

# TEMPTATION



JOHN OWEN (1616-1683)

# TEMPTATION

*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 thou hast kept the word of my patience, I  
also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,  
which shall come upon all the world, to  
try them that dwell upon the earth.”

—*Revelation 3:10*

John Owen

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# TEMPTATION

## Preface

Christian Reader,

If you are in any measure awake in these days in which we live, and have taken notice of the many, great, and various temptations with which all sorts of persons that know the Lord and profess His name are perplexed, to which they are continually exposed, and what success those temptations have had—to the unspeakable scandal of the gospel, with the wounding and ruin of innumerable souls—I suppose you will not inquire any farther after other reasons for the publishing of the following warnings and directions, since they are suited to the times that pass over us and your own concern in them.

This I shall only say to those who think it suitable to persist in any such inquiry. My first engagement for the exposing of 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 adherence to everything that is made precious by its relation to Him. This has given them power over me to require services of greater importance at any time. Yet, I dare not lay my writing this book upon that account, as in the least to intimate that, with respect to the general state of things mentioned, I did not myself esteem it seasonable and necessary. The variety of outward providences and dispensations<sup>1</sup> with which I myself have been exercised in this world, with the inward trials with which they have been attended, added to the observation that I have had advantages to make of the ways and walkings of others—their beginnings, progresses, and endings—their risings and falls in profession and behavior, in darkness and light—have left a constant sense and impression of the power and danger of temptations upon my mind and spirit. Without other pleas and pretenses, in my own judgment, I cannot but admit that, in this season, it is needful to make a serious call to men to beware of temptation, with a discovery of some of the most important ways and means of the prevalence of present temptations.

But now, reader, if you are among those

- who take no notice of these things or care not for them,
- who have no sense of the effect and danger of temptations in your own walk and profession,<sup>2</sup>
- who have not observed the power of temptations upon others,

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<sup>1</sup> **providences and dispensations** – Providences are all things done by “God’s...most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions.” (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 11; see also *God’s Providence* by Charles Spurgeon; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY) Dispensations are events arranged by God.

<sup>2</sup> **profession** – profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

- who discern not the many advantages that temptations have in these days in which all things are shaken,
  - who have not been troubled or moved for the sad successes temptations have had among professors;
  - but suppose that all things are well within doors and without,
  - and think things would be better if you could more fully satisfy your lusts in the pleasures or profits of the world—
- then I desire you to know that I write not for you, nor do I esteem you a fit reader or judge of what is here written.

While all the issues of providential dispensations, in reference to the public concerns of these nations, are perplexed and entangled;

- while the footsteps of God lie in the deep where His paths are not known;
- while, in particular, unparalleled distresses and strange prosperities are measured out to men, yea, even to professors;
- while a spirit of error, giddiness, and delusion goes forth with such strength and effectiveness, as it seems to have received a commission to go and prosper;
- while there are found among brethren such divisions, strifes, and rivalries attended with such evil suspicions, wrath, and revenge;
- while the desperate issues and products of men's temptations are seen daily in partial and total apostasy,<sup>3</sup> in the decay of love, the overthrow of faith; our days being filled with fearful examples of backsliding, such as former ages never knew;
- while there is a visible decline from reformation seizing upon the professing part of these nations, both as to personal holiness and zeal for the interest of Christ—

then he who does not understand that there is an “hour of temptation...come upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev 3:10), is doubtless either himself at present captivated under the power of some woeful lust, corruption, or temptation, or is indeed stark blind, and knows not at all what it is to serve God in temptations!

With such, then, I have not at present to do.

The following warning is intended for those who have a general sense of these things. It also is intended for those who in some measure are able to consider that the plague is begun, so that they may be further awakened to look about them—lest by some secret and imperceptible ways, the infection has approached nearer to them than they did apprehend—or lest they should be surprised hereafter by any of those temptations that, in these days, either waste at noon or else walk in darkness. And the following directions also are proposed for the sake of those who mourn in secret for all the abominations that are found among and upon them, who profess the gospel and are under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, fighting and resisting the power of temptations, from whatever spring they rise in themselves.

Our faithful and merciful High Priest both suffered and was tempted, and is on that account touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Heb 4:15). May He accompany this small discourse

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<sup>3</sup> **apostasy** – abandoning the faith one had professed. See Free Grace Broadcaster 205, *Apostasy*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

with seasonable supplies of His Spirit and suitable mercy to them that shall consider it, so that it may be useful to His servants for the ends for which it is designed! This is the prayer of him who received this handful of seed from His storehouse and treasure.

—*John Owen, 1658*

# Chapter 1

## WHAT TEMPTATION IS

*“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”*

—Matthew 26:41

### 1. Introduction

These words of our Savior are repeated with very little alteration in three evangelists. However, whereas Matthew and Mark have recorded them as written above, Luke reports them in this way: “Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Luk 22:46). So, 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 that lie “upon the top of a mast...in the midst of the sea” (Pro 23:34)—that is, men overborne by security in the mouth of destruction. If ever poor souls lay down on the 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” (Heb 5:7). He was then taking into His hand and beginning to taste that cup which was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Jews, armed for His and their destruction, were but a little more distant from them. Our Savior had a little before informed them that that night He should be betrayed, and be delivered up to be slain. They saw that He was “sorrowful and very heavy” (Mat 26:37); nay, He told them plainly that His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (v. 38). He therefore entreated them to tarry and watch with Him, because now He was dying, and that for them.

In this condition, leaving them but a little space, like men forsaken of all love towards Him or care of themselves, they fall fast asleep! Even the best of saints, being left to themselves, will quickly appear to be less than men—to be nothing! All our own strength is weakness, and all our wisdom folly. Peter is one of them who, but a little before, had with so much self-confidence affirmed that though all men forsook Him, yet he never would so do. Our Savior earnestly discusses the matter in particular with him: “He saith unto Peter, Could you not watch with me one hour?” (Mat 26:40)—as if He should have said, “Are you he, Peter, who just now boasted of your resolution never to forsake Me? Is it likely that you should hold to 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 hard for us to believe that Peter should make so high a promise, and be immediately so careless and remiss in the pursuit of it, except that we find the root of the same treachery abiding and working in our own hearts, and see the fruit of it brought forth every day when the most noble engagements unto obedience quickly end in deplorable negligence (Rom 7:18).

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<sup>4</sup> See Heb 2:9; Gal 3:13; 2Co 5:21.

In this condition, our Savior admonishes them of their condition, their weakness, their danger, and stirs them up to a prevention of that ruin which lay at the door. He says, Arise, watch, and pray.

I shall not insist on the particular matter aimed at here by our Savior in this caution to those then present with Him. The great temptation that was coming on them, from the scandal of the cross, was doubtless in His eye. But I shall 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: by our entering into it;
- III. The way of preventing it: to watch and pray.

The first point is considered in this chapter: what temptation is. The second point will be considered in chapters 2, 3, and 4. The third point will be considered in chapters 5, 6, and 7.<sup>5</sup>

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. However, so that we may know what we affirm and whereof we speak, some concerns regarding the general nature of temptation may be laid down first.

## 2. Temptation's General Nature: As a Trial

Temptation has both a general and a special nature, and its special nature has both active and passive aspects.

First, the general nature of tempting and temptation lies among things indifferent; to try, to experiment, to prove, to pierce a vessel so that the liquor that is in it may be known, is as much as is signified by it. So God is said to tempt sometimes. And we are commanded as our duty to tempt, try, or search ourselves in order to know what is in us; and to pray that God would do so also. So temptation is like a knife, which may either cut the meat or 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 a) actively, as it leads to evil, or b) passively, as it has an evil and suffering in it. In this way, temptation is taken for affliction (Jam 1:2); for in this passive sense, we are to "count it all joy when we fall into...temptations." In the other active sense, we are to "enter not into it."

Again, actively considered, temptation denotes one of two things:

Temptation can denote the general nature and result of temptation, which is trial; in this way "God did tempt Abraham" (Gen 22:1). He also proves (or tempts) by false prophets (Deu 13:3).

Or, in the tempter, there is a design for the bringing about of the special goal of temptation, namely, a leading into evil; so it is said that God does not tempt any man with a design

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<sup>5</sup> These three lines are inserted by the editors as an aid to the reader.

for sin as such (Jam 1:13). (See the next section, 3. Temptation's Special Nature: To Evil.)<sup>6</sup>

Now, as to God's tempting of anyone, two things are to be considered: a) The purpose for which He does it; b) The way by which He does it.

### **a. Why God tempts men**

For the first, His general purposes are two.

#### **1). To show man what is in him**

God tests man in order to show unto man what is in him, that is, the man himself; and that either as to his grace or to his corruption. (I speak not now of temptation as it may have a place and bear a part in judicial hardening.<sup>7</sup>) Grace and corruption lie deep in the heart; men oftentimes deceive themselves in the search after the one or the other of them. When we give vent to the soul to try what grace is there, corruption comes out; and when we search for corruption, grace appears. So is the soul kept in uncertainty: we fail in our trials. God comes with a gauge that goes to the bottom. He sends His instruments of trial into the bowels and the inmost parts of the soul, and lets man see what is in him, of what metal he is constituted.

