep on top of the mast; who were in the jaws of some vile temptation or other, which afterward produced bitter fruit in their lives and ways. From those few who return from their folly, we hear every day these doleful complaints:

“Oh! I neglected private prayer; I did not meditate on the word, nor attend to hearing it, but rather despised these things: and yet I said I was rich and lacked nothing. Revelation 3:17 Little did I consider that this unclean lust was ripening in my heart; that this atheism, these abominations, were fomenting there.” This is a certain rule: — If his heart grows cold, negligent, or formal in its duties of the worship of God, and that is either as to the matter or manner of these duties, and he had another frame of mind before, then one temptation or another has laid hold of him. Worldliness, or pride, or uncleanness, or self-seeking, or malice and envy, or one thing or another has possessed his spirit; “gray hairs are here and there upon him, even though he does not perceive it”.⁵³ And this is to be observed as to the manner of duties, as well as to the matter of them: men may, on many sinister accounts — especially to satisfy their consciences — keep up and frequent their duties of religion as to their substance and matter, when they have no heart for them, and there is no life in them, as to the spirituality required in their performance. Sardis kept up the performance of duties, and therefore had a name to live; but that church lacked spiritual life in their performances, and it was therefore “dead,” Revelation 3:1. In the distempers of the body, a man may find that his spirit is faint, his heart oppressed, his head heavy, and his whole person indisposed. Even though he does not yet actually burn nor rave, he will cry, “I fear I am entering into a fever — I am so out of order and indisposed.” A man may do the same in this sickness of the soul. If he finds that his spiritual pulse does not beat correctly and evenly towards his duties of worship and communion with God — if his spirit is low, and his heart faint in them — let him conclude this: even though his lust does not yet burn or rage, he has entered into temptation, and it is high time for him to consider the particular causes of his distemper. If the head is heavy and slumbers in the things of grace, if the heart is cold in its duties, then evil lies at the door. And if such a soul does escape a great temptation to sin, yet it will not escape a great temptation to desert God. The spouse cries, “I sleep,” Song of Solomon 5:2; she had “put off her coat, and could not put it on;” — she had an indisposition to her duties and to communion with Christ. What is the next news you have of her? Verse 6, her “Beloved had withdrawn himself,” — Christ was gone; and she seeks him long and does not find him. There is such a suitableness between the new nature that is wrought and created in believers, and the duties of the worship of God, that they will not be parted nor kept asunder, unless it is by the interposition of some disturbing distemper. The new creature feeds upon these duties; it is strengthened and increased by them; it finds sweetness in them; indeed, it meets in them with its God and Father — so that it cannot help but delight in them, and desire to exercise them, unless it has been made sick by some temptation. This frame is described in the 119th Psalm throughout. The soul is not, I say, simply thrown out of this frame and temper, unless it is oppressed or disordered by one secret temptation⁵⁴ or other.⁵⁵ There are various other evidences of a soul’s entering into temptation, which may be discovered upon inquiry.⁵⁶

I propose this in order to remove the false security that we are apt to fall into; and to make manifest the particular duty we are to apply ourselves to in special times of temptation. For the one who has already entered into temptation is to apply himself to means for disentanglement, and not

labor to prevent his entering in. How this may be done, I will declare afterward.

05. CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 5

The second case proposed, or inquiries resolved — What are the best directions to prevent entering into temptation? — Those directions laid down — The directions given by our Savior: “Watch and pray” — What is included in it — (1.) A sense of the danger of temptation — (2.) It is not in our power to keep ourselves — (3.) Faith in the promises of preservation — Of prayer in particular

Having seen the danger of entering into temptation, and having also discovered the ways and seasons by which and in which men usually enter in, our second inquiry is this:

2. What general directions may be given to preserve a soul from that condition which has been spoken of? We see our Savior’s direction in Matthew 26:41. He sums it all up in these two words, “Watch and pray.” I will labor a little to unfold them, and show what is wrapped and contained in them; and that is both jointly and severally: —

(1.) There is included in them a clear abiding apprehension of the great evil that there is in entering into temptation. What a man watches and prays against, he looks upon as evil to himself, and to be avoided by all means. This then, is the first direction: — Always bear in mind the great danger it is for any soul to enter into temptation.

It is a woeful thing to consider what slight thoughts most have about this thing. So men are content that they can keep themselves from sin itself in open action; they scarcely aim at more; all sorts of men will risk any temptation in the world, at any time. How young men will put themselves into any company, any society; at first, being delighted with evil company, and they are then with the evil of the company! How fruitless are all admonitions and exhortations to them, to take heed of such persons, who are debauched in themselves, corrupters of others, and destroyers of souls! At first they will risk the company, abhorring the thought of practising their lewdness themselves; but what is the result? Unless God, with a mighty hand, snatches one here or there from the jaws of destruction, they are all lost; and after a while they become in love with the evil which at first they abhorred. This open door to the ruin of souls is too evident; and woeful experience makes it no less evident that it is almost impossible to convey to many poor creatures any fear or dread of temptation, who yet profess a fear and abhorrence of sin. If only it were thus with young men who are unaccustomed to the yoke of the Lord! What sort of man is free from this folly in one thing or other? How many professors I have known that would plead for their “liberty,” as they called it! They could hear anything, all things, all sorts of men, all men; they would test all things, to see whether they came to them in the way of God or not; and on that basis, they would run to hear and attend to every broacher of false and abominable opinions, every seducer, even though generally stigmatized by the saints. For such a person, they had their liberty — they could do it, but they hated the opinions as much as any. What has been the result? I scarcely know of any who come off without a wound; most have had their faith overthrown. Let no man then, pretend to fear sin,

who does not also fear the temptation to sin. They are too nearly allied to be separated. Satan has put them together such that it is very hard for any man to pull them apart. He does not hate the fruit, who delights in the root. When men see that such ways, such company, such courses, such business, such studies and aims will entangle them, make them cold and careless, become quench-coals to them — that they indispose them to steady, universal, and constant obedience — if they venture upon them, sin lies at the door. It is a tender frame of spirit, sensible of its own weakness and corruption — of the craft of Satan, of the evil of sin, of the efficacy of temptation — that can perform his duty. And yet until we bring our hearts to this frame, upon the considerations mentioned before, or similar considerations that might be proposed, we will never free ourselves from sinful entanglements. As known, boldness upon temptation, springing from several pretences, has ruined innumerable professors in these days, and it still continues to throw many down from their excellence. Nor do I have the least hope of a more fruitful profession among us, until I see more fear of temptation. Sin will not seem great or heavy for long, to anyone to whom temptations seem light or small. This is the first thing wrapped in this general direction: — The daily exercise of our thoughts with an apprehension of the great danger that lies in entering into temptation, is required of us. Grieving the Spirit of God, disquieting our own souls, loss of peace, hazard of eternal welfare, lies at the door. If the soul is not prevailed with to observe this direction, then all that ensues will be of no value. Temptation despised will conquer; and if the heart is made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing a good conversation is over. Do not go any further if you are not resolved to employ this direction in a daily conscientious observation of it.

(2.) There is also this wrapped in it: that it is not in our own power to keep and preserve ourselves from entering into temptation. Therefore are we to pray that we may be preserved from it, because we cannot save ourselves. This is another means of preservation. We have no strength to resist a temptation when it comes, when we have entered into it, but we will fall under it without a sufficient supply of grace from God. So it is a preserving principle to reckon that we have no power or wisdom to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, but must be kept by the power and wisdom of God. 1 Peter 1:5, We are in all things “kept by the power of God.” Our Savior instructs us in this, not only by directing us to pray that we not be led into temptation, but also by his own praying for us, that we may be kept from it:

John 17:15, “I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil;”

— that is, from the temptations of the world to evil, to sin — “out of the evil”⁵⁷ that is in the world — that is temptation, which is all that is evil in the world; or from the evil one who is in the world, who makes use of the world for temptation. Christ prays to his Father to keep us, and he instructs us to pray that we be so kept. It is not then a thing in our own power. The ways of our entering into temptation are so many, various, and imperceptible — the means of it are so efficacious and powerful — the entrance of it is so deceitful, subtle, insensible, and plausible⁵⁸ — our weakness, our unwatchfulness, are so unspeakable — that we cannot in the least keep or preserve ourselves from it. We fail both in wisdom and power for this work.

Let the heart then commune with itself and say, “I am poor and weak;

Satan is subtle, cunning, powerful, and watching constantly for advantages against my soul; the world is earnest, pressing, and full of specious pleas, innumerable pretences, and ways of deceit;

my own corruption is violent and tumultuating, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and both warring in me, and against me; the occasions and advantages of temptation are innumerable in all the things I have done or allow, and in all businesses and persons with whom I converse; the first beginnings of temptation are insensible⁵⁹ and plausible

— so that, left to myself, I will not know that I am ensnared until my bonds are made strong, and sin has gained ground in my heart. Therefore I will rely on God alone for my preservation, and I will continually look up to him on that account.” This will make the soul always commit itself to the care of God, resting itself on him, and doing nothing, undertaking nothing, etc., without asking counsel of him. So that a double advantage will arise from observing this direction; both are of singular use for preserving the soul from the evil that is feared: —

[1.] The engagement of the grace and compassion of God, who has called the fatherless and helpless to rest upon him; nor did a soul ever fail to have supplies of grace, which in a sense of want, rolled itself on God, on account of his gracious invitation.

