

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 3

by William Gurnall

The Christian must be armed to stand against the wiles of the devil, who is a subtle enemy with cunning methods and stratagems.

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Satanic Tactics"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the subtle tactics of Satan as a tempter and accuser of Christians. He highlights how Satan uses various wiles to trouble believers, such as laying sinful thoughts at their door, aggravating their sins, and cavilling at their duties. Gurnall emphasizes the importance of discerning Satan's accusations from the rebukes of God and advises Christians to be accurate in their actions, humble in their responses, and observant of Satan's fallacies to counter his attacks.

Transcript

DIRECTION I.--SECOND GENERAL PART

[The reason why the Christian must be armed, 'That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.']

These words present us with the reason why the Christian soldier is to be thus completely armed, 'That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.' The strength of this argument lies in these two particulars [or branches]. First, The danger, if unarmed. The enemy is no mean contemptible one, no less than the devil, set out as a cunning engineer by his wiles and stratagems. Second, The certainty of standing against all his wits and wiles, if we be thus armed. As [there is] no standing without armour, so [there is] no fear of falling into the fiend's hands if armed.

BRANCH FIRST.

[The danger, if unarmed.]

The saint's enemy is the devil, described by his wiles, properly, the methods of Satan. [The Greek word[1]] signifies, the art and order one observes in handling a point; we say such a one is methodical. Now because it shows ingenuity and acuteness of wit so to compose a discourse, therefore it is transferred to express the subtlety of Satan, in laying off his plots and stratagems, in his warlike preparations against the Christian. Indeed the expert soldier hath his order as well as the scholar; there is method in forming of an

army, as well as framing an argument. The note which lies before us is--

Doctrine, That the devil is a very subtle enemy. The Christian is endangered most by his policy and craft. He is called the old serpent--the serpent subtle above other creatures; an old serpent above other serpents. Satan was too crafty for man in his perfection, much more now in his maimed estate, having never recovered that first crack he got in his understanding, by the fall of Adam. And as man hath lost, so Satan hath gained more and more experience; he lost his wisdom, indeed, as soon as he became a devil, but, ever since, he hath increased his craft; though he hath not wisdom enough to do himself good, yet [he hath] subtlety enough to do others hurt. God shows us where his strength lies, when he promiseth he will bruise the head of the serpent; his head crushed, and he dies presently. Now in handling this point of Satan's subtlety, we shall consider him in his two main designs, and therein show you his wiles and policies. His first main design is to draw into sin. The second main design is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin.

[Satan's first main design

is to draw into sin.]

First. Let us consider the devil as a tempter to sin, and there he shows us his wily subtlety in three things. First. In choosing the most advantageous season for temptation. Second. In managing the temptations, laying them in such a method and form as shows his craft. Third. In pitching on fit instruments for his turn, to carry on his design.

[Satan's subtlety in choosing the most

advantageous seasons for tempting.]

First. Satan shows his subtlety in choosing the most proper and advantageous seasons for tempting. 'To every thing there is a season,' Solomon saith, Ecc. 3:1, that is, a nick of time, which taken, gives facility and speedy despatch to a business; and therefore the same wise man gives this reason why man miscarries so frequently, and is disappointed in his enterprises, 'because he knows not his time,' Ecc. 9:12. He comes when the bird is flown. A hundred soldiers at one time may turn a battle, save an army, when thousands will not do [it] at another. Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if at any time) he is most likely to be entertained. As Christ hath the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season of counsel and comfort, to a doubting dropping soul, so Satan knows his black heart, and hellish skill, in speaking words of seduction and temptation in season; and a word in season is a words on its wheels. I shall give you a view of his subtlety in special seasons, which he chooseth to tempt in. These special seasons are:

1. Season. When the Christian is newly converted. No sooner is this child of grace, the new creature, born, but this dragon pours a flood of temptation after it. He learned the Egyptians but some of his own craft, when he taught them that bloody and cruel baptism, which they exercised upon the Israelitish babes, in throwing them into the river as soon as they were born. The first cry of the new creature gives all the legions of hell an alarm. They are as much troubled at it as Herod and Jerusalem were when Christ was born; and now they sit in council to take away the life of this new-born king. The apostles met with opposition and persecution in their latter days when endued with larger portions of the Spirit, but with temptations from Satan in their former, when young converts; as you may observe in the several passages recorded of them. Satan knew grace within was but weak, and the supplies promised at the Spirit's coming

not landed. And when is an enemy more like to carry the town than in such a low condition? And therefore he tries them all. Indeed the advantages are so many, that we may wonder how the young convert escapes with his life; knowledge [being] weak, and [he] so soon let him into an error, especially in divided times, when many ways are held forth one saying, Here is Christ, another There is Christ. And the Christian [is] ready to think every one means honestly that comes with good words, as a little child that hath lost his way to his father's house, is prone to follow any that offer their conduct [or] experience of what he knows little. And if Adam, whose knowledge [was] so perfect, yet was soon cheated--being assaulted before he was well warm in his new possessions--how much more advantage hath Satan of the new convert! In him he finds every grace in a great indisposition to make resistance, both from its own weakness, and the strength of contrary corruption, which commonly in such is unmortified. [This] makes it act with more difficulty and mixture, as in a fire newly kindled, where the smoke is more than the flame, or like beer newly tunned which runs thick. So that though there appear more strength of affection in such, that it works over into greater abundance of duty than in others, yet [it is] with more dregs of carnal passions, which Satan knows, and therefore chooseth to stir what he sees troubled already.