Thus God tempted Abraham to show him his faith. Abraham knew not 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 (Gen 22:1-2). When God says He knew it,<sup>8</sup> He made Abraham to know it. In the same way He tried Hezekiah to discover his pride; God left him that he might see what was in his heart (2Ch 32:31). Hezekiah did not know that he had such a proud heart, so apt to be lifted up, as he appeared to have, until God tried him, and so let out his filth and poured it out before his face. The results of such discoveries to the saints—in thankfulness, humiliation, and treasuring up of experiences—I shall not treat of.

#### **2). To reveal God Himself to man**

God does it to show Himself unto man, and that

a). *In a way of preventing grace.* A man shall see that it is God alone who keeps from all sin. Until we are tempted, we think we live on our own strength. We think that though all men do this or that, we will not. When the trial comes, we quickly see from where our preservation comes, by standing or falling. So was it in the case of Abimelech, when God said, "I also withheld thee" (Gen 20:6).

<sup>6</sup> The following outline is an estimate of Owen's thought.

General nature of temptation: things indifferent, used to test or prove.

Special nature of temptation: A). Active - 1). as a test of faith and to reveal grace, as God does. 2). or, as a design to lead into evil; we are "not to enter into it"; God does not do this. B). Passive - as it has suffering in it (affliction); we are to count it joy.

<sup>7</sup> **judicial hardening** – "A judicial act wherein God withdraws from sinful men—whom He has not elected to life, for the just punishment of their sins—all gracious influences, and leaves them to the unrestrained tendencies of their own hearts, and to the uncounteracted influences of the world and the devil" (A.A. Hodge; 1823-1886). Romans 1:24-28 and 9:18 are examples.

<sup>8</sup> **When God...knew it** – God did not learn something which He did not know before. Rather, the Scriptures use the language of discovery in human terms so that we can begin to understand His purpose in testing: so that we can discover what is in our hearts, which God knows since He ordained it to be before the foundation of the world (1Jo 3:20; Dan 4:25b; Eph 1:4; 1Pe 1:20).

*b). In a way of renewing grace.* God would have the temptation continue with Paul, that He might reveal Himself to him in the sufficiency of His renewing grace (2Co 12:9). We know not the power and strength that God puts forth on our behalf, nor what is the sufficiency of His grace, until it appears unto us as we compare the temptation with our own weakness. The effectiveness of an antidote<sup>9</sup> is found when poison has been taken; and the preciousness of medicines is made known by diseases. We shall never know what strength there is in grace, if we know not what strength there is in temptation. We must be tried, that we may be made sensible of being preserved. And God has many other good and gracious purposes that He accomplishes towards His saints by His trials and temptations, on which I will not now elaborate.

### **b. How God tempts men**

For the ways by which God accomplishes His search, trial, or temptation, these are some of them.

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

*2). Great sufferings.* God puts men in 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. This, Peter tells us, is one way by which we are brought into trying temptations (1Pe 1:6-7). Our temptations arise from the “fiery trial”; and yet the end is but a trial of our faith.

*3). Providential occasions for sin.* God providentially disposes of things so that occasions unto sin will be administered unto men, which is the case mentioned in Deuteronomy 13:3. Innumerable other instances could be added.

## **3. Temptation’s Special Nature: To Evil**

Now, it is not properly the temptations of God, as coming from Him, with His design upon them, that is here intended; and therefore I shall set these apart from our present consideration. What I intend, then, is temptation in its special nature, as it denotes an active influence towards sinning (as it is managed with evil, unto evil).

### **a. The world, the flesh, and the devil**

In this sense, temptation may proceed either singly from Satan, or the world, or other men in the world, or from ourselves, or jointly from all or some of them in combination.

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<sup>9</sup> **antidote** – something that counteracts injurious effects.

1). *Satan* tempts sometimes singly by himself, without taking advantage from the world (the things or persons of it) or ourselves. He deals this way in his injection of evil and blasphemous thoughts of God into the hearts of the saints; which is his own work alone, without any advantage from the world or our own hearts. This is because nature will contribute nothing to this, nor anything that is in the world, nor any man of the world—for none can conceive a God and conceive evil of Him. Satan is alone in this sin, and shall be so in the punishment. These fiery darts are prepared in the forge of his own malice, and shall, with all their venom and poison, be turned into his own heart forever.

2). *The world*. Sometimes Satan makes use of the world, and joins forces against us, without any helps from within ourselves. So he tempted our Savior by showing “him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them” (Mat 4:8). The variety of the assistances he finds from the world is inexpressible, in persons and things (on which I must not elaborate), the innumerable instruments and weapons he takes from it, of all sorts and at all seasons.

3). *The flesh*. Sometimes Satan takes assistance from ourselves also. It is not with us as it was with Christ when Satan came to tempt Him. Christ declares that he “hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30). It is otherwise with us: he has, for the compassing of most of his goals, a willing participator within our own breasts (Jam 1:14-15). Thus he tempted Judas: Judas himself was at work, and Satan put it into his heart to betray Christ. “Then entered Satan into Judas” for that purpose (Luk 22:3). And Satan sets the world at work: the things of it, providing money for Judas (“They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver,” Mat 26:15); and the men of it, even the priests and the Pharisees. And Satan calls in the assistance of Judas’ own corruption: he was covetous, “a thief, and had the bag” (Joh 12:6).

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

## b. Descriptions

*Temptation, then, in general, is any thing, state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, has a force or effectiveness to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience that God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever.*

*In particular, a temptation to any man is that which causes or occasions him to sin, or in anything to go off from his duty, either by bringing evil into his heart, or drawing out that evil which is in his heart, or in any other way diverting him from communion with God and that constant, equal, universal obedience, in matter and manner, that is required of him.*

For the clearing of this description I shall only observe that—though temptation seems to be of a more active importance, and so to denote only the power of seduction to sin itself—yet in the Scripture, it is commonly taken in a neutral sense, and denotes the matter of the temptation or the thing whereby we are tempted. And this is a basis for the description I have given

of it. Be it what it will, from anything whatever, within us or without us, having advantage to hinder in duty, or to provoke unto or in any way to occasion sin—that is a temptation, and is to be looked on as such. Be it business, employment, course of life, company, affections, nature; or corrupt design, relations, delights, name, reputation, esteem, abilities, personal qualities or excellencies of body or mind, place, dignity, art—so far as they further or occasion the promotion of the ends before mentioned, they are all of them no less truly temptations than the most violent solicitations of Satan or allures of the world. That soul who discerns it not lies at the brink of ruin. And this will be further discovered in our process.

## Chapter 2

# TO “ENTER INTO TEMPTATION”

*“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”*

—Matthew 26:41

I have said that I shall consider these words of Christ as containing a general direction to all His disciples in their following Him throughout all generations, and that there are three things in the words:

- I. The evil cautioned against: temptation
- II. The means of its prevalence: by our entering into it
- III. The way of preventing it: to watch and pray.

The first point was considered in chapter 1, the second is considered in this and the following two chapters.<sup>10</sup>

Having showed what temptation is, then, I come, secondly, to show

*II. What it is to “enter into temptation.”*

### 1. What to “Enter into Temptation” Is Not

*a. To “enter into temptation” is not merely to be tempted.* It is impossible that we should be so freed from temptation as not to be at all tempted. While Satan continues in his power and malice, while the world and lust exist, we shall be tempted. “Christ,” says one, “was made like unto us, that he might be tempted; and we are tempted that we may be made like unto Christ.” Temptation in general is comprehensive of our whole warfare, as our Savior calls the time of His ministry the time of His “temptations” (Luk 22:28). We have no promise that we shall 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 therein. The direction we have for our prayers is: “Lead us not into temptation” (Mat 6:13). It is “entering into temptation” that we are to pray against. We may be tempted, and yet not enter into temptation.

*b. It is not ordinary.* 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 notable in this “entering into temptation” that is not the saints’ everyday work. It is something

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<sup>10</sup> This paragraph is adapted from chapter 1 and inserted by the editors as an aid to the reader.

that falls upon them peculiarly in reference to seduction unto sin, on one account or other, by way of being allured or frightened.

*c. It is not to be conquered by a temptation*, to fall down under it, to commit the sin or evil to which we are tempted, or to omit the duties that are opposed. A man may “enter into temptation” and yet not fall under temptation. God can make a way for a man to escape. When he is in temptation, God can break the snare, tread down Satan, and make the soul more than a conqueror—even though he has entered into temptation. Christ entered into it, but was not in the least foiled by it.

## 2. What to “Enter into Temptation” Is

To “enter into temptation” is, as the apostle expresses it, “to fall into temptation” (1Ti 6:9), as a man falls into a pit or deep place where there are snares by which he is entangled. The man is not presently killed and destroyed, but he is entangled and detained. He knows not how to get free or be at liberty. So it is expressed again to the same purpose: “There hath no temptation taken you” (1Co 10:13)—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. So Peter also says, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (2Pe 2:9)—that is, they are entangled with them, and God knows how to deliver them out of them. When we suffer a temptation to enter into us, then we “enter into temptation.” While it knocks at the door, we are at liberty. But we “enter into temptation” when any temptation comes in and engages with the heart, reasons with the mind, entices and allures the affections, be it a long or a short time, whether insensibly and imperceptibly, or with the soul taking notice of it.