[2.] Keeping the soul in such a frame, on various accounts, is useful for its preservation. The one who looks to God for assistance in a due manner, is both sensible of his danger, and conscientiously careful in the use of means to preserve himself. The importance of these two things in this case, may easily be apprehended by those who exercise their hearts in these things.

(3) This also is wrapped in it: act in faith on the promise of God for preservation. To believe that he will preserve us, is a means of preservation. For God will certainly do this, or make a way for us to escape out of temptation, if we fall into it under such a believing frame. We are to pray for what God has promised. Our requests are to be regulated by his promises and commands, which are of the same extent. Faith closes with the promises, and so it finds relief in this case. James instructs us in this in chap. 1:5-7.⁶⁰ What we want we must “ask of God;” but we must “ask in faith,” for otherwise we must not “think that we will receive anything from the Lord.” This then is also in this direction of our Savior: — that we act in faith on the promises of God for our preservation out of temptation. He has promised that he will keep us in all our ways; that we will be directed in a way that, even though we are fools, “we will not err in it,” Isaiah 35:8; that he will lead us, guide us, and deliver us from the evil one. Set faith to work on these promises of God, and expect a good and comfortable outcome. It is not easily conceived what a train of graces attend faith when it goes out to meet Christ in the promises; nor what power to preserve the soul lies in this thing — but I have spoken about this elsewhere.⁶¹

Weigh these things severally; but first, take prayer into consideration. To pray that we do not enter into temptation, is a means to preserve us from it. Glorious things are spoken of this duty, as all men who know anything about it will attest. And yet the truth is, not one half of its excellence, power, and efficacy is known. It is not my business to speak of it in general; but I say this as to my present purpose: — let someone who would be little in temptation, be much in prayer. This calls in the suitable help and relief that is laid up in Christ for us, Hebrews 4:16.⁶² This throws our souls into a frame of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for putting on “the whole armor of God” that we may resist and stand in the time of temptation, he adds this general close of the whole,

Ephesians 6:18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching to this end with all perseverance and supplication.”

Without this, all the rest will have no efficacy for the end proposed. And therefore consider the weight he lays on it: “Praying always,” — that is, at all times and seasons, or always be ready and prepared for the discharge of that duty, Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18; “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,” — presenting all kinds of desires to God, that are suited to our condition, according to his will, and which we are assisted in by the Spirit; “and watching to that end,”⁶³ lest we be diverted by anything whatsoever; and that is not for a little while, but “with all perseverance,” — continuance lengthened out to the utmost: so shall we stand. The soul so framed, is in a sure posture; and this is one of the means without which this work will not be done. If we do not abide in prayer, we shall abide in cursed temptations.

(4) Let this then be another direction: — Abide in prayer, and expressly to this purpose, that we “do not enter into temptation.” Let this be one part of our daily contending with God — that he would preserve our souls, and keep our hearts and our ways, so that we are not entangled; that his good and wise providence will order our ways and affairs; that no pressing temptation should befall us; that he would give us diligence, carefulness, and watchfulness over our own ways. So shall we be delivered when others are held with the cords of their own folly.

06. CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 6

Watching so that we do not enter into temptation — The nature and efficacy of that duty — The first part of it, as to the special seasons of temptation — The first season, in unusual prosperity — The second, a season of slumber of grace — Third, a season of great spiritual enjoyment — The fourth, a season of self-confidence The other part of our Savior's direction — namely, to "watch," — is more general, and extends itself to many particulars. I will fix on some things that are contained in it: —

3. Watch the seasons in which men usually "enter into temptation." There are various seasons in which an hour of temptation is commonly at hand; and temptation will unavoidably seize upon the soul unless it is delivered by mercy in the use of watchfulness. When we are under such a season, then we are to be particularly on our guard so that we do not enter into — so that we do not fall under — the power of temptation. Some of these seasons may be named: —

(1.) A season of unusual outward prosperity is usually accompanied with an hour of temptation. Prosperity and temptation go together; indeed, prosperity is a temptation, many temptations, and that is because, without eminent supplies of grace, prosperity is apt to throw a soul into a frame and temper exposed to any temptation, and provides it with food and fuel for all. It has provision for lust, and darts for Satan. The wise man tells us that the "prosperity of fools destroys them," Proverbs 1:32. It hardens them in their way, makes them despise instruction, and puts the evil day far off from them⁶⁴ (whose terror should influence them to amend their ways). Without special assistance, it has an inconceivably malignant influence on believers themselves. Hence Agur prays against riches because of the temptation that attends them: "Lest," he says, "I be full and deny you, and say, Who is the Lord?" Proverbs 30:8-9 — lest, being filled with them, he should forget the Lord; as God complains that his people did, Hosea 13:6. We know how David was mistaken in this case: Psalms 30:6, "I said in my prosperity, I will never be moved." All is well, and will be well. But what was at hand, what lay at the door, that David did not think of? Verse 7, "You hid your face, and I was troubled." God was ready to hide his face, and David was ready to enter into a temptation to desert Him, and he did not know it. As for a prosperous condition, I will not run contrary to Solomon's counsel, "In the day of prosperity, rejoice," Ecclesiastes 7:14. Rejoice in the God of your mercies, who does you good in his patience and forbearance, notwithstanding all your unworthiness. Yet I may add to it (from the same fountain of wisdom), "Consider," also, lest evil lie at the door. A man in that state, is in the midst of snares. Satan has many advantages against him, forging darts out of all this man's enjoyments — and if the man does not watch out, he will be entangled before he is aware.

You want what should poise and ballast your heart. Formality in religion⁶⁵ is apt to creep in upon you; and that lays the soul open to all temptations in their full power and strength. Satisfaction and delight in creature-comforts, the poison of the soul, is apt to grow upon you. In such a time, be vigilant, be circumspect, or you will be surprised. Job says that in his affliction, "God made his

heart soft,” chap. 23:16.

There is a hardness, an insensible lack of spiritual sense, that is gathered in prosperity, that if not watched against, will expose the heart to the deceits of sin⁶⁶ and baits of Satan. “Watch and pray” in this season. Many men’s negligence in this area has cost them dearly; their woeful experience cries out to take heed. Blessed is he that always fears, but especially in a time of prosperity.

(2.) As manifested in part before, a time of the slumber of grace, of neglect in communion with God, of formality in duty, is a season in which to watch, as it certainly has some other temptation attending it.

Let a soul in such an estate awake and look around him. His enemy is at hand, and he is ready to fall into such a condition that it may cost him dearly all the days of his life. His present estate is bad enough in itself; but it is an indication of a worse estate that lies at the door. The disciples who were with Christ in the mount not only had a bodily, but a spiritual drowsiness upon them. What does our Savior say to them? “Arise; watch and pray, that you do not enter into temptation.”⁶⁷ We know how near one of them was to a bitter hour of temptation, and not watching as he should have, he immediately entered into it.

I mentioned before, the case of the spouse in Song of Solomon 5:2-8. She slept, and was drowsy, and unwilling to gird herself to a vigorous performance of her duties, in a way of quick, active communion with Christ. Before she is aware, she has lost her Beloved; then she moans, inquires, cries, endures woundings, reproaches, and all, before she obtains him again. Consider then, O poor soul, your state and condition! Does your light burn dim? Matthew 25:8 or though it gives light to others as brightly as before, do you not see so clearly the face of God in Christ by it, as you have done?⁶⁸ Is your zeal cold? Or if it does the same works as formerly, is your heart not warmed with the love of God and to God in these works, as formerly — but you are only proceeding in the course you have been in? Are you negligent in the duties of praying, or hearing the word? Or if you observe them, do you do it with that same life and vigor as formerly? Do you flag⁶⁹ in your profession? Or if you keep it up, are your wheels yet oiled in some sinister respects, either from within or without? Does your delight in the people of God faint and grow cold? Or is your love toward them changing from that which is purely spiritual, into that which is very carnal, on account of the suitableness of natural principles and spirits, if not worse foundations?

If you are drowsing in such a condition as this, take heed: you are falling into some woeful temptation that will break all your bones, and give you wounds that will stick with you all the days of your life. Indeed, when you awake, you will find that this temptation has indeed laid hold of you already, even though you did not perceive it; it has struck and wounded you, even though you have not complained or sought relief or healing for it.

Such was the state of the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:2. “The things that remained were ready to die.” “Be watchful,” says our Savior, “and strengthen them, or a worse thing will befall you.” If anyone who reads the words of this direction is in such a condition, if he has any regard for his poor soul, let him awake now, before he is entangled beyond recovery. Take this warning from God — do not despise it.

(3.) A season of great spiritual enjoyments is often — by the malice of Satan and the weakness of our hearts — turned into a season of danger as to this business of temptation. We know how it

stood with Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7. He had glorious spiritual revelations of God and Jesus Christ. Instantly Satan falls upon him, and a messenger from Satan buffets him,⁷⁰ so that he earnestly begs for its departure — yet he is left to struggle with it. God is pleased sometimes to give us special discoveries of himself and his love, to fill the heart with his kindness. Christ takes us into the banqueting-house, and gives our hearts their fill of love. Song of Solomon 2:4 And this is by some signal work of his Spirit, overpowering us with a sense of love in the unspeakable privilege of adoption; and so he fills our souls with joy unspeakable and glorious. A man would think this was the securest condition in the world. What soul does not cry with Peter in the mount, “It is good for me to be here; to abide here for ever?” Matthew 17:4 Yet very frequently, some bitter temptation is now at hand. Satan sees that (being possessed by the joy before us) we quickly neglect many of the ways of approach to our souls, those in which he seeks and finds advantages against us. Is this then, our state and condition? Does God at all times let us drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, Psalms 36:8 and satisfy our souls with his kindness as with marrow and fatness? Psalms 63:5 Let us not say, “We shall never be moved.” Psalms 10:6 We do not know how soon God may hide his face from us, or a messenger from Satan may buffet us.