2. Season. When the Christian is beset with some great affliction, this is as blind lane or solitary place, fit for this thief to call for his purse in. An expert captain first labours to make a breach in the wall, and then falls on in storming the city. Satan first got power from God to weaken Job in his estate, children, health and other comforts he had, and now tempts him to impatience, and what not; he lets Christ fast forty days before he comes, and then he falls to his work; as an army stays till a castle be pinched for provision within, and then sends a parley, never more likely to be embraced than in such a strait. A temptation comes strong when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that Satan is wooing to; when one is poor and Satan comes, What! wilt starve rather than step over the hedge and steal for thy supply? this is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

3. Season. When the Christian is about some notable enterprise for God's glory, then Satan will lie like a serpent in the way, 'an adder in the path, that biteth his horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.' Thus he stood at Joshua's right hand 'to resist him.' The right hand is the working hand, and his standing there implies the desire to hinder him in his enterprise. Indeed the devil was never friend to temple-work, and therefore that work is so long a doing. What a handsome excuse doth he help the Jews unto--The time is not come! God's time was come, but not the devil's, and therefore he helps them to this poor shift, Ezra 1, 2, 6, 8, perverting the sense of providence as if it were not time, because they were so poor; whereas they thrive no better because they went no sooner about the work, as God tells them plainly. Paul and Barnabas had a holy design in their thoughts, to [go] visit the brethren in every city, and strengthen their faith. The devil knew what a blow this might give to his kingdom; their visiting might hinder him in his circuit, and he stirs up an unhappy difference between these two holy men, who grow so hot that they part in this storm, Acts 15:36-39. There were two remarkable periods of Christ's life, his intrat and exit, his entrance into his public ministry at his baptism, and his finishing it at his passion, and at both we have the devil fiercely encountering him. The more public thy place, Christian, and the more eminent thy service for God, the more thou must look that the devil [will have] some more dangerous design or other against thee; and therefore if every private soldier needs armour against Satan's bullets of temptation, then the commanders and officers, who stand in the front of the battle, much more.

4. Season. When he hath the presence of some object to enforce his temptation. Thus he takes Eve when she is near the tree, and had it in her eye while he should make the motion, [so] that [by] assaulting two ports at once, it might be the harder for her to hinder the landing of his temptation; and if Eve's eye did so

soon affect her heart with an inordinate desire, then much more now is it easy for him, by the presence of the object, to excite and actuate that lust which lies dormant in the heart. As Naomi sent her daughter to lie at the feet of Boaz, knowing well, if he endured her there, there were hope he might take her into his bed at last. If the Christian can let the object come so near, Satan will promise himself [that] his suit may in time be granted. Therefore it should be our care, if we would not yield to the sin, not to walk by, or sit at, the door of the occasion. Look not on that beauty with a wandering eye, by which thou wouldst not be taken prisoner. Parley not with that in thy thoughts, which thou meanest not to let into thy heart. Conversation begets affection: some by this have been brought to marry those, whom at first they thought they could not have liked.

5. Season. After great manifestations of God's love, then the tempter comes. Such is the weak constitution of grace, that it can neither well bear smiles or frowns from God without a snare; as one said of our English nation,[2] it cannot well bear liberty nor bondage in the height. So neither can the soul. If God smile and open himself a little familiar to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton; if the frown, then we sink as much in our faith. Thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up the weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips and even kills the flowers of grace. The Christian is in danger on both hands; therefore Satan takes the advantage, when the Christian is flush of comfort, even as a cheater, who strikes in with some young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves till he hath eased him of his money. Thus Satan lies upon the catch, then to inveigle a saint into one sin or other, which he knows will soon leak out his joy. Had ever any a larger testimony from heaven than Peter? Matt. 16:17, where Christ pronounceth him blessed, and puts a singular honour upon him, making him the representative of all his saints. No doubt this favour to Peter stirred up the envious spirit the sooner to fall upon him. If Joseph's parti-coloured coat made the patriarchs to plot against him their brother, no wonder malice should prompt Satan to show his spite, where Christ had set such a mark of love and honour; and therefore we find him soon at Peter's elbow, making him his instrument to tempt his Master, who rebukes Peter with a 'get thee behind me, Satan.' He that seemed a rock even now, through Satan's policy is laid as a stone of offence for Christ to stumble at. So [with] David, when he had received such wonderful mercies, settled in his throne with the ruin of his enemies, yea, pardoned for his bloody sin, and now ready to lay down his head with peace in the dust, Satan chops in to cloud his clear evening, and tempts him to number the people; so ambitious is Satan then chiefly to throw the saint into the mire of sin, when his coat is cleanest.

6. Season. At the hour of death, when the saint is down and prostrate in his bodily strength, now this coward falls upon him. It is the last indeed he hath for the game; now or never; overcome him now and ever. As they say of the natural serpent[3], he is never seen at his length till dying; so this mystical serpent never strains his wits and wiles more, than when his time is short. The saint is even stepping into eternity, and now he treads upon his heel, which he cannot trip up so as to hinder his arrival in heaven, yet at least to bruise it, that he may go with more pain thither.

[Satan's subtlety in managing his temptations,

where several stratagems used by him to

deceive the Christian are laid down.]

Second. The second way wherein Satan shows his tempting subtlety, is in those stratagems he useth to deceive the Christian, managing his temptations, laying them in such a method and form, as shows his

craft.

1. Stratagem. He hangs out false colours, and comes up to the Christian in the disguise of a friend, so that the gates are opened to him, and his motions received with applause, before either be discovered. Therefore he is said to 'transform himself into an angel of light,' II Cor. 11:14. Of all plots it is most dangerous, when he appears in Samuel's mantle, and silvers his foul tongue with fair language. Thus in point of error he corrupts some in their judgement, by commending his notions for special gospel-truths, and like a cunning chapman[4] puts off his old ware (errors I mean that have lain long upon his hand), only turning them a little after the mode of the times, and they go for new light, under the skirt of Christian liberty. He conveys in libertinism, by crying up the Spirit. He decries and vilifies the Scripture, by magnifying faith. He labours to undermine repentance, and blow up good works. By bewailing the corruption of the church in its administrations, he draws unstable souls from it, and amuseth them, till at last they fall into a giddiness[5], and can see no church at all in being. And he prevails no less on the hearts and lives of men by this wile, than on their judgements. Under the notion of zeal, he kindles sometimes a dangerous flame of passion and wrath in the heart, which like a rash fire makes the Christian's spirit boil over into unchristian desires of, and prayers for, revenge where he should forgive. Of this we have an instance of the disciples, Luke 9:54, where two holy men are desiring that 'fire may come down from heaven.' Little did they think from whence they had their coal that did so heat them, till Christ told them, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' ver. 55. Sometimes he pretends pity and natural affection, which in some cases may be good counsel, and all the while he desires to promote cowardice and sinful self-love, whereby the Christian may be brought to fly from his colours, shrink from the truth, or decline some necessary duty of his calling. This wile of his, when he got Peter to be his spokesman, saying, Master, pity thyself, Christ soon spied, and stopped his mouth with that sharp rebuke, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' O what need have we to study the Scriptures, our hearts, and Satan's wiles, that we may not bid this enemy welcome, and all the while think it is Christ that is our guest!