### a. Requirements to “enter into temptation”

So, then, the following are required in order for us to enter into temptation.

*1). Satan is more active than normal.* By some advantage or on some occasion, Satan is more earnest than ordinary in his solicitations to sin, by frightening or alluring, by persecutions or seductions, by himself or others. Or, some unusual lust or corruption disturbs us within, by his instigation and use of outward objects—provoking, such as when in prosperity; or terrifying, such as when in trouble. Entering into temptation requires special action by the author (Satan) and the principles of temptation.

*2). The heart attempts to defend itself.* This happens when the heart is so far entangled with the temptation as to dispute and argue in its own defense, and yet not be wholly able to eject or cast out the poison and leaven that has been injected. Instead, the heart is surprised, if it is ever so little off its watch, into an entanglement not easy to be avoided. In this, the soul may cry, and pray, and cry again, and yet not be delivered; as Paul “besought the Lord” thrice for the departure of his temptation, and prevailed not (2Co 12:8). The entanglement continues. And this usually falls out in one of these two seasons:

*a). When Satan*, by the permission of God, for ends best known to Himself, *has got some peculiar advantage* against the soul. This was the case of Peter when Satan sought to sift him like wheat and prevailed (Luk 22:31-34).

*b). When a man’s lusts and corruptions meet with peculiarly provoking objects* and occasions, through the condition of life that a man is in, with the circumstances of it; as it was with David. Of both I will discuss later.

## **b. The hour of temptation**

### **1). *What the hour of temptation is***

In this state of things, a man is entered into temptation—and this is called the “hour of temptation,” the season in which it grows to a head (Rev 3:10). The discovery of this will give further light into the present inquiry about what it is to “enter into temptation”; because, when the hour of temptation is come upon us, we are 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—from the conjunction of other occurrences (such as those mentioned), outward or inward—it has a dangerous hour. And then, for the most part, men enter into it. Therefore, that very temptation, which at one time has little or no power on a man—he can despise it, scorn the motions of it, and easily resist it—at another time bears him away quite before it. It has, from other circumstances and occurrences, got new strength and effectiveness, or the man is weakened. The hour is come, he is entered into it, and it prevails.

David probably had temptations before, in his younger days, to adultery or murder, as he had in the case of Nabal (1Sa 25), but the hour of temptation was not come. It had not got its advantages about it, and so he escaped until afterward. Let men look for it that are exposed to temptations, as who is not? Temptations will have a season in which their solicitations will be more urgent, their reasonings more plausible, pretenses more glorious, hopes of recovery more appearing, opportunities more broad and open, the doors of evil made more beautiful than ever they have been. Blessed is he who is prepared for such a season; without such preparation there is no escaping. This, as I said, is the first thing required to entering into temptation. If we stay here, we are safe.

Before I descend to other particulars, having now entered into this one, I shall show in general how or by what means commonly any temptation comes to its hour; and then, how we may know when any temptation is come to its high noon, and is in its hour.

### **2). *How temptation comes to its hour***

Temptation commonly comes to its hour by several ways.

*a). By long solicitations*, causing the mind frequently to converse with the evil solicited unto, it gives birth to thoughts that minimize its evil. If it makes this progress, it is coming towards its hour. It may be when first it began to press upon the soul, the soul was amazed with the ugly appearance of what it aimed at, and cried, “Am I a dog?” (2Ki 8:14). If this indignation be not daily heightened, but the soul, by conversing with the evil, begins to grow, as it were, familiar with it—not to be startled as formerly, but rather inclines to cry, “Is it not a little one?” (Gen 19:20)—then the temptation is coming towards its high noon. Lust has then enticed and entangled, and is ready to “conceive” (Jam 1:15). Of this I shall say more later, in our inquiry how we may know whether we are entered into temptation or not. Our present inquiry is after the hour and power of temptation itself.

*b). When temptation 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 temptation, and raises it towards its height. When that temptation sets upon any one that, at the same time, has possessed and prevailed with many, it has so great and so many

advantages thereby that it is surely growing towards its hour. Its prevailing with others is a means to give it its hour against us. The falling off of Hymenaeus and Philetus is said to “overthrow the faith of some” (2Ti 2:17-18).

c). *By complicating itself with many considerations* that, perhaps, are not absolutely evil. So did the temptation of the Galatians to fall from the purity of the gospel; it was complicated by freedom from persecution, and union and consent with the Jews. Things that are in themselves good were pleaded in it, and gave life to the temptation itself.

But because I must speak unto some of them later, I shall 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 to this purpose from various circumstances, opportunities, specious<sup>11</sup> pleas and pretenses, necessities for doing that which cannot be done without answering the temptation, and the like.

### 3). *How we may recognize temptation when in its hour*

We may know temptation when it comes, when it is in its hour,

a). *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 pretenses. Some ground is already got by former arguments. Here the evil has been minimized; here are hopes of pardon by later endeavors, all in readiness. If Satan can do nothing now, he must sit down lost in his undertakings.

So when he had got all things in a readiness against Christ, he made it the “hour of darkness.” When a temptation discovers “a thousand arts of harming,”<sup>12</sup> presses within doors by imaginations and reasonings, and without by solicitations, advantages, and opportunities, let the soul know that the hour of it is come. The glory of God, with the soul’s own welfare, depends on its behavior in this trial. We shall see this in particular cases which follow.

b). *When temptation makes a conjunction of both frightening and alluring,* these two comprise the whole forces of temptation. When both are brought together, temptation is in its hour. They were both in David’s case as to the murder of Uriah. There was the fear of Uriah’s revenge on his wife, and possibly on David, and fear of the publication of his sin at least; and there was the allure of his present enjoyment of her after whom he lusted. Men sometimes are carried into sin by love to it, and are continued in it by fear of what will ensue upon 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 what to “enter into temptation” is. This is the “hour” of it. More will be said of this in the process of our discourse.

<sup>11</sup> **specious** – falsely appearing to be true.

<sup>12</sup> Virgil (70-19 BC), *Aeneid*, book 7. Virgil was a Roman poet of the Augustan period, known for the *Eclogues*, the *Georgics*, and the epic poem *Aeneid*.

### 3. How to Prevent Entering into Temptation

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:41). We are considering three general things in these words:

- I. The evil cautioned against: temptation (ch. 1);
- II. The means of its prevalence: by entering into it (this ch. 2);
- III. The way of preventing it: to watch and pray.

Now we touch briefly on the final point (which we will explain more fully in chapters 5, 6, and 7):<sup>13</sup>

*III. There are means of prevention prescribed by our Savior; they are two: a. “Watch”; b. “Pray.”*

#### a. “Watch”

The first is a general expression that by no means is to be limited to its normal meaning of waking from sleep. To “watch” here is to be on our guard, to take heed, to consider all ways and means by which an enemy may approach us. So says the apostle in 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” This is what is meant by watching in this work of avoiding entering into temptation: to “stand fast in the faith,” as good soldiers, to “quit<sup>14</sup> you like men.” It is to “be watchful”—that is, to “take heed” or look to ourselves—as the same thing is by our Savior often expressed (Rev 3:2). A universal carefulness and diligence that we be not entangled—exercising itself in and by all ways and means prescribed by God, over our hearts and ways, the baits and methods of Satan, the occasions and advantages of sin in the world—is that which in this word is pressed on us.

#### b. “Pray”

For the second direction, of prayer, I need not speak to it. The duty and its concerns are known to all. I shall only add that these two comprise the whole endeavor of faith for the soul’s preservation from temptation.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This paragraph is adapted from chapter 1 and inserted by the editors as an aid to the reader.

<sup>14</sup> **quit you like men** – demonstrate manly preparation for brave action.

<sup>15</sup> Watching and prayer are explained more fully in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

## Chapter 3

# THE GROUNDS AND POWER OF TEMPTATION

Having thus opened the words in the foregoing chapters so far as is necessary to discover the foundation of the truth to be insisted on and applied, I shall lay it down in the following observation:

*It is the great duty of all believers to use all diligence in the ways of Christ's appointment that they fall not into temptation.*

I know God is able to “deliver the godly out of temptations” (2Pe 2:9). I know He is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will make a way for our escape (1Co 10:13). Yet, I dare say, I shall 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 that we enter not into temptation. I shall prove it by the following considerations.

### 1. Our Savior's Direction

In the summary instructions given us by our Savior concerning what we ought to pray for, this of not entering into temptation is expressly one of the points. Our Savior knew of what concern it was to us not to “enter into temptation” when He gave us this as one special subject of our daily dealing with God: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Mat 6:13). The order of the words shows us of what importance it is: if we are led into temptation, evil will befall us, more or less.

How God may be said to tempt us, or to “lead us into temptation,” I showed before. In this direction, it is not so much the not giving us up to it, as the powerful *keeping us from it* that is intended. The last words are explanatory of the former: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”—that is, so deal with us 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 had experience of it (Heb 2:18). He knows our vain confidence, and the reserves we have concerning our ability to deal with temptations, as He found it in Peter. But He also knows our weakness and folly, and how soon we are cast to the ground. Therefore He lays this provision for instruction at the entrance of His ministry, to make us heedful, if possible, to that which is of so great concern to us. If, then, we will rest any confidence in the wisdom, love, and care of Jesus Christ towards us, we must grant the truth pleaded for.