Besides, there often lies a greater and worse deceit in this business. Men cheat their souls with their own fancies, instead of having a sense of God’s love by the Holy Ghost; and when they are lifted up with their imaginations, it is not expressible how fearfully they are exposed to all manner of temptations. How then are they able to find relief against their consciences from their own foolish fancies and deceptions with which they entertain themselves? May we not see such people every day — walking in the vanities and ways of this world, yet boasting of their sense of the love of God? Shall we believe them? If so, then we must not believe truth itself; how woeful then must their condition be!

(4.) A fourth season is a season of self-confidence; temptation is then usually at hand. The case of Peter is clear as to this: “I will not deny you; though all men should deny you, I will not; even if I were to die for it, I would not do it.” Matthew 26:33; Matthew 26:35 The poor man said this when he stood on the very brink of that temptation which cost him such bitter tears in the outcome. And this taught him so far to know himself all his days, and gave him such an acquaintance with the state of all believers, that when he had received more of the Spirit and of power, he had less confidence in himself; and he saw that it was fit for others to have less also. Therefore he persuades all men to “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear,” 1 Peter 1:17 — not to be confident and high as he was, lest they fall, as he did. At the first trial he compares himself with others, and vaunts himself above them: “Though all men should forsake you, yet I will not.” He fears every man more than himself. But when our Savior afterward comes to him, and makes a direct comparison, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these?” John 21:15, Peter is done comparing himself with others, and only cries, “Lord, you know that I love you.” John 21:15-17 He will lift himself up above others no more.

Such a season often happens. Temptations are abroad in the world, false doctrines, with innumerable other allurements and provocations. Every one of us is ready and very confident that we will not be surprised by them: though all men should fall into these follies, yet we will not. Surely we will never depart from walking with God: it is impossible that our hearts would be so drunkenly foolish. But, the apostle says, “Do not be high-minded, but fear; let him that thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.” 1 Corinthians 10:12 Peter had walked on the sea with Christ,

confessed him to be the Son of God, and been with him in the mount when he heard the voice from the excellent glory. Would you think that, at the word of a servant-girl — when there was no legal inquisition after him, no process against him, nor anyone else in his condition — he would instantly fall to cursing and swearing that he did not know Christ? Let those take heed of self-confidence, who have any mind to take heed of sin. This is the first thing in our watching: to consider well the seasons in which temptation usually makes its approaches to the soul, and be armed against them. And these are some of the seasons in which temptations are near at hand.

07. CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 7

Several acts of watchfulness against temptation are proposed — Watch the heart — What it means to be watched in and about — The snares lying in men's natural tempers — About particular lusts — The occasions suited to them — Watching to lay in provision against temptation — Directions for watchfulness in the first approaches of temptation — Directions after entering into temptation That part of watchfulness against temptation which we have considered, regards the outward means, occasions, and advantages of temptation. We proceed now to what respects the heart itself, which is worked upon and entangled by temptation. Watching or keeping the heart, which we are obliged to do above all other keepings, also comes within the compass of this duty; for the right performance of it, take these ensuing directions: —

(1.) Let him that would not enter into temptation labor to know his own heart, to be acquainted with his own spirit, his natural frame and temper, his lusts and corruptions, his natural, sinful, or spiritual weaknesses, so that finding where his weakness lies, he may be careful to keep at a distance from all occasions to sin. Our Savior tells the disciples that “they did not know what spirit they were of;” Luke 9:55 which, under a pretense of zeal, betrayed them into ambition and a desire for revenge. Had they known it, they would have watched over themselves. David tells us, Psalms 18:23, that he considered his ways, and “kept himself from his iniquity,” which he was particularly prone to.

There are advantages for temptations, often lying in men's natural tempers and constitutions. Some are naturally gentle, facile, easy to be entreated, and pliable. Though it is the noblest temper of nature — and the best and choicest ground when it is well broken up and fallowed for grace to grow in — yet if it is not watched over, it will be a means of innumerable surprisals and entanglements in temptation.⁷¹ Others are earthy, froward, and morose; so that envy, malice, selfishness, peevishness, harsh thoughts of others, and repinings⁷² lie at the very door of their natures; and they can scarcely step out without being in the snare of one or another of them. Others are passionate, and the like. Now, someone who would watch that he does not enter into temptation, needs to be acquainted with his own natural temper, that he may watch over the treacheries that lie in it continually. Take heed lest you have a Jehu in you that will make you drive furiously; or a Jonah in you that will make you ready to repine; or a David that will make you hasty in your determinations, as he often was in the warmth and goodness of his natural temper. Someone who does not watch this thoroughly, who is not exactly skilled in the knowledge of himself, will never be disentangled from one temptation or another all his days.

Again: men have particular natural tempers which, according to how they are attended or managed, prove to be a great fuel for sin, or a great advantage to the exercise of grace. So too, men may have particular lusts or corruptions which, either by their natural constitution or education, or other prejudices, have gotten deep rooting and strength in them. This also is to be found out by the one who would not enter into temptation. Unless he knows it, unless his eyes are

always on it, unless he observes its actings, motions, and advantages, it will continually entangle and ensnare him. This then, is our first direction in this kind: — Labor to know your own frame and temper; what spirit you are of; what associates Satan has in your heart; where corruption is strong, where grace is weak; what stronghold lust has in your natural constitution, and the like. How many have had all their comforts shattered and peace disturbed by their natural passion and peevishness! How many are rendered useless in the world by their frowardness and discontent! How many are disquieted even by their own gentleness and facileness! Be acquainted then with your own heart: even though it is deep, search it; even though it is dark, inquire into it; even though it gives all its distempers other names than what they are, do not believe it. If men were not utter strangers to themselves; if they did not give flattering titles to their natural distempers; if they did not strive to justify, palliate, or excuse the evils of their hearts rather than destroy them, then it would be impossible for them, all their days, to hang about in the same briars, without making any attempt for deliverance. These evils are suited to their natural tempers and constitutions; and by accommodating them in these ways, they keep themselves from taking a clear and distinct view of their own hearts. Uselessness and scandal in professors of Christ, are branches growing constantly on this root of unacquaintedness with their own frame and temper; and how few there are who will either study these in themselves, or bear with others who would acquaint them with these!

(2.) When you know the state and condition of your heart as to the particulars mentioned, watch against all those occasions and opportunities, employments, societies, retirements, and businesses, that are apt to entangle your natural temper or provoke your corruption.

It may be that there are some ways, some societies, some businesses, that you never in your life escaped, but allowed them more or less, through their suitableness to entice or provoke your corruption. It may be that you are in a state and condition of life that weary you day by day on account of your ambition, passion, discontent, or the like. If you have any love for your soul, it is time for you to awake and to deliver yourself like a bird from the evil snare. Peter will not come again in haste to the high priest's hall; nor would David walk again on the top of his house when he should have been on the high places of the field. But the particulars of this instance are so various, and of such several natures in respect to several persons, that it is impossible to enumerate them, Proverbs 4:14, 15.⁷³ In this lies no small part of that wisdom which consists in ordering our conversation rightly. Seeing that we have so little power over our hearts once they meet with suitable provocations, we are to keep them apart, just as a man would keep fire apart from the combustible parts of the house in which he dwells.

(3.) Be sure to lay in provision, in store against the approach of any temptation. This also belongs to our watchfulness over our hearts. You will say, "What provision is intended, and where is it to be stored?" Our hearts, as our Savior speaks of them, are our treasury. There we store whatever we have, good or bad; and from there we draw it out for our use whatever we have, good or bad, Matthew 12:35.⁷⁴ It is the heart then, in which provision is to be laid up against temptation. When an enemy draws near to a fort or castle to besiege and take it, oftentimes if he finds it well-manned and furnished with provision for a siege (and so able to hold out), he withdraws and does not assault it. If Satan, the prince of this world, comes and finds our hearts fortified against his batteries, with provisions to hold out against him, he not only departs, but as James says, he flees: "He will flee from us," James 4:7.⁷⁵ For the provision to be laid up, it is that which is provided in

the gospel for us. Gospel provisions will do this work; that is, they will keep the heart full of a sense of the love of God in Christ. This is the greatest preservative against the power of temptation in the world. Joseph had this; and therefore, on the first appearance of temptation, he cries out, "How can I do this great evil, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9, and so there is an end of temptation for him; it lays no hold on him, but departs. He was furnished with such a ready sense of the love of God that the temptation could not stand. "The love of Christ constrains us," says the apostle, "to live to him," 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, and consequently, the love of Christ enables us to withstand temptation. A man may, no, he ought to lay in provisions of the law also — fear of death, hell, punishment, with the terror of the Lord in them. But these are far more easily conquered than the other; indeed, they will never stand alone against a vigorous assault. They are conquered in convinced persons every day; hearts stored with them will struggle for a while, but quickly surrender. But supply the heart with a sense of the love of God in Christ — with the eternal design of his grace; with a taste of the blood of Christ, and his love in shedding it; get a relish of the privileges we have thereby (our adoption, justification, and acceptance with God); fill the heart with thoughts of the beauty of holiness, as it is designed by Christ for the end, issue, and effect of his death 76 — and you will, in an ordinary course of walking with God, have great peace and security as to the disturbance of temptations. When men can live and plod on in their profession, and not be able to say when they had any living sense of the love of God, or of the privileges which we have in the blood of Christ, I do not know what they can have to keep them from falling into snares. The apostle tells us that the "peace of God shall keep our hearts," Philippians 4:7. 77 The Greek word for "keep" is a military word — a garrison; and so it is, "shall keep as in a garrison." Now, a garrison has two things attending it — first, it is exposed to the assaults of its enemies; secondly, safety lies in it from their attempts. It is so with our souls: they are exposed to temptations, and assaulted continually; but if there is a garrison in them, or if they are kept as in a garrison, then temptation will not enter, and consequently we will not enter into temptation.