2. Stratagem. Is to get intelligence of the saint's affairs. This is one great wheel in the politician's clock, to have spies in all places, by whom they are acquainted with the counsels and motions of their enemies, and [as] this gives them advantage to disappoint their designs, so also more safely to compass their own. It is no hard matter for him to play this game well, that sees his enemies' hands. David knew how the squares went at court, Jonathan's arrows carried him the news; and accordingly he removed his quarters, and was too hard for his great enemy Saul.

Satan is the greatest intelligencer in the world; he makes it his business to inquire into the inclinations, thoughts, affections, purposes of the creature, that finding which humour abounds, he may apply himself accordingly,--[finding] which way the stream goes, that he may open the passage of temptation, and cut the channel to fall of the creature's affections, and not force it against the torrent of nature. Now if we consider but the piercing apprehension of the angelic nature, how quick he is to take the scent which way the game goes, by a word dropped, the cast of an eye, or such a small matter--signal enough to give him the alarm; if we consider his experience in heart-anatomy, having inspected, and as it were dissected, so many in his long practice, whereby his knowledge is much perfected, as also his great diligence to add to both these, being as close a student as ever, considering the saints, and studying how he may do them a mischief, as we see in Job's case, whom he had so observed, that he was able to give an answer ex tempore to God, [as to] what Job's state and present posture was, and what might be the most probable means of obtaining his will of him; and besides all this, the correspondence that he hath with those in and about the Christian, from whom he learns much of his estate, as David [did] by Hushai in Absalom's

counsel;--all these considered, it is almost impossible for the creature to stir out of the closet of his heart, but it will be known whither he inclines.

Some corrupt passion or other will bewray the soul to him, as they did [bewray] David to Saul, who told him where he might find him, in the wilderness of Engedi, I Sam. 24:4. Thus will these give intelligence to Satan, and say [to him], If thou wouldst surprise such a one, he is gone that way, you will have him in the wood of worldly employments, over head and ears in the desires of this life. See where another sits under a bower, delighting himself in this child, or that gift, endowment of mind, or the like; lay but the lime-twig[6] there, and you shall soon have him in it.

Now Satan having thus intelligence, lets him alone to act his part. He sure cannot be at a loss himself, when his scholars, the Jesuits I mean, have such agility of mind, to wreath and cast themselves into any form becoming the persons they would seduce. Is ambition the lust the heart favours? O the pleasing projects that he will put such upon! How easily, having first blown them up with vain hopes, doth he draw them into horrid sins. Thus Haman, that he may have a monopoly of his prince's favour, is hurried into that bloody plot, fatal at last to himself against the Jews.

Is uncleanness the lust after which the creature's eye wanders? Now he will be the pander, to bring him and his minion together. Thus he, finding Amnon sick of this disease, sends Jonadab, a deep-pated fellow, II Sam. 13.3, to put this fine device into his head of feigning himself sick, whereby his sister fell into his snare.

3. Stratagem. In his gradual approaches to the soul. When he comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little; he know that he may get that at many times, which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming in a body would be shut out; and therefore that he may beget no suspicion, he presents may be a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of his plot. These like scouts go before, while his whole body lies hid as it were in some swamp at hand. Thus he wriggled into Eve's bosom, whom he doth not, at first dash, bid take and eat. No, he is more mannerly than do so. This would have been so hideous, that as the fish with some sudden noise, by a stone cast into the river, is scared from the bait, so she would have been affrighted from holding parley with such a one. No, he propounds a question which shall make way for this. Hath God said? art [thou] not mistaken? Could this be his meaning, whose bounty lets thee eat of the rest, to deny thee the best of all? Thus he digs about and loosens the root of her faith, and then the tree falls the easier the next gust of temptation. This is a dangerous policy indeed. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan, that never intended to go two; but when once on the way, they have been allured farther and farther, till at last they know not how to leave his company.

Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. He first presents an object that occasions some thoughts; these set on fire the affections, and they fume up into the brain, and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, Satan now dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it even now have defied. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession; but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christian, give not place to Satan, no, not an inch, in his first motions. He that is a beggar and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in. Yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if it be not mended by timely repentance.

4. Stratagem. The fourth way, wherein Satan shows his subtlety in managing his temptations, is in his reserves. A wise captain hath ever some fresh troops at hand, to fall in at a pinch when others are worsted. Satan is seldom at a loss in this respect; when one temptation is beat back, he soon hath another to fill up the gap, and make good the line.

Thus he tempts Christ to diffidence and distrust, by bidding him turn stones into bread, as if it were now time to carve for himself, being so long neglected of his Father, as to fast forty days, and no supplies heard of. No sooner had Christ quenched this dart with these words, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' Matt. 4:4, but he hath another on the string, which he let fly to him, tempting him to presumption. 'Then the devil taketh him up and setteth him on a pinnacle,' and bids, 'Cast thyself down headlong; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,' &c., ver. 5, 6. As if he had said, If thou hast such confidence on God and his Word, as thou pretendest, show it by casting thyself down, for thou hast a word between thee and the ground, if thou darest trust God. And truly, though Christ had his answer ready, and was prepared to receive his charge on the right hand and on the left, being so completely armed that no temptation could come amiss, yet note we, [that] Satan's temptations on Christ were like the serpents motion on a rock, of which Solomon speaks, Prov. 30:19. They make no impression, no dint at all; but on us they are as a serpent on sand, or dust, that leaves a print, when not in the heart yet in the fancy--colours that which is next door to it, and so the object there is ready to slip in, if great care be not observed. Especially in this case when he doth thus change his hand, as when we have resisted one way, falls afresh in another, yea, plants his succeeding temptation upon our very resistance in the former.

Now it requires some readiness in our postures, and skill at all our weapons, to make our defence; like a disputant, when he is put out of his road, and hath a new question started, or argument unusual brought, now he is tried to purpose. And truly this is Satan's way when he tempts the Christian to neglect of [the] duties of God's worship (from his worldly occasions, the multitude of them, or necessity of following them); and this takes not, then he is on the other side, and is drawing the Christian to the neglect of his worldly calling, out of a seeming zeal to promote his other in the worship of God. Or first, he comes and labours to deaden the heart in duty, but the Christian too watchful for him there, then he is puffing of him up with an opinion of his enlargement in it, and ever he keep his sliest and most sublimated temptations for the last.