## 2. Christ's Promise of Preservation

Christ promises this freedom and deliverance as a great reward of most acceptable obedience: "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation" (Rev 3:10). This is the great promise made to the church of Philadelphia, wherein Christ found nothing that He would blame. It is not, "I will preserve thee in it"; but He goes higher: "I will keep thee from" it. "There is," our Savior says, "an hour of temptation coming, a season that will make havoc in the world. Multitudes shall then fall from the faith and deny and blaspheme Me. Oh, how few will be able to stand and hold out! Some will be utterly destroyed and perish forever. Some will get wounds to their souls that shall never be well healed while they live in this world, and have their bones broken so as to go halting all their days. But," He says, "because 'thou hast kept the word of my patience,' I will be tender towards you, and keep you from this hour of temptation." Certainly that which Christ thus promises to His beloved church, as a reward of her service, love, and obedience, is no light thing. Whatever Christ promises to His spouse is a fruit of unspeakable love; that is so in a special manner which is promised as a reward of special obedience.

## 3. Results of Entering into Temptation

Let us, to this purpose, consider the general results of entering into temptation regarding both bad and good men: of ungrounded professors and the choicest saints.

### a. Ungrounded professors

For the first I shall offer but one or two texts of Scripture. "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe" (Luk 8:13). Good. But how long do they believe? They are affected with the preaching of the Word, believe thereon, make profession, and bring forth some fruits; but until when do they abide? He says that they "in time of temptation fall away." When once they enter into temptation, they are gone forever. Temptation withers all their profession and slays their souls.

We see this accomplished every day. Some men have attended on the preaching of the gospel, have been affected and delighted with it, and have made profession of it. They may have been looked upon as believers, and thus have continued for some years. But no sooner does temptation fall upon them, temptation which has vigor and permanency, but they are turned out of the way and are gone forever! They come to hate the Word they have delighted in, despise the professors of it, and are hardened by sin.

So also, "every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (Mat 7:26). But what does this "house" of profession do? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and stands for a while. But He says, "When the rain descended [that is, when temptation came]...it fell, and great was the fall of it" (v. 27).

Judas follows our Savior three years, and all goes well with him. However, no sooner does he enter into temptation (Mat 26:14-16), but Satan has got him and sifted him, and he is gone. Demas will preach the gospel until the love of the world falls upon him and he is utterly turned aside (2Ti 4:10). It would be endless to give instances of this. Entrance into temptation

is, with this sort of men, an entrance into apostasy, more or less, in part or in whole. It does not fail.

#### **b. Choicest saints**

For the saints of God themselves, let us see, by some examples, what result they have had of their entering into temptation. I shall name a few.

Adam was the “son of God” (Luk 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 have, and had nothing in him to entice or seduce him. Yet this Adam no sooner enters into temptation but he is gone, lost, and ruined—he and all his posterity with him. What can we expect in the like condition, who have not only in our temptations a cunning devil to deal with, as he had, but a cursed world and a corrupt heart also?

Abraham was the father of the faithful, whose faith is proposed as a pattern to all them that shall believe. Yet he, entering twice into the same temptation, namely, that of fear about his wife, was twice overpowered by it (Gen 12:12-13; 20:2)—to the dishonor of God and, no doubt, the unsettling of his own soul.

David is called a man after God’s own heart by God Himself (Act 13:22), yet what a dreadful thing is the story of his entering into temptation! He is no sooner entangled, but he is plunged into adultery; then, seeking deliverance by his own invention, like a poor creature in a snare, he is entangled more and more until he lies as one dead under the power of sin and folly.

I might mention Noah, Lot, Hezekiah, Peter, and the rest, whose temptations and falls therein are on record for our instruction. Certainly he that has any heart in these things cannot but say (as the inhabitants of Samaria upon the letter of Jehu), “Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand?” (2Ki 10:4). O Lord, if such mighty pillars have been cast to the ground, such cedars blown down, how shall I stand before temptations? Oh, keep me that I enter not in! “The footsteps frighten me!”<sup>16</sup> Behold the footsteps of them that have gone in. Whom do you see retiring without a wound or a blemish at least?

On this account, the apostle would have us to exercise tenderness towards them that are fallen into sin: “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1). He does not say, “Lest you also sin, or fall, or be overtaken with a fault,” but, “Lest thou also be tempted.” “You see the power of temptation in others, and know not how soon you may be tempted, nor what will then be the state and condition of your soul.” Assuredly, he that has seen so many better, stronger men than himself fail, and cast down in the trial, will think it necessary for him to remember the battle and, if it be possible, to come there no more. Is it not madness for a man who can scarce crawl up and down because he is so weak (which is the case of most of us), not to avoid that which he has seen giants defeated in? You are yet 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 fell in the time of trial.

In nothing does the folly of the hearts of men show itself more openly in the days wherein we live, than in this cursed boldness—after so many warnings from God and so many sad experiences every day under their eyes—of running into and putting themselves upon tempta-

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<sup>16</sup> Horace (65-8 BC), *Epistles*, I.i.74. Horace was the leading Roman lyric poet during the time of the Roman emperor Augustus.

tions. They are ready for any society, any company, any conditions of outward advantages, without once weighing what their strength, or what the concern of their poor souls is. Though they go over the dead and the slain that in those ways and paths have just now fallen down before them, yet they will go on without regard or trembling. At this door are gone out hundreds, thousands of professors, within a few years.

Let us now, in the following section, consider ourselves: what our weakness is. And then in section 5, "Temptation's Power," we will consider what temptation is: its power and efficacy, and what it leads to.

#### **4. Our Weakness**

For ourselves, we are weakness itself. We have no strength, no power to withstand. Confidence of any strength 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, which is worse, it is the worst kind of weakness that is in us: a weakness from treachery, a weakness arising from that party which every temptation has in us. If a castle or fort is very strong and well-fortified, yet if there is a treacherous party within, which is ready to betray it on every opportunity, there is no preserving it from the enemy. There are traitors in our hearts, ready to take part, to close and side with every temptation, and to give up all to them—yes, even to solicit and bribe temptations to do the work, as traitors incite an enemy.

Do not flatter yourselves that you should hold out. There are secret lusts that lie lurking in your hearts, which perhaps now do not stir. However, as soon as any temptation falls upon you, they will rise, create an uproar, cry, disquiet, seduce, and never give up until they are either killed or satisfied. He that promises himself that the frame of his heart will be the same under a temptation as it was before will be woefully mistaken. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" says Hazael (2Ki 8:13). Yes, you will be such a dog if ever you be king of Syria: temptation from your self-interests will unman you. He that now abhors the thoughts of such and such a thing, if he once enters into temptation, will find his heart inflamed towards it, and all contrary reasoning overborne and silenced. He will deride his former fears, cast out his scruples, and despise the consideration that he lived upon. Little did Peter think he should deny and forswear his Master as soon as he was questioned whether he knew Him or not. It was no better when the hour of temptation came: all resolutions were forgotten, all love to Christ buried; the present temptation closed with his carnal fear and carried all before it.

To handle this a little more distinctly, I shall consider the means of safety from the power of temptation, if we enter therein, that may be expected from ourselves; and that in general as to the spring and rise of them, and in particular as to the ways of exerting that strength we have, or seem to have.

##### **a. Our hearts during temptation**

In general, all we can look for is from our hearts. What a man's heart is, that is he. But now, what is the heart of a man in such a season?

*1). Suppose a man is not a believer, but only a professor of the gospel, what can the heart of such a one do? "The heart of the wicked is little worth" (Pro 10:20); and surely that which is little worth in anything is of not much worth during temptation. A wicked man may in out-*

ward things be of great use; but come to his heart, and it is only false and a thing of nought. 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 we have mentioned these things before. Entering into temptation and apostasy are both the same with them.

2). *Trusting one's own heart.* Let it be whose heart it will, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pro 28:26). He who does so, be he what he will, in such trusting he is foolish. Peter did so in his temptation; he trusted in his own heart: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Mat 26:33). Trusting in his heart was his folly; but why was it his folly? Because he shall 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 before a temptation comes. "Am I a dog," says Hazael, "that I should do this thing?" "Though all men should deny thee," says Peter, "I will not. Shall I do this evil? It cannot be." All the arguments that are suited to give check to the heart in such a condition are mustered up. Do you not think Peter did so? "What! Deny my Master, the Son of God, my Redeemer, Who loves me? Can such ingratitude, unbelief, rebellion, befall me? I *will not* do it."

Shall then a man rest in the expectation that his heart will be steadfast? Let the wise man answer: "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "The heart is deceitful" (Jer 17:9). We would not willingly trust anything in which there is any deceit or guile, and here is that which is "deceitful above all things." It has a thousand shifts and treacheries that it will deal with; when it comes to the trial, every temptation will steal it away (Hos 4:11). Generally, men's hearts deceive them no more often than they trust in them, and then they never fail to do so.