Now, how is this done? He says, "The peace of God shall do it." What is this "peace of God?" A sense of his love and favor in Jesus Christ. Let this abide in you, and it will garrison you against all assaults whatsoever. Besides, in a special manner, there is something in this which is also in all the rest of the directions — namely, that the thing itself lies in direct opposition to all the ways 78 and means that temptation can make use of to approach our souls. Contending to obtain and keep a sense of the love of God in Christ, in the nature of it, obviates all the workings and insinuations of temptation.

Let this be a third direction then, in our watching against temptation: — Lay in a store of gospel provisions that may make the soul a place that is defended against all the assaults of temptation.

(4.) In the first approach of any temptation, as we are all tempted, the following directions are also suited to carry on the work of watching, which we are in the pursuit of: —

[1.] Always be awake, so that you may have an early discovery of your temptation, so that you may know it to be a temptation. Most men do not perceive their enemy until they are wounded by him. Indeed, others may sometimes see them deeply engaged in battle, while they are utterly insensible themselves; they sleep without any sense of the danger, until others come and wake them, telling them that their house is on fire. Temptation in a neuter sense is not easily discoverable — namely, as it denotes such a way, thing, or matter, that is or may be made use of

by temptation for its ends. Few take notice of it until it is too late, and they find themselves entangled, if not wounded. Watch then, in time to understand the snares that are laid for you — to understand the advantages your enemies have against you, before they gain strength and power, before they are incorporated with your lusts, and have distilled poison into your soul.

[2.] Consider the aim and tendency of the temptation, whatever it is, and all the things concerned in it. Those which actively concur in your temptation are Satan and your own lust. For your own lust, I have made it clear elsewhere what it aims at in all its actings and enticings. It never rises up without its intent being the worst of evils. Every acting of it would be a formed enmity against God. Hence look at it in its first attempts as your mortal enemy, whatever pretences may be made about it. “I hate it,” says the apostle, Romans 7:15 — that is, the working of lust in me. “I hate it; it is the greatest enemy I have. Oh, that it were killed and destroyed! Oh, that I were delivered out of the power of it!” Know then, that in the first attempt or assault in any temptation, the most accursed, sworn enemy is at hand; it is setting on you, and does it for your utter ruin; so that it would be the greatest madness in the world to throw yourself into its arms to be destroyed. But I have spoken of this in my discourse on Mortification. Does Satan have any friendly aim and intention towards you, if he shares in every temptation? To beguile you as a serpent; to devour you as a lion — this is the friendship that he owes you. I will only add that the sin he tempts you to, against the law, is not the thing he aims at; his design lies against your interest in the gospel. He would make sin but a bridge to get over to better ground, to assault you as to your interest in Christ. Someone who might say today, “You may risk sin, because you have an interest in Christ,” will tell you tomorrow that you have no interest in Christ, because you have sinned.

[3.] Meet your temptation at its entrance with thoughts of faith concerning Christ on the cross; this will make it sink before you. If you would not enter into it, then entertain no parley, no dispute with it. Say, “‘It is Christ that died,’ — that died for such sins as these.” This is called “taking the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of Satan,” Ephesians 6:16. Faith does it by laying hold on Christ crucified, his love therein, and what he suffered for sin from there. Let your temptation be what it will — let it be to sin, to fear or doubting for sin, or about your state and condition — temptation is not able to stand before faith lifting up the standard of the cross. We know what means the Papists use to keep up the form, who have lost the power of faith. They will sign themselves with the sign of the cross, or make crosses in the air; and by virtue of doing that work being done, they think to scare away the devil. To act faith on Christ crucified is really to sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, and thereby we will overcome that wicked one, 1 Peter 5:9.⁷⁹

[4.] Suppose the soul has been surprised by temptation, and entangled unawares, so that now it is too late to resist its first entrances: what will such a soul do so that it will not be plunged into it, and carried away with its power?

1st. Do as Paul did: beseech God again and again that it may “depart from you,” 2 Corinthians 12:8. And if you continue in this, you will certainly either be speedily delivered out of it, or receive sufficient grace not to be utterly foiled by it. Only, as I said in part before, do not employ your thoughts so much about the things to which you are tempted, which often raises further entanglements, but set yourself against the temptation itself. Pray against the temptation that it may depart; and when that is taken away, the things themselves may be more calmly considered.

2dly. Fly to Christ in a specific way — as he was tempted — and beg him to give you comfort in this necessary “time of trouble,”⁸⁰ The apostle instructs us in this: “In that he has been tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted,” Hebrews 2:18. This is the meaning of it: “When you are tempted and are ready to faint, when you want help — when you must have it or you die — act faith specifically on Christ as he was tempted; that is, consider that he was tempted himself — that he suffered thereby; that he conquered all temptations; and that was not merely on his own account. It was for our sakes that he submitted to be tempted; it was but for us.” He conquered in and by himself, but it was for us. And draw, yes, expect help from him, Hebrews 4:15, 16.⁸¹ Lie down at his feet; make your complaint known to him; beg his assistance; and it will not be in vain.

3dly. Look to Him who has promised deliverance. Consider that he is faithful, and will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able.¹ Corinthians 10:13 Consider that he has promised a comfortable outcome from these trials and temptations. Call all the promises to mind of assistance and deliverance that he has made; ponder them in your heart. And rest upon it, that God has innumerable ways that you know nothing about, to give you deliverance; such as —

(1st.) He can send an affliction that will mortify your heart as to the matter of the temptation, whatever it is, what was before a sweet morsel under the tongue, will have neither taste nor relish in it for you — your desire for it will be killed, as was the case with David;⁸² or,

(2dly.) He can, by some providence, alter that whole state of things from which your temptation arises, thus taking fuel from the fire, and causing it to go out by itself; as it was with that same David in the day of battle;⁸³ or,

(3dly.) He can tread down Satan under your feet, so that he will not dare to suggest anything more to your disadvantage (the God of peace will do this for you), so that you will hear from Satan no more;⁸⁴ or,

(4thly.) He can give you such a supply of grace that you may be freed, if not from the temptation itself, yet from its tendency and danger; as was the case with Paul;⁸⁵ or,

(5thly.) He can give you such a comfortable persuasion of good success in the outcome, that you will be refreshed in your trials, and be kept from the anxiety of the temptation; as was the case with the same Paul;⁸⁶ or, (6thly.) He can utterly remove it, and make you a complete conqueror.^{Romans 8:37} And He has innumerable other ways to keep you from entering into temptation so as to be foiled by it.

4thly. Consider where the temptation with which you are surprised has made its entrance, and by what means. And then, with all speed, shore up the breach. Plug that passage through which the waters have made their entrance. Deal with your soul like a wise physician: inquire when, how, and by what means you fell into this distemper. And if you find that negligence, carelessness, or lack of keeping watch over yourself, lie at the bottom of it, then fix your soul there — lament that before the Lord — shore up that breach — and then proceed to the work that lies before you.

08. CHAPTER 8

CHAPTER 8

The last general direction is Revelation 3:10, Watch against temptation by constantly “keeping the word of Christ’s patience” — What that word is — How it is kept — How keeping it will keep us from the “hour of temptation.” The directions insisted on in the former chapters are partly given to us, in their several particulars, up and down the Scripture; partly they arise from the nature of the thing itself. There is one general direction that remains, which comprehends all those that went before, and also adds many more particulars to them. It contains an approved antidote against the poison of temptation — a remedy that Christ himself has marked with a note of efficacy and success. That antidote is given in Revelation 3:10, in the words of our Savior to the church of Philadelphia.

“Because,” he says, “you have kept the word of my patience, I will also keep you from the hour of temptation, which will come upon all the world, to try those who dwell in the earth.” Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Hebrews 13:8 As he dealt with the church of Philadelphia, so he will deal with us. If we “keep the word of his patience,” he will “keep us from the hour of temptation.” This then, being a way of rolling the whole care of this weighty affair onto the one who is able to bear it, it requires our particular attention. And therefore, I will show —

(1.) What it means to “keep the word of Christ’s patience,” so that we may know how to perform our duty; and, (2.) How this will be a means of our preservation, which will establish us in the faith of Christ’s promise.