5. Stratagem. In his politic retreats. You shall have an enemy fly as [if] overcome, when it is on a design of overcoming. This was Joshua's wile, by which he caught the men of Ai in a trap, Josh. 8. We read not only of Satan's being cast out, but of the unclean spirit going out voluntarily, yet with a purpose to come again, and bring worse company with him, Matt. 12:43. Satan is not always beat back by the dint and power of conquering grace, but sometimes he draws off, and raiseth his own siege, the more handsomely to get the Christian out of his fastnesses and trenches, that so he may snap him on the plains, whom he cannot come at in his works and fortifications. Temptations send the saint to his castle, as the sight of the dog doth the coney to her burrow. Now the soul walks the rounds, stands upon its guard, dares not neglect duty, because the enemy is under its very walls, shutting in his temptations continually; but when Satan seems to give the soul over, and the Christian finds he is not haunted, with such motions as formerly, truly now he is prone to remit in his diligence, fail in his duty, and grow either unfrequent or formal therein; as the Romans, whose valour decayed for want of the Carthaginian troops to alarm them. Let Satan tempt or not tempt, assault or retreat, keep thou in order, stand in a fighting posture, let his flight strengthen thy faith, but not weaken thy care. The Parthians do their enemy most hurt in their flight, shooting their darts as they run, and so may Satan do thee, if thy seeming victory makes thee secure.

[Satan's subtlety in choosing fitting

instruments for his purpose.]

Third. Satan shows his subtlety in pitching on fit instruments for his turn to carry on his designs. He, as the master-workman, cuts out the temptation, and gives it the shape, but sometime he hath his journeymen to make it up; he knows his work may be carried on better by others, when he appears not aboveboard himself. Indeed there is not such a suitableness between the angelical nature and man's, as there is between one man and another; and therefore he cannot make his approaches so familiarly with us, as man can do to man. And here, as in other things, he is God's ape. You know this very reason was given, why the Israelites desired God might not speak to them, but Moses, and God liked the motion: 'they have well said,' saith God, 'I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee,' Deut. 18:17, 18. Thus Satan useth the ministry of men like ourselves, by which as he becomes more familiar, so he is less suspected, while Joab-like, he gets another to do his errand. Now it is not any [one that] will serve his turn for this employment; he is very choice in his instruments he pitcheth on. It is not every soldier [that] is fit for an embassy, to treat with an enemy, to betray a town, and the like. Satan considers who can do his work to his greatest advantage. And in this he is unlike God, who is not at all choice in his instruments, because he needs none, and is able to do as well with one as another; but Satan's power being finite, he must patch up the defect of the lion's skin with the fox's. Now the persons Satan aims at for his instruments are chiefly of four sorts. 1. Persons of place and power. 2. Persons of parts and policy. 3. Persons of holiness, or at least reputed so. 4. Persons of relation and interest.

1. Instrument. Satan makes choice of persons of place and power. These are either in the commonwealth or church. If he can, he will secure the throne and the pulpit, as the two forts that command the whole line. (1.) Men of power in the commonwealth; it is his old trick to be tampering with such. A prince or a ruler may stand for a thousand; therefore saith Paul to Elymas, when he would have turned the deputy from the faith, 'O full of all subtilty thou child of the devill!' Acts 13:10. As if he had said, You have learned this of your father the devil--to haunt the courts of princes, wind into the favour of great ones. There is a double policy that Satan hath in gaining such to his side. (a) None have such advantage to draw others to their way. Corrupt the captain, and it is hard if he bring not off his troop with him. When the princes--men of renown in their tribes--stood up with Korah, presently a multitude are drawn into the conspiracy, Num. 16:2, 19. Let Jeroboam set up idolatry, and Israel is soon in a snare. It is said [that] the people willingly walked after his commandment, Hos, 5:11. (b) Should the sin stay at court, and the infection go no farther, yet the sin of such a one, though a good man, may cost a whole kingdom dear. 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel,' I Chron. 21:1. He owed Israel a spite, and he pays them home in their king's sin, which dropped in a fearful plague upon their heads. (2.) Such as are in place and office in the church. No such way to infect the whole town, as to poison the cistern at which they draw their water. Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go to Ramoth-Gilead and fall? Satan can tell: 'I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets,' I Kings 22:22. How shall the profane be hardened in their sins? Let the preacher sew pillows under their elbows, and cry Peace, peace, and it is done. How may the worship of God come to be neglected? Let Hophni and Phinehas be but scandalous in their lives, and many both good and bad will 'abhor the sacrifice of the Lord.'

2. Instrument. He employeth persons of parts and policy. If any hath more pregnancy of wit and depth of reason than other, he is the man Satan looks upon for his service, and so far does he prevail, that very few of his rank are found among Christ's disciples, 'Not many wise.' Indeed, God will not have his kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, maintained by carnal policy, [for] it is a gospel command that we walk in

godly simplicity[7]. Though the serpent can shrink up into his folds, and appear what he is not, yet it doth not become the saints to juggle or shuffle with God or men; and truly when any of them have made use of the serpent's subtlety, it hath not followed their hand. Jacob got the blessing by a wile, but he might have had it cheaper with plain dealing. Abraham and Sarah both dissemble to Abimelech; God discovers their sin, and reproves them for it by the mouth of a heathen. Asa, out of state-policy, joins league with Syria, yea, pawns the vessels of the sanctuary and all for help. And what comes of all this? 'Herein thou hast done foolishly,' saith God, 'from henceforth thou shalt have wars.' Sinful policy shall not long thrive in the saints' hands well. But Satan will not out of his way; he inquires for the subtlest-pated men, a Balaam, Ahithophel, Haman, Sanballat, men admired for their counsel and deep plots; these are for his turn. A wicked cause needs a smooth orator; bad ware, a pleasing chapman. As in particular, the instruments he useth to seduce and corrupt the minds of men are commonly subtle-pated men, such 'that if it were possible should deceive the very elect.' This made the apostle so jealous of the Corinthians, whom he had espoused to Christ, lest, as Eve by the serpent, so their 'minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.' He must be a cunning devil indeed that can draw off the spouse's love from the Beloved; yet there is such a witchery in Satan's instruments, that many have been brought to fly on the face of those truths and ordinances, yea, [of] Christ himself, to whom they have seemed espoused formerly. Now in three particulars this sort of Satan's instruments show their master's subtlety.