### **b. How the heart protects itself**

Consider the particular ways and means that such a heart has, or can use, to safeguard itself in the hour of temptation, and its insufficiency to that purpose will quickly appear. I shall mention only a few such ways.

#### **1). *Love of honor in the world***

Reputation and esteem in the church, obtained by former profession and walk, is one of the heart's own weapons to defend itself in the hour of temptation. "Shall such a one as I fly? I, who have had such a reputation in the church of God, shall I now lose it by giving way to this lust, to this temptation—by closing 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 the reputation they have in the church of God! But, alas, this is but a weak cord to bind a giant temptation with (Jdg 15:13).

What do you think of the "third part of the stars of heaven?" (Rev 12:4). Had they not shone in the firmament of the church? Were they not sensible, more than enough, of their own honor, height, usefulness, and reputation? But when the dragon comes with his temptations, he casts them down to the earth. Yea, great temptations will make men who have not a better defense insensibly fortify themselves against that dishonor and disrepute with which their ways are attended. "The people hiss at me, but I applaud myself."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Horace (65-8 BC), *Satires*, I.i.66.

Do we not know examples of some yet living who have ventured on compliance with wicked men, after the glory of a long and useful profession? Within a while, finding themselves cast down thereby from their reputation with the saints, they have hardened themselves against it and ended in apostasy (Joh 15:6). This kept not Judas. It kept not Hymenaeus nor Philetus (2Ti 2:17). It kept not the stars of heaven. Nor will it keep you.

## **2). *Shame, reproach, loss***

There is, on the other side, the consideration of shame, reproach, loss, and the like. This also men may put their trust in as a defense against temptations. They do not fear but to be safeguarded and preserved by it. They would not for the world bring that shame and reproach upon themselves that accompany such miscarriages! Now, in addition, this consideration extends itself only to open sins, such as the world takes notice of and abhors. Therefore it is of no use at all

- in such cases in which pretenses and external appearances may be invented and used;
- nor in public temptations to loose and careless walking, like those of our days;
- nor in cases that may be disputable in themselves, though expressly sinful to the consciences of persons under temptations;
- nor in heart sins.

In all these, and most other cases of temptation, there are innumerable reliefs ready to be tendered to the heart against this consideration.

Besides all this, I say, we see by experience how easily this cord is broken when once the heart begins to be entangled. Each corner of the land is full of examples to this purpose.

## **3). *Their consciences***

They have yet that which outweighs these lesser considerations, namely, that they will not wound their own consciences, and disturb their peace, and bring themselves in danger of hell fire. This, surely, if anything, will preserve men in the hour of temptation. They will not lavish away their peace, nor venture their souls, by running against God and the thick bosses of His buckler!<sup>18</sup> What can be more effective and powerful? I confess this is of great importance. Oh, that it were more pondered than it is! Oh, that we laid more weight upon the preservation of our peace with God than we do!

Yet, I say that even this consideration will not preserve him who is otherwise off from his watch and does not make it his work to follow the other rules insisted on. The reasons for this follow.

### **a). *False peace***

The peace of such a one may be false peace or security, made up of presumption and false hopes. Yes, even though he be 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 ready to perish, and Sardis' peace when dying (Rev 3:14-16; 3:1). What should secure a soul that it is otherwise, 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? Think you that the peace of many in these days will be found to be true peace at last? No, nothing less! They go alive down to hell, and death will have dominion over them in the morning. Now, if a man's peace be such, do you think that can preserve him which can-

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<sup>18</sup> **bosses...buckler** – *bosses*: knob-like ornamental studs on a shield; *buckler*: a shield (Job 15:26).

not preserve itself? It will give way at the first vigorous assault of a temptation in its height and hour. Like a broken reed, it will run into the hand of him that leaneth on it (Isa 36:6).

*b). True peace*

Suppose the peace cared for, and proposed to safeguard the soul, is true and good. Yet when all is laid up in this one hope, when the hour of temptation comes, so many reliefs will be tendered against this consideration as will make it useless. "This evil is small; it is questionable; it falls not openly and downright upon conscience. I do but fear consequences; still, it may be that I might keep my peace notwithstanding. Others of the people of God have fallen, and yet kept or recovered their peace. If it be lost for a season, it may be obtained again. I will not disturb its place ever again. Or, though peace be lost, safety might remain." There are a thousand such pleas that are all planted as battering rams against this fort, so that it cannot long hold out.

*c). Only one defense*

The fixing on only this particular is to make secure one passage or entrance, while the enemy assaults us round about. It is true, a little armor would serve to defend a man if he could choose where his enemy will strike him; but we are commanded to take the "whole armour of God" if we intend to resist and stand (Eph 6:13). This peace we speak of is but one piece of armor; and when our eye is only to that, temptation may enter and prevail twenty other ways. For instance, a man may be tempted to worldliness, unjust gain, revenge, vain-glory, or the like. If he fortify himself alone with this consideration of peace, he will not do this thing and thus wound his conscience and lose his peace. If he fixes his eye on this particular, and counts himself safe while he is not overcome on that hand, then it may be that neglect of private communion with God, sensuality, and the like do creep in. When that is the case, he is not one bit in a better condition than if he had fallen under the power of that part of the temptation which was most visibly pressing on him. Experience shows that this does and will fail also. Every saint of God puts a valuation on the peace he has; yet, how many fail in the day of temptation!

**4). *Vileness of sinning against God***

Those who trust in their own hearts have another consideration also, and that is the vileness of sinning against God. How shall they do this thing and sin against God, the God of their mercies, of their salvation? How shall they wound Jesus Christ, Who died for them? This consideration surely cannot but preserve them. I answer,

*First*, We see every day this consideration failing also. There is no child of God that is overcome of temptation but overcomes this consideration. It is not, then, a sure and infallible<sup>19</sup> defense.

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

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<sup>19</sup> **infallible** – not capable of error.

## 5. Temptation's Power

Consider the power of temptation. We have seen this partly from what was showed before: from the effects and fruits of temptation in the saints of old. Now we will see it from such other effects as we find ascribed to it in general.

### a. Darkens the mind

Temptation darkens the mind so that a man shall not be able to make a right judgment of things, as he did before he entered into it. In the men of the world, the god of this world blinds their minds that they should not see the glory of Christ in the gospel (2Co 4:4), and “whoredom and wine and new wine take away” their hearts (Hos 4:11). It is the same way in the nature of every temptation, more or less, to “take away” the heart—that is, to darken the understanding of the person tempted.

And this it does in various ways.

a). *By fixing the imagination and the thoughts* upon the object whereunto it tends, so that the mind shall be diverted from the consideration of the things that would relieve and help it in the state wherein it is. A man is tempted to think that he is forsaken of God, that he is an object of His hatred, that he has no interest in Christ. By the craft of Satan, the mind shall be so fixed to the consideration of this state and condition, with the distress of it, that he shall not be able to manage any of the reliefs suggested and tendered to him against it. Instead, following the fullness of his own thoughts, he shall walk on in darkness and have no light. I say, a temptation will so possess and fill the mind with thoughtfulness of itself and the matter of it that it will take off from that clear consideration of things which otherwise it might and would have. And those things in which the mind was accustomed to have a vigorous sense to keep it from sin, will by this means come to have no force or effectiveness with it. Indeed, it will commonly bring men to that state and condition such that when others, to whom their estate is known, are speaking to them the things concerning their deliverance and peace, their minds will be so possessed with the matter of their temptation as not at all to understand, as scarce to hear one word that is spoken to them.

b). *By woeful entangling of the affections.* You know the influence the affections have when they are engaged; they blind the mind with darkness and darken the understanding. If any do not know the influence of the affections, let him but open his eyes in these days, and he will quickly learn it. By what ways and means it is that engaged affections will cloud the mind and darken it, I shall not now declare. Only, I say, give me a man engaged in hope, love, and fear in reference to any particulars in which he ought not, and I shall quickly show you wherein he is darkened and blinded.

This, then, you will fail in if you enter into temptation: the present judgment you have of things will not be utterly altered, but darkened and rendered powerless to influence the will and master the affections. These, being set at liberty by temptation, will run on in madness. After this, detestation of sin, abhorring of it, terror of the Lord, sense of love, and the presence of Christ crucified all depart and leave the heart a prey to its enemy.

c). *Temptation will give oil and fuel to our lusts*—that is, incite, provoke, and make them rage and agitate beyond measure. Offering a lust or a corruption a suitable object, advantage, or occasion heightens and exasperates the lust, and makes it for a season wholly predominant. In this way temptation dealt with carnal fear in Peter, with pride in Hezekiah, with covetous-

ness in Achan, with uncleanness in David, with worldliness in Demas, with ambition in Diotrephes.<sup>20</sup> It will lay the reins on the neck of a lust and spur the sides of it, so that it may rush forward like a horse into the battle. A man knows not 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 is defeated. And what will be the result of such a condition?

### **b. Public and private temptations**

Consider that temptations are either public or private. Let us view a little the effectiveness and power for each of them.