(1.) The word of Christ is the word of the gospel; the word revealed by him from the bosom of the Father; the word of the Word; the word spoken in time, by the eternal Word. So it is called “The word of Christ,” Colossians 3:16; or “The gospel of Christ,” Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 9:12; and “The doctrine of Christ,” Hebrews 6:1; “Of Christ,” that is, as its author, Hebrews 1:1-2; and of him as the chief subject or matter of it, 2 Corinthians 1:20.⁸⁷ Now, this word is called “The word of Christ’s patience,” or tolerance and forbearance, on account of that patience and long-suffering which (in its dispensing) the Lord Christ exercises towards the world, and to all persons in it; and that is both actively and passively in his bearing with men, and in enduring from them: —

[1.] He is patient towards his saints; he bears with them, suffers from them. He is “patient toward us,” 2 Peter 3:9 — that is, toward those who believe. The gospel is the word of Christ’s patience even to believers. A soul acquainted with the gospel knows that there is no property of Christ rendered more glorious in the gospel, than that of his patience. That he should bear with so many unkindnesses, so many causeless breaches, so many neglects of his love, so many affronts to his grace, so many violations of engagements as he does, manifests that his gospel is not only the word of his grace, but also of his patience. He suffers also from them in all the reproaches they bring upon his name and ways; and he suffers in them, for “in all their afflictions he is afflicted.”

[2.] Towards his elect not yet effectually called. Revelation 3:20, he stands waiting at the door of their hearts and knocks for an entrance. He deals with them by all means, and yet he stands and waits until “his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night,” Song of Solomon 5:2 — such as enduring the cold and inconveniences of the night, that when his morning has come, he may have entrance. Oftentimes for a long season he is scorned by them in his person, persecuted in his saints and in his ways, reviled in his word, even while he stands at the door in the word of his patience, with his heart full of love towards their poor rebellious souls.

[3.] To the perishing world. Hence the time of his kingdom in this world is called the time of his “patience,” Revelation 1:9. He “endures the vessels of wrath with much long-suffering,” Romans 9:22. While the gospel is administered in the world, he is patient towards the men thereof, until the saints in heaven and earth are astonished and cry out, “How long?” Psalms 13:1-2; Revelation 6:10. And they mock him as if he were an idol, 2 Peter 3:4. He endures bitter things from them in his name, ways, worship, saints, promises, threats, in all his interest of honor and love; and yet he passes by them, lets them alone, even does them good. Nor will he cut short this way of proceeding until the gospel is preached no more. Patience must accompany the gospel.

Now, this is the word that is to be kept, so that we may be kept from “the hour of temptation.”

(2.) Three things are implied in keeping this word of patience:

[1.] Knowledge;

[2.] Valuation;

[3.] Obedience: —

[1.] Knowledge. The one who would keep this word must know it, be acquainted with it, under a fourfold notion: —

1st. As a word of grace and mercy, to save him;

2dly. As a word of holiness and purity, to sanctify him;

3dly. As a word of liberty and power, to ennoble him and set him free;

4thly. As a word of consolation, to support him in every condition: —

1st. As a word of grace and mercy it is able to save us: “It is the power of God unto salvation,” Romans 1:16; “The grace of God that brings salvation,” Titus 2:11; “The word of grace that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all those who are sanctified,” Acts 20:32; “The word that is able to save our souls,” James 1:21. When the word of the gospel is known as a word of mercy, grace, and pardon, as the sole evidence for life, as the conveyance of an eternal inheritance — when the soul finds it to be such for itself — it will strive to keep it.

2dly. As a word of holiness and purity, it is able to sanctify him: “You are clean through the word I have spoken to you,” says our Savior, John 15:3. His prayer in John 17:17 is to that very purpose.⁸⁸ The one who does not know the word of Christ’s patience as a sanctifying, cleansing word, in the power that it has upon his own soul, neither knows it nor keeps it. The empty profession of our days does not know one step towards this duty; and this is why most are so

overborne under the power of temptations. Men who are full of self, of the world, of fury, ambition, and almost all unclean lusts, nonetheless talk of keeping the word of Christ! See 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:19.89

3dly. As a word of liberty and power, it ennobles him and sets him free — and this is not only liberty from the guilt of sin and from wrath — for it does that as a word of grace and mercy; and liberty not only from the power of sin — for it does that as a word of holiness; but liberty also from all outward respects of men or the world that might entangle him or enslave him. It declares us to be “Christ’s freemen,” and in bondage to none, John 8:32; 1 Corinthians 7:23.90 We are not freed by it from due subjection to superiors, nor from any duty, nor for any sin, 1 Peter 2:16;91 but in two respects it is a word of freedom, liberty, largeness of mind, power, and deliverance from bondage:

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(1st.) In respect to conscience as to the worship of God, Galatians 5:1.92

(2ndly.) In respect to ignoble, slavish respect for the men or things of the world in the course of our pilgrimage. The gospel gives a free, large, and noble spirit that is in subjection to God, and none else. There is administered in it a spirit “not of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” 2 Timothy 1:7; a mind “terrified in nothing,” Php 1:28 — not swayed by any personal gain whatsoever. There is nothing more unworthy of the gospel than a mind that is in bondage to persons or things: prostituting itself to the lusts of men, or frights of the world. And he that knows the word of Christ’s patience in this way, really and in power, is thereby freed even from innumerable and unspeakable temptations.

4thly. As a word of consolation, to support him in every condition, and to be a full portion in the want of all. It is a word attended with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 Peter 1:8 It gives support, relief, refreshment, satisfaction, peace, consolation, joy, boasting, glory, in every condition whatsoever.

Thus to know the word of Christ’s patience, thus to know the gospel, is the first part, and it is a great part of this condition of our preservation from the hour and power of temptation.

[2.] Valuation of what is thus known belongs to keeping this word.

It is to be kept as a treasure, as in 2 Timothy 1:14 93 — that excellent “depositum” (that is, the word of the gospel) — “keep it,” says the apostle, “by the Holy Ghost;” 94 and, “Hold fast the faithful word,” Titus 1:9. It is a good treasure, a faithful word; hold it fast. It is a word that comprises the whole interest of Christ in the world. To value that as our greatest treasure is to keep the word of Christ’s patience. Those who would be regarded by Christ in their time of temptation, are not to be regardless of his concerns.

[3.] Obedience. Personal obedience in the universal observation of all the commands of Christ, is the keeping of his word, John 14:15.95 Close adherence to Christ in holiness and universal obedience, is the life and soul of the duty required: this is when the opposition that the gospel of Christ meets with in the world, renders it signally “the word of his patience.”

Now, all these things are to be so managed with that intention of mind and spirit, with that care of heart and diligence of the whole person, as to comprise a keeping of this word; this plainly includes all these considerations.

We have arrived then, at the sum of this safeguarding duty, of this condition of freedom from the power of temptation: — The one who has a due acquaintance with the gospel in all its excellences — such that it is a word of mercy, holiness, liberty, and consolation to him — values it in all its concerns as his greatest and only treasure. He makes it his business and the work of his life to surrender himself to it in universal obedience — especially when opposition and apostasy test the patience of Christ to the utmost — he will be preserved from the hour of temptation. This is what comprehends all that went before, and it is exclusive of all other ways to obtain the end proposed. Nor let any man think that, without this, he will be kept one hour from entering into temptation: wherever he fails in these, there temptation enters in. That this will be a sure preservative, may appear from the ensuing considerations: —

(1.) It has the Promise of Preservation, and this alone has it. It is solemnly promised to the church of Philadelphia on this account in Revelation 3:10. When a great trial and temptation was to come on the world at the opening of the seventh seal, Revelation 7:3,96 a caution is given to preserve God's sealed ones, who are described as those who keep the word of Christ; for the promise is that it should be so.

Now, in every promise there are three things to be considered: —

[1.] The faithfulness of the Father, who gives it.

[2.] The grace of the Son, which is the substance of it.

[3.] The power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, which puts the promise into execution. And all these are engaged to preserve such persons from the hour of temptation.

[1.] The faithfulness of God accompanies the promise. On this account our deliverance is laid. 1 Corinthians 10:13 : Though we are tempted, yet we shall be kept from the hour of temptation; it will not grow too strong for us. What comes upon us we shall be able to bear; and what would be too hard for us we shall escape. But what security do we have of this? We have the faithfulness of God: "God is faithful, who will not allow you," etc. And in what is God's faithfulness seen and exercised? "He is faithful that promised," Hebrews 10:23; his faithfulness consists in his discharge of his promises. "He abides faithful: he cannot deny himself," 2 Timothy 2:13. So that by being under the promise, we have the faithfulness of God engaged for our preservation.

[2.] There is in every promise of the covenant the grace of the Son; that is the subject-matter of all promises: "I will keep you." How? "By my grace with you." So that whatever assistance the grace of Christ can give a soul that has a right in this promise, it shall enjoy it in the hour of temptation. Paul's temptation grew very high; it was likely to have come to its prevalent hour. He "pleaded with the Lord" for help, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 12:8;97 and received this answer from him: "My grace is sufficient for you," verse 9. It is evident from the close of that verse, that it was the Lord Christ and his grace with whom Paul specifically dealt: "I will glory in my infirmity, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me;" or "the efficacy of the grace of Christ is made evident in my preservation." So it is in Hebrews 2:18.98

[3.] The efficacy of the Spirit accompanies the promises. He is called "The Holy Spirit of promise;" not only because he is promised by Christ, but also because he effectually makes good the promise, and he accomplishes it in our souls. He is also then engaged to preserve the soul

walking according to the rule laid down. See Isaiah 59:21.⁹⁹ Thus, where the promise is, there is all this assistance. The faithfulness of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Spirit, are all engaged in our preservation.