(1.) In aspersing the good name of the sincere messengers of Christ--Satan's old trick to raise his credit upon the ruined reputation of Christ's faithful servants. Thus he taught Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to charge Moses and Aaron: 'Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy,' Num. 16:3. They would make the people believe that it was the pride of their heart to claim a monopoly to themselves, as if none but Aaron and his fraternity were holy enough to offer incense, and by this subtle practice they seduced for a while, in a manner, the whole congregation to their side. So the lying prophets, that were Satan's knights of the post to Ahab, fell foul on good Micaiah. Our Saviour himself was no better handled by the Pharisees and their confederates; and Paul, the chief of the apostles, [had] his ministry undermined, and his reputation blasted, by false teachers, as if he had been some weak sorry preacher. 'but his bodily presence is weak,' say they, 'and his speech contemptible,' II Cor. 10:10. And is this your admired man?

(2.) In covering their impostures and errors with choice notions and excellent truths. Arius himself, and other dangerous instruments of Satan, were too wise to stuff their discourses with nothing but heterodox matter. Precious truths dropped from them, with which they sprinkled their corrupt principles, yet with such art as should not easily be discerned. This, as one observes, our Saviour warns his disciples of, when he bids them 'beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,' that is, of their errors. But why leaven? [Just] for the secret mixture of it with the wholesome bread. You do not make your bread all of leaven, for none would then eat it, but crumble a little into a whole batch, which sours all. Thus Christ doth tell the disciples, that the Pharisees among many truths mix their errors; and therefore it behoves them to beware, lest with the truth the errors go down also. Again, leaven is very much like the dough, of the same grain with it, [and] only differs in age and sourness. Thus Christ intimates the resemblance of their errors to the truth, as it were, out of the Scriptures, but soured with their own false glosses. This indeed makes it easy for Christ's sheep to be infected with the scab of error, because that weed which breeds the rot is so like the grass that nourisheth them.

(3.) Their subtlety appears in holding forth such principles as are indulgent to the flesh. This brings in whole shoals of silly souls into their net. The heart of man loves a life to shape a religion according to his

own humour, and is easy to believe that to be a truth that favours his own inclination. Now there are three lusts that Satan's instruments labour to gratify in their doctrine--carnal reason, pride, and fleshly liberty.

(a) Carnal reason. This is the great idol which the more intelligent part of the world worship, making it the very standard of their faith, and from this bitter root have sprung those Arian and Socinian heresies. And truly he that will go no farther than reason will carry him, may hold out in the plain way of the moral law, but when he comes to the depths of the gospel, must either go back, or be content that faith should help reason over.

(b) Another lust that Satan cockers is pride. Man naturally would be a god to himself, though for clambering so high he got his fall; and whatever doctrine nourisheth a good opinion of man in his own eye, this is acceptable to him; and this hath spawned another fry of dangerous errors--the Pelagian and Semi-pelagian, which set nature upon its legs, and persuade man he got alone to Christ, or at least with a little external help, of a hand to lead, or argument to excite, without any creating work in the soul. O, we cannot conceive how glib such stuff goes down. If one workman should tell you your house is rotten, and must be pulled down, and all new materials prepared; and another should say, No such matter; such a beam is good, and such a spar may stand --a little cost will serve the turn: it were no wonder that you should listen to him that would put you to least cost and trouble. The faithful servants of Christ tell sinners from the Word, that man in his natural state is corrupt and rotten, that nothing of the old frame will serve, and there must needs be all new; but in comes an Arminian, and blows up the sinner's pride, and tells him he is not so weak or wicked as the other represents him. If thou wilt, thou mayest repent and believe; or, at least, by exerting thy natural abilities, oblige God to superadd what thou hast not. This is the workman that will please proud man best.

(c) Satan by his instruments nourisheth that desire of fleshly liberty, which is in man by nature, who is a son of Belial, without yoke; and if he must wear any, that will please best which hath the softest lining, and pincheth the flesh least; and therefore when the sincere teachers of the Word will not abate of the strictness of the command, but press sincere obedience to it, then come Satan's instruments and say, These are hard task-masters, who will not allow one play-day in a year to the Christian, but tie him to continual duty; we will show you an easier way to heaven. Come, saith the Papist, confess but once a year to the priest, pay him well for his pains, and be an obedient son of the church, and we will dispense with all the rest. Come, saith the Familist^[8]Quoted from the Funk and Wagnalls online Encyclopedia --L. B. W., the gospel charter allows more liberty than these legal preachers tell you of. They bid you repent and believe, when Christ hath done all these to your hand. What have you left to do but to nourish the flesh? Something sure is in it, that impostors find such quick return for their ware, while truth hangs upon the log. And is it not this, that they are content to afford heaven cheaper to their disciples than Christ will to his? He that sells cheapest shall have most customers, though, at last, best will be best cheap; truth with self-denial [is] a better pennyworth, than error with all its flesh-pleasing.

3. Instrument. Satan makes choice of such as have a great name for holiness. None so good as a live bird to draw other birds into the net. But is it possible that such should do this work for the devil? Yes, such is the policy of Satan, and the frailty of the best, that the most holy men have been his instruments to seduce others. 'Abraham' he tempts his wife to lie, 'Say thou art my sister.' The old prophet leads the man of God out of his way, I Kings 13:11; the holiness of the man, and the reverence of his age, it is like, gave authority to his counsel. O, how should this make you watchful, whose long travel and great progress in the ways of God, have gained you a name of eminency in the church, what you say, do, or hold, because you are file-leading men, and others look more on you than their way!

4. Instrument. Satan chooseth persons of relation and interest, such as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for the nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. It is like David would not have received that from Nabal, which he took from Abigail, and thanks her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Delilah doth more with Samson than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison, 'Curse God and die.' Some think Satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants--(though she was also within his commission)--as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter, a disciple, to tempt Christ, at another time his friends and kinsfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met withal, was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations. Paul himself could not get off his snare without heart-breaking. 'What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?' Acts 21:13.

[Satan's subtlety as a tempter to sin

briefly applied.]