#### **1). Public temptations**

There are public temptations; such as that mentioned which was to “come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev 3:10)—that is, a combination of persecution and seduction for the trial of a careless generation of professors. Now, concerning such a temptation, consider the following:

##### *a). In respect to God*

It has an effect in respect to God, Who sends it to revenge the neglect and contempt of the gospel on the one hand, and treachery of false professors on the other. Therefore, it will certainly accomplish what it receives commission from Him to do.

When Satan offered his service to go forth and seduce Ahab that he might fall, God says to him, “Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so” (1Ki 22:22). Satan is permitted as to his wickedness, and commissioned as to the event and punishment intended. 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 of the temptation that fell upon them that “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie” (2Th 2:11).

That which comes so from God in a judiciary manner has a power with it and shall prevail. That selfish, spiritually slothful, careless, and worldly frame of spirit, which in these days has infected almost the whole body of professors, if it has a commission from God to kill hypocrites, to wound negligent saints—to break their bones and make them scandalous, so that they may be ashamed—shall it not have a power and effectiveness to do so? What work has the spirit of error made among us! Is it not from this, that, as some men delighted not to retain God in their hearts, so He has given “them over to a reprobate mind” (Rom 1:28).

A man would think it strange, yea, a matter of amazement, to see persons of a sober spirit pretending to great things in the ways of God being overcome, captivated, ensnared, and destroyed by weak means, baseless opinions, and foolish imaginations—such as a man would think it impossible that they should ever lay hold of sensible or rational men, much less professors of the gospel. But that which God will have to be strong, let us not think weak. No strength but the strength of God can stand in the way of the weakest things of the world when they are commissioned from God for any end or purpose whatever.

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<sup>20</sup> Mat 26:74-75; 2Ki 20:12-18; Jos 7:1; 2Sa 11:2-4; 2Ti 4:10; 3Jo 1:9.

*b). In respect to the poor example of false professors*

There is in these public temptations the secret insinuation<sup>21</sup> of examples in those that are accounted godly and are professors. “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Mat 24:12). The abounding of iniquity in some will insensibly cast water on the zeal and love of others, so that by little and little it shall wax cold. Some begin to grow negligent, careless, worldly, and wanton. They break the ice towards the pleasing of the flesh. At first others blame, judge them, perhaps reprove them. In a short time their love also waxes cold; and the brunt being over, they also conform to them, and are cast into the same mold with them.

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Paul repeats this saying twice (1Co 5:6; Gal 5:9); he would have us take notice of it. He is speaking of the danger of the infection of the whole body, from the ill examples of some. We know how insensibly leaven proceeds to give savor to the whole; so it is termed a “root of bitterness” that “springing up trouble[s] you, and thereby many [are] defiled” (Heb 12:15). If one little piece of leaven, if one bitter root, may endanger the whole, how much more when there are many roots of that nature, and much leaven is scattered abroad! It is easy following a multitude to do evil, and saying “a conspiracy” to them to whom the people say “a conspiracy” (Isa 8:12).

Would anyone have thought it possible that certain professing believers in our days should have fallen into ways of self, of flesh, of the world? To play at cards, dice, revel, dance? To neglect family and closet duties?<sup>22</sup> To be proud, haughty, ambitious, worldly, covetous, oppressive? Would anyone have thought it possible that they should be turned away after foolish, vain, and ridiculous opinions, deserting the gospel of Christ? In these two areas<sup>23</sup> lies the great temptation that is come on us, the inhabitants of this world, to try us.

But does not every man see that this is come to pass? And may we not see how it is come to pass? Some loose, empty professors, who had never more than a form of godliness, when they had served their turn of that “godliness,” began the way to these temptations; then others began a little to comply, and to please the flesh in so doing. This, by little and little, has reached even the top boughs and branches of our profession, until almost all flesh has corrupted its way. And he that departs from these iniquities makes his name a prey, if not his person.

*c). Difficult to resist*

Public temptations are usually accompanied with strong reasons and pretenses that are difficult for men to resist. These reasons prevail upon men, at least insensibly, to undervalue the evil to which the temptation leads—giving strength to that complicated temptation which in these days has even cast down the people of God from their excellency, cutting their locks [of strength like Samson’s] and making them become like other men (Jdg 16:16-21).

How full is the world of specious pretenses and pleadings! For example, Christians have been delivered from bondage into liberty and freedom. I have observed various ones going out into sensuality and apostasy [pleading this deliverance from bondage for a pretense]. They begin with a light conversation, proceed to a neglect of the Sabbath and public and private duties, and end in profaneness<sup>24</sup> and lack of moral restraint. [Another pretense] is the leaving of

<sup>21</sup> **insinuation** – subtle influence.

<sup>22</sup> **closet duties** – private prayer, reading, and meditation (Mat 6:6).

<sup>23</sup> Worldliness and false teaching.

<sup>24</sup> **profaneness** – contempt or irreverence for that which is sacred.

public things to providence, being contented with what is. They become contented with things that are good in themselves, but disputed into wretched, carnal compliances to the utter ruin of all zeal for God, for the interest of Christ or His people in the world.

These and the like considerations, joined with the ease and plenty, the greatness and promotion of professing believers, have so brought things about that, whereas we have by providence changed places with the men of the world,<sup>25</sup> we have by sin changed spirits with them also. We are like a plantation of men carried into a foreign country. In a short space they degenerate from the manners of the people from which they came, and fall into that of the country whereunto they are brought, as if there were something in the soil and the air that transformed them.

Give me leave a little to follow my figure of speech. We see the prevailing party of these nations—many of those in rule, power, and favour, with all their adherents—and remember that they were a colony of Puritans, whose habitation was “in a low place,” as the prophet speaks of the city of God (Isa 32:19). They have been translated by a high hand to the mountains they now possess. We cannot but wonder how soon they have forgotten the customs, manners, and ways of their own old people, and are cast into the mold of them that went before them in the places whereunto they are translated. I speak of us all, especially of us who are among the lowest of the people, where perhaps this iniquity most abounds. What were those before us that we are not? What did they that we do not? Prosperity has slain the foolish and wounded the wise.

## **2). *Private temptations***

Suppose the temptation is private. This has been spoken about before; I shall add two things.

### **a). *Temptation and lust***

Temptation has union and incorporation with lust, by which it gets within the soul, and lies at the bottom of its actings. John tells us that the things which are “in the world” are “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1Jo 2:16). Now, it is evident that all these things principally lie in the subject, not in the object—in the heart, not in the world. Yet they are said to be “in the world,” because the world gets into them: mixes, unites, and incorporates itself with them. As faith and the promises are said to be “mixed” (Heb 4:2), so are lust and temptation mixed. They twine together, receive mutual improvement from one another, and grow each of them higher and higher by the mutual strength they administer to one another.

Now, by this means, temptation gets so deep in the heart that no contrary reasonings can reach it. Nothing but what can kill the lust can conquer the temptation. Like leprosy that has mingled itself with a wall, the wall itself must be pulled down, or the leprosy will not be cured. Like a gangrene that mixes poison with the blood and spirits,<sup>26</sup> and cannot be separated from the place where it is; both must be cut off together. For instance, in David’s temptation to uncleanness, ten thousand considerations might have been taken to stop the mouth of the temp-

<sup>25</sup> **changed places with the men of the world** – This book was written during the English civil war, when nonconformists under Oliver Cromwell defeated the monarchy and assumed the government of England. Owen was a chaplain in Cromwell’s army.

<sup>26</sup> **spirits** – supposed principle of sensation and voluntary motion; nerve action.

tation; but it had united itself with his lust, and nothing but the killing of that lust could destroy the temptation or get him the conquest.

This deceives many. They have some pressing temptation that, having got some advantages, is urgent upon them. They pray against it and oppose it with all powerful considerations, every one of which seems sufficient to conquer and destroy it—or at least to overpower it, so that it should never be troublesome anymore. But no good is done, no ground is got or obtained; instead, it grows upon them more and more. What is the reason of it? The temptation has incorporated and united itself with the lust, and is safe from all the opposition they make. If they would make progress, they would set upon the whole of the lust itself—their ambition, pride, worldliness, sensuality, or whatever it may be, which the temptation is united with. All other dealings with it are like tampering with a prevailing gangrene: the part or whole may be preserved a little while, in great torment; but amputation or death must come at last. The soul may torment itself for a season with such a procedure; but it must come to this: its lust must die, or the soul must die.

*b). Whole soul drawn after*

In whatever part of the soul the lust is seated, with which the temptation is united, it draws after it the whole soul by one means or other, and so 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). What a world of ways has the understanding to bridle the affections so that they should not so strongly cleave to God, seeing that, in what it aims at, there is so much that gives the affections both contentment and satisfaction! This lust of the mind will not only prevent all the reasoning of the mind—which it does necessarily, being like a bloody infirmity in the eyes, presenting all things to the common sense and perception in that hue and color—but it will draw the whole soul, on other accounts and collateral considerations, into the same frame. It promises the whole a share in the spoil aimed at—as Judas' money, which he first desired from covetousness, was to be shared among all his lusts.

Or it may be in the more sensual part, and first possesses the affections. What prejudices they will bring upon the understanding, how they will bribe it to submission—what arguments, what hopes they will supply it with—cannot easily be expressed, as was shown before. In brief, there is no particular temptation, but, when it is in its hour, it has such a contribution of assistance from things good, evil, and indifferent. It is fed by so many considerations that seem to be most alien and foreign to it, and in some cases has such deceptive pleas and pretenses, that its strength will easily be acknowledged.