(2.) This constant, universal keeping of Christ's word of patience will keep the heart and soul in such a frame, that no prevalent temptation, by virtue of any advantages whatsoever, can seize upon it so as to totally prevail against it. Thus David prays, Psalms 25:21, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." This integrity and uprightness is the Old Testament keeping of the word of Christ — it is universal close-walking with God. Now, how can those preserve a man? Why, by keeping his heart in such a frame, so defended on every side, that no evil can approach or take hold of him. If a man fails in his integrity, he has an open place for temptation to enter in, Isaiah 57:21.¹⁰⁰ To keep the word of Christ, is to keep it universally, as shown. This exercises grace in all the faculties of the soul, and encompasses the soul with the whole armor of God. The understanding is full of light; the affections are full of love and holiness. Let the wind blow from whatever quarter it will, the soul is fenced and fortified. Let the enemy assault when or by whatever means he pleases, all things in the soul are on guard. "How can I do this thing, and sin against God?" is at hand.

Especially, deliverance and security arise from His hand on a twofold account: —

[1.] By mortifying the heart as to the matter of temptations. The prevalence of any temptation arises from this: that the heart is ready to draw near to the matter of the temptation. There are lusts within, suited to the proposals of the world or Satan without. Hence James resolves all temptations into our "own lusts," chap. 1:14; because either they proceed from or they are made effectual by our lusts, as declared. Why do terror and threats turn us aside from a due constancy in performing our duty? Is it not because there is unmortified, carnal fear abiding in us, that agitates at such a time? Why is it that the allurements of the world and compliance with men entangle us? Is it not because our affections are entangled with the things and considerations proposed to us?

Now, keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the manner declared, keeps the heart mortified to these things; and so it is not easily entangled by them. The apostle says in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." Whoever keeps close to Christ, is crucified with him, and is dead to all the desires of the flesh and the world; as in Gal. 6:14.¹⁰¹ Here the match is broken, and all love for it, entangling love, is dissolved. The heart is crucified to the world and all things in it. Now the matter of almost all temptations is taken out of the world: the men or things of the world which comprise it. "As to these things," says the apostle, "I am crucified to them," (and it is so with everyone who keeps the word of Christ). "My heart is mortified to them. I have no desire for them, nor affection for them, nor delight in them, and they are crucified to me. The crowns, glories, thrones, pleasures, profits of the world — I see nothing desirable in them. The lusts, sensual pleasures, love, respects, honours of men, name and reputation among them — they are nothing. I have no value or estimation for them." When Achan saw the "goodly Babylonian garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold," he first "coveted them," and then he "took them," Joshua 7:21. Temptation subtly spreads before the eyes of men, the Babylonish garment of favor, praise, peace, the silver of pleasure or profit, along with the golden contentments of the flesh. If now there is something in them which is alive and unmortified, and which will soon fall into coveting — let whatever fear of punishment might ensue — the heart or hand will be led into iniquity by it. In this

then, lies the security of such a frame as that described:¹⁰² It is always accompanied with a mortified heart that is crucified to the things that are the matter of our temptations. Without this, it is utterly impossible for us to be preserved one moment when any temptation befalls us. If the liking or love of anything proposed, insinuated, and commended to us in the temptation, is living and active in us, we will not be able to resist and stand.

[2.] In this frame, the heart is so far filled with better things and their excellence, as to be fortified against the matter of any temptation. See what resolve this puts into Paul, Philippians 3:8;¹⁰³ all is “loss and dung” to him. Who would go out of his way to have his arms filled with loss and dung? And why is it that he has this estimation of the most desirable things in the world? It is from that dear estimation he had of the excellence of Christ. So, verse 10,¹⁰⁴ when his soul is exercised to communion with Christ, and to walking with him, he drinks new wine, and cannot desire the old things of the world; for he says “The new is better.” Hebrews 12:24 He tastes every day how gracious the Lord is; and therefore he does not long for the sweetness of forbidden things — which indeed have no sweetness. The one who makes it his business to eat daily from the tree of life, will have no appetite for other fruit, even though the tree that bears them seems to stand in the midst of paradise. The spouse makes this the means of her preservation: even the excellence which, by daily communion, she found in Christ and his graces, above all other desirable things. Let a soul exercise itself toward a communion with Christ in the good things of the gospel — pardon of sin, fruits of holiness, hope of glory, peace with God, joy in the Holy Ghost, dominion over sin — and he will have a mighty preservative against all temptations. The soul thus filled, loathes the honey-comb — just as a soul filled with carnal, earthly, sensual contentments finds no relish or savor in the sweetest spiritual things. So too, the one who is satisfied with the kindness of God, as with marrow and fatness — that is, the one who is entertained every day at the banquet with wine — wine upon the lees,¹⁰⁵ and well refined — has a holy contempt for the baits and allurements that lie in prevailing temptations, and he is safe.

(3.) He that keeps the word of Christ’s patience in this way, is always furnished with preserving considerations and preserving principles — moral and real advantages of preservation.

[1.] He is furnished with preserving considerations, that powerfully influence his soul in his walking diligently with Christ. Besides the sense of duty which is always upon him, the believer considers —

1st. The concern of Christ with him and with his careful walking, for his soul loves Christ. He considers that the presence of Christ is with him; that His eyes are upon him; that He ponders his heart and ways, as one who is greatly concerned with his deportment of himself in a time of trial. Christ makes it clear that He does this, Revelation 2:19-23.¹⁰⁶ He considers it all — what is acceptable, and what is to be rejected. He knows that Christ is concerned with His honor, that evil not be spoken of His name because of the believer; that He is concerned in love for his soul, having that design to “present him holy, and unblamable, and unreprouable in His sight,” Colossians 1:22 — and Christ’s Spirit is grieved wherever he is interrupted in this work; He is concerned for His gospel, for its progress and acceptance in the world — its beauty would be slurred, its good things reviled, its progress stopped, if such a person is prevailed against; He is concerned with his love for others who are grievously scandalized, and perhaps ruined by the miscarriages of such men. When Hymeneus and Philetus fell, they overthrew the faith of some.

And such a soul who is exercised to keep the word of Christ's patience when intricate, perplexed, entangling temptations arise — public, private, and personal — then says,

“Shall I now be careless? Shall I be negligent? Shall I comply with the world and its ways? Oh what thoughts of my heart Christ has concerning me, whose eye is upon me! Shall I scorn his honor, despise his love, trample his gospel in the mire under the feet of men, and turn aside others from his ways? Shall such a man as I flee, and give up resisting? It cannot be.”

There is no man who keeps the word of the patience of Christ that is not full of this soul-pressing consideration. It dwells on his heart and spirit; and the love of Christ constrains him to thus keep his heart and ways, 2 Corinthians 5:14.

2dly. The great consideration of the temptations of Christ in his behalf, and the conquest Christ made in all assaults for his sake and his God, also weigh on his spirit. The prince of this world came upon him; everything in earth or hell that has either allurements or fright in it, was proposed to Christ to divert him from the work of mediation which he had undertaken for us. This whole life he calls the time of his “temptations;” but he resisted all, conquered all, and has become a Captain of salvation to those who obey him. The soul says, “And shall this temptation, these arguings, this plausible pretense, this sloth, this self-love, this sensuality, this bait of the world, turn me aside, prevail over me, to desert the one who, for my good, went before me in the ways of all those temptations that his holy nature was obnoxious to?”

3dly. Dismal thoughts of the loss of love, of the smiles of the countenance of Christ, also frequently exercise such a soul. He knows what it is to enjoy the favor of Christ, to have a sense of his love, to be accepted in his approaches to him, to converse with him, and perhaps has sometimes been at some loss in this thing; and so he also knows what it is to be in the dark, distanced from Christ. See the deportment of the spouse in such a case, Song of Solomon 3:4.107 Once she has found him again, she holds him; she will not let him go; she will lose him no more.

[2.] He that keeps the word of Christ's patience has preserving principles by which he is moved to act. Some of them may be mentioned here: —

1st. In all things he lives by faith, and is moved to act by faith, in all his ways, Galatians 2:20.108 Now, on a twofold account, when improved,109 faith has annexed to it the power to preserve from temptation:

(1st.) Because it empties the soul of its own wisdom, understanding, and fullness, so that it may act in the wisdom and fullness of Christ. The only advice for preservation in trials and temptations, lies in that of the wise man, Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding.” This is the work of faith; it is faith; it is to live by faith. The great [cause of] men falling in trials is their leaning to, or leaning on, their own understanding and counsel. What is the result of it? Job 18:7, “The steps of his strength will be narrowed, and his own counsel will throw him down.” First, he will be entangled, and then he will be thrown down — and all by his own counsel, until he comes to be ashamed of it, as Ephraim was in Hosea 10:6.110

Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, and listen to self-reasonings, even though they seem to be good and tend to our preservation, yet the principle of living by faith is stifled, and the result is that we will be thrown down by own counsels. Now, nothing can empty the

heart of this self-fullness except faith, except living by it, except not living to ourselves, except having Christ live in us by our living by faith in him.

(2dly.) In making the soul poor, empty, helpless, and destitute in itself, faith engages the heart, will, and power of Jesus Christ for assistance; I have spoken of this more at large elsewhere.

2dly. Love for the saints, with care that they do not suffer on our account, is a great preserving principle in a time of temptations and trials. David declares how powerful this was in this earnest prayer, Psalms 69:6, "Let not those who wait on you, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake; let not those who seek you be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel;" — That is, "O do not let me so miscarry, that those for whom I would lay down my life would be put to shame, have evil spoken of them, be dishonored, reviled, or scorned on my account, and for my failings." A selfish soul, whose love is turned wholly inwards, will never abide in a time of trial.