Use First. Affect not sinful policy and subtlety, it makes you but like the devil. There is the wisdom of the serpent, which is commended, and that is his perfection as a creature, in which both the literal and the mystical excel, the one in an ingenious observing nature above the beast of the field, and the other in knowledge as an angel above men; but as the subtlety of the one and knowledge of the other is degenerate, and makes them more able to do mischief, the one of the bodies, the others to the souls of men, this kind of wisdom and subtlety is to be abhorred by us. The serpent's eye, as one saith, does well only in the dove's head.

1. Affect not subtlety in contriving any sin. Some are wise to do evil, Jer. 4:22. Masters of this craft, who can as they lie on their beds, cast their wicked designs into an artificial method, showing a kind of devilish wit therein, as the Egyptians who dealt wisely, as they thought, with the Israelites, and Jezebel, who had printed her bloody design in so fair a letter, that some might read her saint while she was playing the devil. This is the black art indeed, and make the soul as black as hell that practiseth it. It is not hard for any, though a fool, to learn. Be but wicked, and the devil will help thee to be witty. Come but a while to his school, and thou mayest soon be a cunning man. No sins speak a higher attainment in wickedness, than those which are of deliberate counsel and deep plottings. Creatures, as they go longer with their young, so their birth is more strong and perfect, as the elephant above all others. The longer a sin is a forming and forging within, and the oftener the head and heart meet about it, the completer the sin. Here are many litters of unformed sins in one, such, I mean, as are conceived and cast forth in the hurry of extemporary passion. Those sudden acts show weakness, these other deep wickedness.

2. Take heed of hiding sin when thou hast committed it. This is one of the devices that are in man's heart; and as much art and cunning is shown in this, as in any one part of the sinner's trade. What a trick had the patriarchs to blind their father's eye with a bloody coat? Joseph's mistress, to prevent a charge from Joseph, accuseth him for what she is guilty, like the robber who escaped by crying 'stop the thief.' God taught man to make coats to cover his naked body, but the devil learnt him to weave these coverings to hide the nakedness of his soul. The more subtle thou seemest in concealing thy sin, the more egregiously thou playest the fool. None so shamed as the liar when found out, and that thou art sure to be. Thy covering is too short to hide thee from God's eye, and what God sees, if thou dost not put thyself to shame, he will tell all the world hereafter, however thou escapest in this life.

3. Take heed of subtlety and sinful policy, in compassing that which is lawful in itself; it is lawful to improve thy estate and husband it well for thy posterity but take not the devil's counsel, who will be putting thee upon some tricks in thy trade and sleights in thy dealing. Such may go for wise men for a while, but the prophet reads their destiny, 'At his end he shall be a fool,' Jer. 17:11. It is lawful to love our estate, life, liberty; but beware of sinful policy to save them. It is no wisdom to shuffle with God, by denying his truth, or shifting off our duty to keep correspondence with men. He is a weak fencer that lays his soul at open guard to be stabbed and wounded with guilt, while he is lifting up his hands to save a broken head. Our fear commonly meets us at that door by which we think to run from it. He that 'will save his life shall lose it.' As you love your peace, Christians, be plain-hearted with God and man, and keep the king's highway. Go the plain way of command to obtain thy desire, and not leap over hedge and ditch to come a little sooner to the journey's end; such commonly either meet with some stop that makes them come back with shame, or else put to venture their necks in some desperate leap. He is sure to come faster, if not sooner, home, that is willing to go a little about to keep God company. The historian's observation is worth the Christian's remembrance: 'Crafty counsels promise fair at first, but prove more difficult in the managing, and in the end do pay the undertaker home with desperate sorrow.'^[9]

Use Second. Is Satan so subtle? O then, think not to be too cunning for the devil, he will be too hard for thee at last. Sin not with thoughts of an after-repentance; it is possible thou meanest this at present, but dost thou think, who sits down to play with this cheater, to draw out thy stock when thou pleasest? Alas, poor wretch! he has a thousand devices to carry thee on, and engage thee deeper, till he hath not left thee any tenderness in thy conscience. As some have been served at play, intending to venture only a shilling or two, yet have by the secret witchery in gaming, played the very clothes off their back before they had done,--O how many have thus sinned away all their principles, yea, profession itself, that they have not so much as this cloak left, but walk naked to their shame! [They are] like children, who, got into a boat, think to play near the shore, but are unawares by a violent gust carried down to the wide sea. O how know you that dally with Satan, but that at last you may (who begin modestly) be carried down to the broad sea of profaneness? Some men are so subtle to over-reach, and so cruel when they get men into their hands, that a man had better beg his bread than borrow of them. Such a merchant is Satan, cunning to insinuate, and get the creature into his books, and when he hath him on the hip, [there is] no more mercy to be had at his hand than the lamb may expect from the ravenous wolf.

Use Third. Study his wiles, and acquaint thyself with Satan's policy. Paul takes it for granted, that every saint doth in some measure understand them; 'We are not ignorant of his devices,' II Cor. 2:11. He is but an ill fencer that knows and observes nothing of his enemy's play. Many particular stratagems I have laid down already which may help a little, and for thy direction in this study of, and inquiry into, Satan's wiles, take the threefold counsel.

1. Take God into thy counsel. Heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee what plots are hatching there against thee. Consider Satan as he is God's creature; so God cannot but know him. He that makes the watch, knows every pin in it. He formed this crooked serpent, though not the crookedness of this serpent; and though Satan's way in tempting is as wonderful as the way of a serpent on a rock, yet God traceth him, yea, knows all his thoughts together. Hell itself is naked before him; and this destroyer hath no covering. Again, consider him as God's prisoner, who hath him fast in chains, and so the Lord, who is his keeper, must needs know whither his prisoner goes, who cannot stir without his leave. Lastly, consider him as his messenger, for so he is. An evil spirit from the Lord vexed Saul, and he that gives him his errand, is able to tell thee what it is. Go then and plough with God's heifer; improve thy interest with Christ,

who knows what his Father knows, and is ready to reveal all that concerns thee to thee, John 15:15. It was he who described the devil coming against Peter and the rest of the apostles, and faithfully revealed it to them, before they thought of any such matter, Luke 22. Through Christ's hands passes all that is transacted in heaven hell. We live in days of great actions, deep counsels, and plots on all sides, and only a few that stand on the upper end of the world know these mysteries of state; all the rest know little more than pamphlet intelligence. Thus it is in regard of those plots which Satan in his infernal conclave is laying against the souls of men; they are but a few that know anything to purpose of Satan's designs against them; and those are the saints, from whom God cannot hide his own counsels of love, but sends his Spirit to reveal unto them here, what he hath prepared for them in heaven, I Cor. 2:10, and therefore much less will he conceal any destructive plot of Satan from them.