**c. Satan's goal in any temptation**

Consider the goal of any temptation. This is Satan's goal and sin's result: the dishonor of God and the ruin of our souls.

**d. The results of former temptations**

Consider what has been the result of the former temptations you have had. Have they not defiled your conscience, disquieted your peace, weakened you in your obedience, and clouded the face of God? Though you were not prevailed on to the outward evil or utmost result of your temptation, yet have you not been foiled? Has not your soul been sullied and grievously perplexed with it? Moreover, did you ever in your life come away completely without sensible loss, from almost any temptation that you had to deal with; and would you willingly be entangled

again? If you are at liberty, take heed. Enter no more, if it be possible, lest a worse thing happen to you.

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

## 6. Objections

Against what has been spoken, some objections are to be considered and removed. These secretly and gradually introduce themselves into the souls of men, and effectively make them negligent and careless in avoiding temptation, a duty of such importance, and so indispensable to them who intend to walk with God in any peace, or with any faithfulness. The objections are these that follow:

### a. First objection: Count temptation as joy

“Why should we so fear and labor to avoid temptation? We are commanded to ‘count it all joy when [we] fall into divers<sup>27</sup> temptations’ (Jam 1:2). Now, surely I need not carefully avoid falling into that which, when I am fallen into, I am to count it all joy.” To which I answer the following.

#### 1). *Inconsistent*

You will not hold by this rule in all things; namely, that a man need not seek to avoid that which, when he cannot but fall into it, it is his duty to rejoice in it. The same apostle bids the rich “rejoice...that he is made low” (1:9-10). And, without doubt, to him who is acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, and love of God in His dealings, in every condition that is needful for him, it will be a matter of rejoicing to him. But yet, how few rich, godly men can you persuade not to use all lawful means to prevent their being made poor and low! And, in most cases, the truth is, it would be their sin not to do so. It is our business to make good our stations, and to secure ourselves as we can. If God alters our condition, we are to rejoice in it. If the temptations here mentioned fall upon us, we may have cause to rejoice. But there is no cause to rejoice if by a neglect of duty we fall into temptation.

#### 2). *Taken passively and actively*

Temptations are taken two ways: passively and actively. Temptations may be taken *passively* and merely materially, for such things as are, or in some cases may be, temptations. Or, temptations may be taken *actively* when they entice to sin. James speaks of temptations in the first sense only; for having said, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (1:2), he adds, “Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation” (1:12).

James also adds: “for when he is tried, he *shall receive the crown of life*” (1:12). Therefore, a man might say, “If this be so, then temptations are good and from God.” “No,” James says in effect, “take temptation in such a sense as that it is a thing enticing and leading to sin, and in this sense God tempts none; but every man is tempted of his own lust (1:13-14). To have such temptations, to be tempted to sin, is not the blessed thing I intend; but the enduring of afflictions that God sends for the trial of our faith is a blessed thing.” So that, though I must count it all joy when, through the will of God, I fall into various afflictions to try my faith, which yet

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<sup>27</sup> **divers** – various.

have the matter of temptation in them, yet I am to use all care and diligence that my lust have no occasions or advantages given unto it to tempt me to sin.

### **b. Second objection: Christ was tempted**

“But was not our Savior Christ Himself tempted, and is it evil to be brought into the same state and condition with Him? Yea, it is not only said that He was tempted, but His being so is expressed as a thing advantageous and contributing to His mercifulness as our priest: ‘In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour<sup>28</sup> them that are tempted’ (Heb 2:17-18). And He makes it the basis for a great promise to His disciples, that they had abode with Him in His temptations” (Luk 22:28).

*Answer.* It is true our Savior was tempted; but His temptations are reckoned among the evils that fell upon Him in the days of His flesh—things that came on Him through the malice of the world and its prince. He did not willfully cast Himself into temptation, which He said was to “tempt the Lord thy God” (Mat 4:7)—as, indeed, willingly to enter into any temptation is highly to tempt God.

Now, our condition is such that, use the greatest diligence and watchfulness that we can, yet we shall be sure to be tempted, and be made like to Christ in it. This hinders not, but it is our utmost duty to prevent our falling into temptations; and that namely on this account: Christ had only the suffering part of temptation when He entered into it; we have also the sinning part of it! When the prince of this world came to Christ, he had “nothing in” Him (Joh 14:30). But when he comes to us, he has something in us. In one effect of temptations, namely trials and uneasiness, we are made like to Christ, and so are to rejoice as far as that is produced, by any means. But by another effect of temptations, we are made unlike Him: we are defiled and entangled, and are therefore to seek by all means to avoid them. We never come off like Christ. Who of us “enter into temptation” and are not defiled?

### **c. Third objection: God has promised deliverance**

“But what need for this great endeavor and carefulness? Is it not said that ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape’ (1Co 10:13)? And, He ‘knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations’ (2Pe 2:9). What need we, then, to be so careful that we enter not into them?”

*Answer.* I much question what assistance he will have from God in his temptation who willingly enters into it because he supposes 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 does so easily beset us—when we have done our utmost, yet we shall enter into divers temptations. In His love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness, He has provided such a sufficiency of grace for us, that these temptations shall not utterly prevail to make an everlasting separation between Him and our souls. Yet, I have three things to say to this objection.

1). He that willfully 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 is entered. The promise is made to them whom temptations do fall in their way, whether they will or not—not them that willfully fall into them, that run out of their way to meet with them. The devil, when he tempted our Savior, said, “He shall give his angels charge over thee,

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<sup>28</sup> **succour** – give assistance or support in time of need.

to keep thee” (Luk 4:10). But (as is usually observed), he left out the expression of the text of Scripture that he wrested to his purpose: “in all thy ways” (Psa 91:11). The promise of deliverance is to them who are in their ways [of obedience]. This is a primary part of these ways: to beware of temptation.

2). Though there be a sufficiency of grace provided for all the elect, that they shall by no temptation fall utterly from God (1Co 10:13), yet it would make any gracious heart tremble to think what dishonor to God, what scandal to the gospel, what woeful darkness and uneasiness they may bring upon their own souls, though they perish not. And they who are scared by nothing but fear of hell, on whom other considerations short of hell have no influence, in my apprehension have more reason to fear it than perhaps they are aware of.

3). To enter on temptation on this account is to venture on sin (which is the same with “continuing in sin”) so “that grace may abound” (Rom 6:1-2). But the apostle rejects this thought with the greatest detestation. Is it not a madness for a man willingly to allow the ship he is in to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, because he supposes he shall in his own person swim safely to shore on a plank? Is it less madness in him who will 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 supposition that his soul shall yet escape? These things a man would think did not deserve to be mentioned, and yet with such as these do poor souls sometimes delude themselves.

# Chapter 4

## HOW TO KNOW WE HAVE ENTERED INTO TEMPTATION

We have considered three things in *general* regarding temptation:

- I. The evil cautioned against: the nature of temptation (ch. 1);
- II. The means of its prevalence: by our entering into it (ch. 2);
- III. The way of preventing it: to watch and pray (general introduction at end of chapter 2).<sup>29</sup>

I proceed now to the consideration of three *particular* cases arising from the truth proposed. The first relates unto the thing itself. The second relates to our conduct in order to prevent the evil of entering into temptation. The last relates to the time or season of it.

- I. How a man may know when he is entered into temptation (ch. 4)
- II. What directions are to be given for the preventing of our entering into temptation (ch. 5)
- III. What seasons there are in which a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand (ch. 6)

Our first inquiry, then, is:

*I. How shall a man know whether he has entered into temptation or not.*

### 1. Drawn into Any Sin

When a man is drawn into any sin, he may be sure that he has entered into temptation. All sin is from temptation (Jam 1:14). Sin is a fruit that comes only from that root. Even when a man is suddenly or violently surprised in or with any sin, it is from some temptation or other that he has been so surprised. So says the apostle: If a man be surprised and overtaken with a fault, yet he was tempted to it; for says he, “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1)—that is, tempted as he was when he was so surprised, as it were, at unawares.

Men sometimes take no notice of this consideration, 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, in order to set themselves against that also, to take care that they enter no more into it. Therefore, they are quickly again entangled by it, though they have the greatest detestation of the sin itself that can be expressed. He who would indeed get

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<sup>29</sup> This paragraph is adapted from chapter 1 and inserted by the editors as an aid to the reader.

the conquest over any sin, must consider his temptations to it and strike at that root. Without deliverance from this, he will not be healed.

This is a folly that possesses many who have yet a lively sense of sin. They are sensible of their *sins*, but not of their *temptations*. They are displeased with the bitter fruit, but cherish the poisonous root. Therefore, in the midst of their humiliations for sin, they will continue in those ways, those societies, in the pursuit of those ends that have occasioned the sin. I will say more about this later.