Many other considerations and principles might be enumerated, that attend those who keep the word of Christ's patience in the way and manner described before; but I will content myself to have pointed at those already mentioned. And it will now be easy to determine why it is that so many in our days are prevailed on in the time of trial — why is it that the hour of temptation comes upon them, and bears them down more or less before it? Is it not because, among the great multitude of professors that we have, there are few that keep the word of the patience of Christ? If we wilfully neglect or throw away our interest in the promise of preservation, is it any wonder if we are not preserved? An hour of temptation has come upon the world to test those who dwell in it. It variously exerts its power and efficacy. There is no way or thing in which it may not be seen acting and exerting itself. It appears in worldliness; in sensuality; in loose conversation; in neglect of spiritual duties both private and public; in foolish, loose, diabolical opinions; in haughtiness and ambition; in envy and wrath; in strife and debate, revenge, selfishness; in atheism and contempt of God. These are but branches of the same root, bitter streams of the same fountain, cherished by peace, prosperity, security, apostasies of professors, and the like. And alas! How many daily fall under the power of this temptation in general! How few keep their garments girded about them and undefiled! Luke 12:35 And if any particular urging temptation befalls anyone, what instances do we have of any who escape? May we not describe our condition as the apostle described the Corinthians in respect to an outward visitation: "Some are sick, and some are weak, and many sleep"? Some are wounded, some defiled, many are utterly lost. What is the spring and fountain of this sad condition of things? Is it not, as has been said? — we do not keep the word of Christ's patience in universal close walking with him, and so we lose the benefits of the promise that is given and annexed to it.

If I were to go about giving instances of this thing, of professors coming short of keeping the word of Christ, it would be a long work. These four heads would comprise most of them: —

First, Conformity to the world, which Christ redeemed us from in almost all things, with joy and delight in promiscuous compliances with the men of the world.

Secondly, Neglect of those duties which Christ has enjoined us to do, from close attention to public ordinances.

Thirdly, Strife, variance, and debate among ourselves, woeful judging and despising of one another on account of things that are foreign to the bond of communion that exists between the

saints.

Fourthly, Self-fullness as to the principles, and selfishness as to the ends.

Now, where these things are found, are not men carnal? Is the word of Christ's patience effectual in them? Will they be preserved? They will not. Would you then, be preserved and kept from the hour of temptation? Would you watch against entering into it? As deductions from what has been delivered in this chapter, take the ensuing cautions: —

1. Take heed of leaning on deceitful assistances; such as leaning on —

(1.) Your own counsel, understanding, and reasoning. However plausibly you argue for them in your own defense, they will desert and betray you. When the temptation comes to any height, they will all turn around and join with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation (whatever it may be) as they pleaded against its end and effects beforehand.

(2.) The most vigorous acts of prayer, fasting, and other such means, against that particular lust, corruption, or temptation with which you are exercised and have to deal. This will not avail you if in the meantime, there are neglects on other accounts. To hear a man wrestle, cry, and contend as to any particular aspect of a temptation, and then to see him immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly compliances, looseness, and negligence in other things — it is righteous with Jesus Christ to leave such a person to the hour of temptation.

(3.) The general security of saints' perseverance and preservation from total apostasy. Every security that God gives us is good in its kind, and for the purpose for which it is given to us. But when it is given for one end, then used for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the general assurance of preservation from total apostasy, to support the spirit in respect to a particular temptation, will not advantage the soul in the end — because notwithstanding that, this or that temptation may prevail. Many relieve themselves with this security, until they find themselves in the depth of perplexities.

2. Apply yourselves to this great preservation of faithfully keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the midst of all trials and temptations: —

(1.) In particular, wisely consider where the word of Christ's patience is most likely to suffer in the days in which we live, and in the seasons that pass over us, and thus vigorously set yourselves to keep that word in this particular especially. You may say, "How will we know where the word of Christ's patience in any season is likely to suffer?" I answer, Consider what works he especially performs in any season; neglect of his word in reference to those works is where his word is like to suffer. The works of Christ in which he has been specially engaged in our days and seasons seem to be these: —

[1.] Pouring contempt on the great men and great things of the world, along with all its enjoyments. He has revealed the nakedness of all earthly things, in overturning, overturning, overturning, both men and things, to make way for the things that cannot be shaken.

[2.] Owning the lot of his own inheritance in a distinguishing manner, putting a difference between the precious and the vile, and causing his people to dwell alone, as not reckoned with the nations.

[3.] Being near to faith and prayer, honoring them above all the strength and counsels of the sons of men.

[4.] Recovering his ordinances and institutions from the carnal administrations that they were in bondage under by the lusts of men, bringing them forth in the beauty and the power of the Spirit. In what then, in such a season, must the singular neglect of the word of Christ's patience lie? Is it not in valuing the world and its things, which he stained and trampled under foot? Is it not in slighting his special lot, his people, and throwing them into the same considerations as the men of the world? Is it not in leaning on our own counsels and understandings? Is it not in defiling his ordinances, by letting the outer court of the temple to be stepped on by unsanctified persons? Let us then be watchful, and in these things keep the word of the patience of Christ, if we love our own preservation.

(2.) In this frame, urge the Lord Jesus Christ with his blessed promises, with all the considerations that may be apt to take and hold the King in his galleries,¹¹¹ and that may work on the heart of our blessed and merciful High Priest, to give suitable help in our time of need.¹¹²

09. CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 9 General exhortation to the duty prescribed

Having thus passed through the considerations of the duty of watching so that we do not enter into temptation, I suppose I need not add motives for observing it. Those who are not moved by their own sad experiences, nor by the importance of the duty as laid down at the start of this discourse, I must leave to the further patience of God. I will only close the whole with a general exhortation to those who are in any measure prepared for it, by considering what has been said. If you were to go into a hospital, and see many people lying sick and weak, sore and wounded, with many filthy diseases and distempers, and were to inquire of them how they fell into this condition, and they all agreed in telling you that such or such a thing was the occasion of it — “I got my wound by that,” says one, “And I got my disease by it,” says another — would it not make you a little careful how or what you had to do with that thing or place? Surely it would. If you were to go to a dungeon, and see many miserable creatures bound in chains for an approaching day of execution, and inquired what was the way and means by which they were brought into that condition, and they all fixed on one and the same thing, would you not take care to avoid it? The case is so with entering into temptation. Ah! how many poor, miserable, spiritually-wounded souls, we have everywhere! — one is wounded by one sin, one by another; one falls into the filthiness of the flesh, another of the spirit. Ask them now, how they came into this estate and condition? They must all answer, “Alas! We entered into temptation; we fell into cursed snares and entanglements; and that has brought us into the woeful condition you see!” Indeed, if a man could look into the dungeons of hell, and see the poor damned souls that lie bound in chains of darkness, and hear their cries, what would he be taught? What do they say? Are they not cursing their tempters, and the temptations that they entered into? And shall we be negligent in this? Solomon tells us that the simpleton who follows the strange woman, does not know that the dead are there, that “her house inclines to death, and her paths to the dead” 113 (which he repeats three times); and that is the reason that he risks her snares. If you knew what has been done by entering into temptation, perhaps you would be more watchful and careful. Men may think they do well enough notwithstanding; but,

Proverbs 6:27-28, “Can a man put fire in his breastpocket, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?” No such thing! Men do not come out of their temptation without wounds, burns, and scars. I do not know any place in the world where there is a greater need to press this exhortation than in this place. Go to our several colleges and inquire about such and such young men; what is the answer in respect to many of them? “Ah! he was very hopeful for a season; but he fell into bad company, and he is quite lost. He had a good beginning of religion; we had great expectations for him, but he has fallen into temptation.” And so too in other places. “He was useful and humble, and adorned the gospel; but now he is so woefully entangled with the world, that he has grown all selfish, and has no sap or savour. He was humble and zealous; but he has advanced in life, and has lost his first love and ways.” Revelation 2:4 Oh! how full is the world, how full is this place, of these woeful examples, to say nothing of those innumerable poor creatures who have fallen into temptation by delusions in religion. And is it not

time for us to awake before it is too late — to watch against the first risings of sin, the first attempts of Satan, and against all the ways by which he has made approaches to us, however harmless they may be in themselves? Do we not experience our weakness, our folly, the invincible power of temptation, once it has gotten within us? As for this duty that I have insisted on, take these considerations: —

1. If you neglect this duty, which is the only means prescribed by our Saviour, you will certainly enter into temptation, and just as certainly fall into sin. Do not flatter yourselves. Some of you are “old disciples;” you have a great abhorrence of sin; you think it is impossible that you would ever be seduced in such a way; but, 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Let him (whoever he may be) that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.”

It is not any grace received, it is not any experience obtained, it is not any resolution improved, that will preserve you from any evil, unless you stand upon your watch: “What I say to you,” says Christ, “I say to all, Watch.” Perhaps you had some good success for a time in your careless frame; but awake: admire God’s tenderness and patience, or else evil lies at the door. Genesis 4:7 If you will not perform this duty, whoever you are, one way or another, in one thing or another, whether spiritual or carnal wickedness, you will be tempted, you will be defiled; and what will be the end of it? Remember Peter! 114

2. Consider that you are always under the eye of Christ, the great captain of our salvation, who has enjoined us to watch thus, and pray that we do not enter into temptation. What do you think the thoughts and heart of Christ are, when he sees a temptation hastening towards us, a storm rising around us, and we are fast asleep? Does it not grieve him to see us so expose ourselves to danger, after he has given us warning upon warning? While he was in the days of his flesh, he considered his temptation while it was still coming, and armed himself against it. “The prince of this world comes,” he says, “but he has no part in me.” John 14:30 And shall we be negligent under his eye? You only have to think that you see him coming to you as he did to Peter, when he was asleep in the garden, and with the same reproof: “What! Can you not watch one hour?” Mark 14:37 Would it not grieve you to be so reproofed, or to hear him thundering from heaven against your neglect, as he did against the church of Sardis? 115

3. Consider that if you neglect this duty, and so fall into temptation — which you will assuredly do — that when you are entangled, God may also bring some heavy affliction or judgment upon you, which (because of your entanglement) you will not be able to look at any other way than as evidence of his anger and hatred. And then what will you do with your temptation and affliction together? All your bones will be broken, and your peace and strength will be gone in a moment. 116 This may seem like only the noise of words for the present; but if it is ever your condition, you will find it to be full of woe and bitterness. Oh then, let us strive to keep our spirits unentangled, avoiding all appearance of evil, and all ways leading to it; especially all the ways, businesses, societies, and employments that we have already found disadvantageous to us.