2. Be intimately acquainted with thy own heart, and thou wilt the better know his design against thee, who takes his method of tempting from the inclination and posture of thy heart. As a general walks about the city, and views it well, and then raiseth his batteries where he hath the greatest advantage, so doth Satan compass and consider the Christian in every part before he tempts.

3. Be careful to read the word of God with observation. In it thou hast the history of the most remarkable battles that have been fought by the most eminent worthies in Christ's army of saints with this great warrior Satan. Here thou mayest see how Satan hath foiled them, and how they have recovered their lost ground. Here you have his cabinet's counsels opened. There is not a lust which you are in danger of, but you have it described; not a temptation which the Word doth not arm you against. It is reported that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture which was sent to Luther, with a warning from a faithful friend that he should take heed of such a man when he saw him, by which he knew the murderer, and escaped his hands. The Word shows thee, O Christian, the face of those lusts which Satan employs to butcher thy precious soul.

'By them thy servant is warned,' saith David, Ps. 19:11.

[Satan's second main design is to accuse,
vex, and trouble the saint for sin.]

The second main design in which Satan appears such a subtle enemy is as a troubler and an accuser for sin, molesting the saint's peace, and disquieting the saint's spirit. As the Holy Spirit's work is not only to be a sanctifier, but also a comforter, whose fruits are righteousness and peace, so the evil spirit Satan is both a seducer unto sin, and an accuser for sin, a tempter and a troubler, and indeed in the same order. As the Holy Ghost is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter, so Satan [is] first a tempter, then a troubler. Joseph's mistress first tries to draw him to gratify her lust, [but] that string breaking, she hath another to trounce him and charge him, and, for a plea, she hath his coat to cover her malice; nor is it hard for Satan to pick some hole in the saint's coat, when he walks most circumspectly. The proper seat of sin is the will, of comfort the conscience. Satan hath not absolute knowledge of or power over these, [they] being locked up from any other but God, and therefore what he doth, either in defiling temptations, or disquieting, is by wiles more than by open force; and he is not inferior in troubling, to himself in tempting. Satan hath, as the serpent, a way by himself. Other beasts [have] their motion direct, right on, but the serpent goes askew, as we say, winding and writhing its body; [so] that when you see a serpent creeping along, you can hardly discern which way its tends. Thus Satan in his vexing temptations hath many intricate policies, turning this way and that way, the better to conceal his design from the saint, which will appear in these following methods:

First Wile. He vexeth the Christian by laying his brats at the saint's door, and charging him with that which is his own creature. And here he hath such a notable art, that many dear saints of God are woefully hampered and dejected, as if they were the vilest blasphemers and veriest atheists in the world: whereas indeed the cup is of his own putting into the sack. But so slyly is it conveyed into the saint's bosom, that the Christian, though amazed and frightened at the sight of them, yet being jealous of his own heart, and unacquainted with Satan's tricks of this kind, cannot conceive how such notions should come there, if not bred in, and vomited out by his own naughty heart. So he bears the blame of the sin himself, because he cannot find the right father, mourning as one that is forlorn and cast off by God, or else, saith he, I should never have such vermin of hell creeping in my bosom. And here Satan hath the end he proposeth, for he is not so silly as to hope he should have welcome with such a horrid crew of blasphemous and atheistical thoughts in that soul, where he hath been denied when he came in an enticing way. No, but his design is by way of revenge, because the soul will not prostitute itself to his lust, otherwise therefore to haunt it and scare it with those imps of blasphemy. So he served Luther, to whom he appeared, and when repulsed by him, went away and left a noisome stench behind him in the room. Thus when the Christian hath worsted Satan in his more pleasing temptations, being maddened, he belcheth forth this stench of blasphemous motions to annoy and affright him, that from them the Christian may draw some sad conclusion or other, and indeed the Christian's sin lies commonly more in the conclusion which he draws from them--as that he is not a child of God--than in the motions themselves. All the counsel therefore I shall give thee in this case, is to do with these motions, as you use to serve those vagrants and rogues that come about the country, whom, though you cannot keep from passing through your town, yet you look they settle not there, but whip them and send them to their own home. Thus give these motions the law, in mourning for them, resisting of them, and they shall not be your charge. Yea, it is like you shall seldomer be troubled with such guests; but if once you come to entertain them, and be Satan's nurse to them, then the law of God will cast them upon you.

Second Wile. Another wile of Satan as a troubler, is in aggravating the saint's sins, against which he hath a notable declamatory faculty--not that he hates sin, but the saint. Now in this, his chief subtlety is so to lay his charge, that it may seem to be the act of the Holy Spirit. He knows an arrow out of God's quiver wounds deep; and therefore, when he accuseth, he comes in God's name. As suppose a child were conscious to himself of displeasing his father, and one that owes him a spite, to trouble him, should counterfeit a letter from his father, and cunningly convey it into the son's hand, who receives it as from his father. Therein he chargeth him with many heavy crimes, disowns him, and threatens he shall never come in his sight, or have penny portion from him; [and] the poor son, conscious to himself of many undutiful carriages, and not knowing the plot, takes on heavily, and can neither eat nor sleep from grief. Here is a real trouble begot from a false and imaginary ground. Thus Satan observes how the squares go between God and his children. Such a saint he sees tardy in his duty, faulty in that service, and he knows the Christian is conscious of this, and that the Spirit of God will also show his distaste for these; both which [reasons] prompt Satan to draw a charge at length, raking up all the aggravations he can think of, and give it into the saint as sent from God. Thus he taught Job's friends to pick up those infirmities which dropped from him in his distress, and shoot them back in his face, as if indeed they had been sent from God to declare him an hypocrite, and denounce his wrath for the same.

But how shall we know the false accusation of Satan from the rebukes of God and his Spirit?