10. Notes

Notes [←1] A number of sentences and phrases were accidentally omitted in Ages' digital conversion. They have been recovered using the same 1850-53 edition of this work, but separately printed from Owen's Works, and titled On Temptation and the Mortification of Sin (see title page "Alt. Source").

[←2] Owen's references to "our several colleges" in chapter 9.

[←3] Hebrews 2:9; Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

[←4]

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

[←5]

Deuteronomy 13:3 "you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

[←6]

Genesis 22:12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

[←7] 2 Chronicles 32:25-31

[←8]

Matthew 26:35 Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples.

[←9]

Genesis 20:6 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

[←10]

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[←11]

1 Peter 1:6-7 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

[←12] John 14:30 "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

[←13]

James 1:14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

[←14] ejmpi>ptein empipto [NT:1706]

[←15] A thousand injurious arts, or a thousand ways to injure.

[←16] Emended from On Temptation, p. 35.

[←17] That is, acquit: to behave in a certain manner.

[←18] prose>cein prosecho [NT:4337], as in Matthew 16:12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Or Hebrews 2:1 "Therefore we must give more earnest heed to the things we have heard..."

[←19] Gregoreuo [NT:1127], as in Revelation 3:2 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain..."

[←20] Hebrews 2:18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

[←21]

Revelation 3:10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere [or patiently endure], I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

[←22]

Genesis 12:12-13 "Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you." Genesis 20:2 Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

[←23] Footprints frighten me. (Horace)

[←24] Emended from On Temptation, p. 42.

[←25]

2Kng 8:9-13 "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" 10 And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die." 11 Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept. 12 And Hazael said, "Why is my lord weeping?" He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child." 13 So Hazael said, "But what is your servant-- a dog, that he should do this gross thing?" And Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you will become king over Syria."

[←26] See 3.(1) above.

[←27] Hosea 4:11 Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.

[←28] Originally, "withe" – a band or rope made of twisted twigs or stems.

[←29]

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

[←30] "The people hiss, but I applaud myself."

[←31]

John 15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."

[←32] That is, "I will not petition for it again." We fool ourselves into thinking this won't happen again, that we won't need to solicit God to restore our peace after this. We cry out, "Just this once!" as we go over the cliff's edge.

[←33] We presume to say, "I may have no peace, but at least I'm saved."

[←34] Battery: a group of cannons fired together at one place to create a breach in the defensive wall.

[←35]

2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

[←36]

Revelation 3:10 "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

[←37]

1Kng 22:21-22 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' 22 "The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the

mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'

[←38] Emended from On Temptation, p. 55.

[←39] Emended from On Temptation, p. 56.

[←40]

Isaiah 8:12 Do not say, 'A conspiracy,' Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.

[←41] That is, falling into worldly ways, and following after vain opinions.

[←42] That is, the status quo.

[←43]

Isaiah 32:19 When it hails, coming down on the forest [i.e., when judgement falls, Revelation 16:21], the city shall be low in a low place [i.e., brought low, humbled] – Isaiah 26:5 For He brings down those who dwell on high, The lofty city; He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He brings it down to the dust.

[←44] Proverbs 1:32 For the turning away of the simple will slay them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them;

[←45] Emended from On Temptation, p. 61.

[←46]

Whether a frame of heart, mind, or will, our "frame" is a system of assumptions and standards (values) that serve to sanction our behavior and give it meaning, for better or worse.

[←47] i.e., trials and afflictions, see the special nature of temptations in Chap. I, sec. I.

[←48]

1 Peter 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

[←49]

Psalms 91:11-12 For He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you in all your ways. 12 In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone. Matthew 4:5-6 Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

[←50] Emended from On Temptation, p. 70.

[←51] Out of the ordinary.

[←52] Exodus 3:22 with Exodus 35:29

[←53]

Hosea 7:9 Aliens have devoured his strength, But he does not know it; Yes, gray hairs are here and there on him, Yet he does not know it.

[←54] Emended from On Temptation, p. 78.

[←55] That is, this malaise and distemper doesn't just happen. It is caused to happen, and temptation is the cause.

[←56]

Inquiry into the current condition of our soul is one of our spiritual duties. 2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith." 1 Corinthians 11:29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. The sacrament is a good occasion for such an inquiry.

[←57] ejk tou~ ponhrou~ ek tou ponerou [NT:4190]

[←58] Emended from On Temptation, p. 84.

[←59] They are not sensed or perceived.

[←60]

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

[←61] Mortification of Sin in Believers

[←62]

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

[←63] Emended from On Temptation, p. 87.

[←64]

Amos 6:3 Woe to you who put far off the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; Isaiah 56:12 "Come," they say, "let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure." Luke 12:19 `And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." We attract destruction by being indifferent to it, as if there were no price to pay for sin.

[←65] That is, rote obedience without a change in heart; "just going through the motions".

[←66]

Matthew 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Hebrews 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

[←67] Matthew 26:41 with Luke 22:46.

[←68]

2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[←69] Become less intense.

[←70] To pummel or beat violently.

[←71] Surprisal is used in a military sense: a surprise attack or ambush that shocks and stuns the victim.

[←72] Expressions of discontent.

[←73]

Proverbs 4:14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.

[←74]

Matthew 12:35 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

[←75] James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

[←76] Emended from On Temptation, p. 102.

[←77] frouh>sei ta<v kardi>av phroureo humon kardia [NT:5432, 5216, 2588]

[←78] Emended from On Temptation, p. 103.

[←79] 1 Peter 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith...

[←80] Psalms 37:39 But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble.

[←81]

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

[←82] 2 Samuel 24:10-15 – regarding David's numbering of Israel, and the plague that followed.

[←83]

1 Chronicles 12:17-18 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said to them, "If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart will be united with you; but if to betray me to my enemies, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look and bring

judgment." 18 Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: "We are yours, O David; We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, And peace to your helpers! For your God helps you." So David received them, and made them captains of the troop.

[←84]

Malachi 4:3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, On the day that I do this," Says the LORD of hosts.

[←85]

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

[←86]

Acts 27:24 "saying, `Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

[←87] 2 Corinthians 1:20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

[←88] John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

[←89]

1 Peter 1 :1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. 2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

[←90]

John 8:32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

[←91] 1 Peter 2:16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

[←92]

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

[←93] 2 Timothy 1:14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

[←94] Th<n kalh<n parakataqh>khn tou kalos parakatatheke [NT:2570, 3872]

[←95] John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments.

[←96]

Revelation 7:3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

[←97] 2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.

[←98] Hebrews 2:18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

[←99]

Isaiah 59:21 "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

[←100]

Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

[←101]

Galatians 6:14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

[←102] That is, "the constant, universal keeping of Christ's word of patience," as described above.

[←103]

Php 3:8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...

[←104]

Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship [or communion] of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

[←105] When wine is left to age "upon the lees" (the sediments that are left in the bottle), it increases the complexity of the wine, providing additional flavors, body, and richness.

[←106]

Revelation 2:19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20 "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

[←107]

Song of Solomon 3:4 Scarcely had I passed by them, When I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go, Until I had brought him to the house of my mother, And into the chamber of her who conceived me.

[←108]

Galatians 2:19 "For through the law I died to the law that I might live to God. 20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

[←109]

2 Peter 1:5-8 And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things are in you, and abound [i.e., if they increase or improve], they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Also Revelation 2:19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works [of faith], the last are more than the first [improved].

[←110]

Hosea 10:6 The idol also shall be carried to Assyria As a present for King Jareb. Ephraim shall receive shame, And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

[←111]

KJV Song of Solomon 7:5 Your head upon you is like Carmel, and the hair of your head like purple; the king is held in the galleries. John Gill writes, "the 'galleries' in which he is held may mean the ordinances of the Gospel; where Christ and his people walk and converse together; where he discloses the secrets of his heart to them, leads them into a further acquaintance with his covenant, and the blessings and promises of it; and from which they have delightful views of his person and fulness; they see the King in his beauty, and behold the good land which is afar off."

[←112]

Hebrews 4:16.

[←113]

Proverbs 2:10-19 When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, 11 discretion will preserve you, understanding will keep you... 16 To deliver you from the strange woman, even from the stranger who flatters with her words; 17 Who forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. 18 For her house inclines to death, and her paths to the dead. 19 None that go to her return again, nor take hold of the paths of life.

[←114]

Luke 22:31-34 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." 34 Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

[←115]

Revelation 3:2-3 "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

[←116]

Lamentations 3:1-5 I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. Surely He has turned His hand against me Time and time again throughout the day. He has aged my flesh and my skin, And broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe.

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