1. If they cross any former act or work of the Spirit in thy soul, they are Satan's, not the Holy Spirit's. Now you shall observe Satan's scope in accusing the Christian, and aggravating his sin, is to unsaint him, and

persuade him he is but an hypocrite. Oh, saith Satan, now thou hast shown what thou art. See what a foul spot is on thy coat. This is not the spot of a child. Whoever, that was a saint, committed such a sin after such a sort? All thy comforts and confidence which thou hast bragged of, were false, I warrant you. Thus you see Satan at one blow dasheth all in pieces. The whole fabric of grace which God hath been rearing up many years in the soul, must now at one puff of his malicious mouth be blown down, and all the sweet comforts with which the Holy Spirit hath sealed up God's love, must be defaced with this one blot, which Satan draws over the fair copy of the saint's evidence. Well, soul, for thy comfort know, if ever the Spirit of God hath begun sanctifying or comforting work, causing thee to hope in his mercy, he never is, will, can be the messenger to bring contrary news to thy soul; His language is not yea and nay, but yea and amen for ever. Indeed, when the saint plays the wanton, he can chide, yea, will frown and tell the soul roundly of its sin, as he did David by Nathan. 'Thou art the man' --this thou hast done. He paints out his sin with such bloody colours, as made David's heart melt, as it were, into so many drops of water. But that shall not serve his turn; he tells him what a rod is steeping for him, that shall smart to purpose--one of his own house, no other than his darling son, shall rise up against him. [This happens in order] that he may the more fully conceive how ill God took the sin of him, a child, a saint, when he shall know what it is to have his beloved child traitorously invade his crown, and unnaturally hunt for his precious life; yet not a word all this while is heard from Nathan teaching David to unsaint himself, and call in question the work of God in his soul. No, he had no such commission from God; he was sent to make him mourn for his sin, not from his sin to question his state which God had so oft put out of doubt.

2. When they asperse the riches of God's grace, and so charge the Christian, that withal they reflect upon the good name of God, they are not of the Holy Spirit but from Satan. When you find your sins so represented and aggravated to you, as exceeding either the mercy of God's nature, or the grace of his covenant[10], this comes from that foul liar. The Holy Spirit is Christ's spokesman to commend him to souls, and to woo sinners to embrace the grace of the gospel; and can such words drop from his sacred lips, as should break the match and sink Christ's esteem in the thoughts of the creature? You may know where this is mined. When you hear one commend another for a wise or good man, and at last come in with a but that dasheth all, you will easily think he is no friend to the man, but some sly enemy that by seeming to commend, desires to disgrace the more. Thus you find God represented to you as merciful and gracious, but not to such a great sinner as you. to have power and strength, but not able to save thee; you may say, Avaunt, Satan, thy speech bewrayeth thee.

Third Wile. Another wile of Satan lies in cavilling at the Christian's duties and performances, by which he puts him to much toil and trouble. He is at church as soon as thou canst be, Christian, for thy heart; yea, he stands under thy closet-window, and hears what thou sayest to God in secret, all the while studying how he may commence a suit against thee from thy duty. [He is] like those who come to sermons to carp and catch at what the preacher saith, that they make him an offender for some word or other misplaced; or like a cunning opponent in the schools, while his adversary is busy in reading his position, he is studying to confute it. And truly Satan hath such an art as this, that he is able to take our duties in pieces, and so disfigure them that they shall appear formal, though never so zealous; hypocritical, though enriched with much sincerity. When thou hast done thy duty, Christian, then stands up this sophist to ravel out thy work; there, will he say, thou playedst the hypocrite, zealous, but serving thyself, here wandering, there nodding, a little further puffed up with pride. And what wages canst thou hope for at God's hands, now thou hast spoiled his work, and cut it all out into chips? Thus he makes many poor souls lead a weary life; nothing they do but he hath a fling at, that they know not whether [it be] best to pray or not, to hear or not; and when they have prayed and heard, whether it be to any purpose or not. Thus their souls hang in doubt,

and their days pass in sorrow; while their enemy stands in a corner, and laughs at the cheat he hath put upon them; as one, who by putting a counterfeit spider into the dish, makes those that sit at table either out of conceit with the meat, that they dare not eat, or afraid of themselves if they have eaten, lest they should be poisoned with their meat.

Question. But you will say, What will you have us do in this case to withstand the cavils of Satan, in reference to our duties?

Answer 1. Let this make thee more accurate in all thou doest. It is the very end God aims at in suffering Satan thus to watch you, that you his children might be the more circumspect, because you have one [who] overlooks you, that will be sure to tell tales of you to God, and accuse thee to thy own self. Doth it not behove thee to write thy copy fair, when such a critic reads and scans it over? Doth it not concern thee to know thy heart well, to turn over the Scriptures diligently, that thou mayest know the state of thy soul-controversy in all the cases of conscience thereof, when thou hast such a subtle opponent to reply upon thee?

Answer 2. Let it make thee more humble. If Satan can charge thee with so much in thy best duties, O what then can thy God do! God suffers sometimes the infirmities of his people to be known by the wicked, who are ready to check and frump them for them, for the end of humbling his people. How much more low should these accusations of Satan, which are in a great part too true, lay us before God?

Answer 3. Observe the fallacy of Satan's argument, which discovered, will help thee to answer his cavil. The fallacy is double.

(1.) He will persuade thee that thy duty and thyself are hypocritical, proud, formal, &c., because something of these sins are to be found in thy duty. Now, Christian, learn to distinguish between pride in a duty, and a proud duty; hypocrisy in a person, and a hypocrite; wine in a man, and a man in wine. The best of saints have the stirrings of such corruptions in them and in their services. These birds will light on an Abraham's sacrifice, but comfort thyself with this, that if thou findest a party within thy bosom pleading for God, and entering its protest against thee, thou and thy services are evangelically perfect. God beholds these as the weaknesses of thy sickly state here below, and pities thee, as thou wouldst do thy lame child. How odious is he to us that mocks one for natural defects, a blear eye, or a stammering tongue! such are these in thy new nature. Observable is that in Christ's prayer against Satan, 'And the Lord said unto Satan, Zech. 3:2, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire,'. As if Christ had said, Lord, wilt thou suffer this envious spirit to twit thy poor child with, and charge him for, those infirmities that cleave to his perfect state? He is but new plucked out of the fire. No wonder there are some sparks unquenched, some corruptions unmortified, some disorders unreformed in his place and calling; and what Christ did for Joshua, he doth incessantly for all his saints, for apologizing for their infirmities with his Father.

(2.) His other fallacy is in arguing from the sin that is in our duty, to the non-acceptance of them. Will God, saith he, thinkest thou, take such broken groats at thy hand? Is he not a holy God?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-gurnall/the-christian-in-complete-armor-part-3/>

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