## 2. Degrees of Temptations

Temptations have several degrees. Some arise to such an height, do so press on the soul, so torment and disquiet it, so fight against all opposition that is made to it, that it must needs be past all doubt, to him who is so assaulted, that it is a special power of temptation that he is to wrestle with. When a fever rages, a man knows he is sick, unless his disease has made him mad. The lusts of men, as James tells us, “entice,” draw away, and seduce them to sin (Jam 1:14); but this they do of themselves, without peculiar instigation, in a more quiet, even, and sedate manner. If the lusts grow violent, if they hurry the soul up and down, and give it no rest, the soul may know that these lusts have got the help of temptation to their assistance.

Take an empty vessel and put it into some stream that is in its course to the sea, it will infallibly be carried thither, according to the course and speed of the stream. But let strong winds arise upon it, it will be driven with violence on every bank and rock, until, being broken in pieces, it is swallowed up of the ocean. Men’s lusts will infallibly (if not mortified in the death of Christ) carry them into eternal ruin, but oftentimes without much noise, according to the course of the stream of their corruptions. But let the wind of strong temptations fall upon them, then they are hurried into innumerable scandalous sins—and so, being broken upon all accounts, are swallowed up in eternity.

So is it in general with men; and so 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 (2Ki 20:12-13). David also had this root of pride; yet he could keep from numbering the people until Satan stood up and provoked him, and solicited him to do it (2Sa 24:1-4). Judas was covetous from the beginning, yet he did not contrive to satisfy his covetousness by the selling of his Master until the devil entered into him, and he thereby entered into temptation. The like may be said of Abraham, Jonah, Peter, and the rest.

Therefore, when any lust or corruption disquiets the soul and sets it in an uproar, and puts it with violence onto sin, let the soul know that the lust has got the advantage of some outward temptation, though as yet the soul does not perceive it. Or at least the temptation has become itself a peculiar one by some prompting or provocation that has befallen it, and is to be looked into more than ordinarily.

## 3. Secretly Liking Sin

Entering into temptation may be seen in the lesser degrees of it; as, for instance, when the heart begins secretly to like the matter of the temptation, and is content to feed it and increase it by any ways that it may without downright sinning.

In particular, a man begins to have a good reputation 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 is affected with it. If this man now, with all his strength, work the things from which spring his reputation, esteem, and glory among men, with a secret eye to have it increased, he is entering into temptation. If he take not heed, it will quickly render him a slave to lust.

So was it with Jehu (2Ki 9, 10). He perceived that his reputation for zeal began to grow abroad, and he got honor by it. Jehonadab comes in his way, a good and holy man. “Now,” thinks Jehu, “I have an opportunity to grow in honor of my zeal.” So he calls Jehonadab to him, and to work he goes most seriously. The things he had done were good in themselves; but he was entered into temptation, and served his lust in what he did.

So is it with many scholars. They find themselves esteemed and favored 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 that they might satisfy the thoughts and words of men in which they delight. And so in all they do, they make “provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:14).

It is true, God often brings light out of this darkness, and turns things to a better result. A man may have studied for several years with an eye upon his lusts—his ambition, pride, and vain-glory—rising early and going to bed late, to give them satisfaction. Then God comes in with His grace, turns the soul to Himself, robs those Egyptian lusts, and so consecrates that to the use of the tabernacle that had been provided for idols.<sup>30</sup>

Men may be thus entangled in better things than learning, even in the profession of piety, in their labor in the ministry, and the like. Some men’s profession is a snare to them. They are held in good reputation, and are much honored on account of their profession and strict walking. This often happens in the days we live in, in which all things are carried by parties. Some find themselves on the accounts mentioned, perhaps, to be the darlings and “grand ornaments,” the glory, of their particular group. If thoughts of this secretly and gradually grow in their hearts, and influence them into more than ordinary diligence and activity in their way and profession, they are entangled. Instead of aiming at more glory, they have need to lie in the dust, in a sense of their own vileness. So close is this temptation, that often it requires no food to feed upon except that he who is entangled with it avoids all means and ways of honor and reputation: so that it can but whisper in the heart that that 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 them esteem: their ability, their plainness, their frequency, their success—and all in this sense may be fuel unto temptations.

Let then a man know that, when he likes that which feeds his lust, and keeps it up by ways either good in themselves or not downright sinful, he is entered into temptation.

#### 4. Condition of Life

Sometimes by a man’s state or condition of life, or any means whatever, it comes to pass that his lust and any temptation meet with occasions and opportunities for its provocation and stirring up. When this happens, let that man know, whether he perceive it or not, that he is

<sup>30</sup> Owen is alluding to the Israelites spoiling the Egyptians when they left Egypt, borrowing riches which later were used in the building of the tabernacle (Exo 12:35-36).

certainly entered into temptation. I told you before that to enter into temptation is not merely to be tempted, but so to be under the power of it as to be entangled by it. Now, it is almost impossible for a man to have opportunities, occasions, or advantages suited to his lust and corruption, but he will be entangled. If ambassadors come from the king of Babylon, Hezekiah's pride will cast him into temptation. If Hazael be king of Syria, his cruelty and ambition will make him to rage savagely against Israel. If the priests come with their pieces of silver, Judas' covetousness will instantly be at work to sell his Master. And many instances of the like kind may be given in the days wherein we live.

Some men think to play on the hole of the asp and not be stung, to touch pitch and not be defiled, to take fire in their clothes and not be burnt—but they will be mistaken. If your business, course of life, societies, or whatever else it be of the like kind, do cast you on such things, ways, or persons as suit your lust or corruption, know that you are entered into temptation. How you will come out, God only knows. Let us suppose a man who has any seeds of filthiness in his heart engaged, in the course of his life, in light, vain, and foolish society. Whatsoever notice—little, great, or none at all—that he takes of it, he is undoubtedly entered into temptation. So is it with ambition in high places; passion in a multitude of perplexing affairs; and polluted corrupt fancy in vain societies, and in the perusal of idle books or treatises of vanity and folly. Fire and things combustible may more easily be induced to lie together without affecting each other, than peculiar lusts to be with suitable objects or occasions for their exercise.

## 5. Less Attention to Duties

### a. The matter of duties

A man may be weakened or be made negligent or formal in duty. He may be able to omit duties or to content himself with a careless, lifeless performance of them—without delight, joy, or satisfaction to his soul, which had another frame formerly. When this is the case, let him know that, though he may not be acquainted with the particular distemper of which it consists, yet in something or other he is entered into temptation. This he ultimately will find evident, to his trouble and peril.

How many have we seen and known in our days who, from a warm profession, have fallen to be negligent, careless, indifferent in praying, reading, hearing,<sup>31</sup> and the like! Give an instance of one who has come off without a wound, and I dare say you may find out a hundred for him that have shown themselves to have been asleep on the top of the mast.<sup>32</sup> They have shown that they were in the jaws of some vile temptation or other, which afterward brought forth bitter fruit in their lives and ways. From some few returners from folly we have every day these doleful complaints made: "Oh! I neglected private prayer. I did not meditate on the Word, nor attend to hearing, but rather despised these things: and yet said I was rich and lacked nothing (Rev 3:17). Little did I consider that this unclean lust was ripening in my heart; that this atheism, these abominations, were growing there."

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<sup>31</sup> **hearing** – listening to the preaching of the Word in public worship.

<sup>32</sup> **asleep on the top of the mast** – A sailor foolishly attempting to sleep in the "crow's nest" (lookout platform) or on a crossbar of a mast might be thrown into the sea by any large wave rocking the boat (Pro 23:34).

This is a certain rule: If a person who has had another frame has his heart grow cold, negligent, or formal in duties of the worship of God—and that either as to the matter or manner of them—one temptation or other has laid hold upon him. World, pride, uncleanness, self-seeking, malice and envy, or one thing or other has possessed his spirit. Gray hairs are here and there upon him, though he does not perceive it (Hos 7:9).

### **b. The manner of duties**

And this is to be observed as to the manner of duties, as well as to the matter. Men may, upon many sinister accounts, especially for the satisfaction of their consciences, keep up and frequent duties of religion—as to the substance and matter of them—when they have no heart to them, no life in them as to the spirituality required in their performance. Sardis kept up the performance of duties and had therefore a “name” to live; but lacked spiritual life in their performances, and was therefore “dead” (Rev 3:1). As it is in distempers of the body, if a man find his spirits faint, his heart oppressed, his head heavy, the whole person indisposed—though he does not yet actually burn or rave—yet he will cry, “I fear I am entering into a fever, I am so out of order and indisposed.” A man may do so in this sickness of the soul. If he finds his pulse does not beat rightly and evenly towards duties of worship and communion with God, if his spirit is low and his heart faints in these duties, let him conclude—though his lust does not yet burn or rage—that he is 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 duties, evil lies at the door.

And if such a soul does escape a great temptation to sin, yet it shall not escape a great temptation by desertion [by Christ]. The spouse cries, “I sleep,” and “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?” (Song 5:2-3)—that is, she had an indisposition to duties and communion with Christ. What is the next news you have of her? Her “Beloved had withdrawn himself” (5:6). Christ was gone; she seeks Him long and finds Him not.

### **c. Affinity to Worship**

There is such a suitableness between the new nature that is created in believers and the duties of the worship of God that they will not be parted nor kept asunder, unless it be by the intervention of some disturbing distemper. The new creature feeds upon them, is strengthened and increased by them, finds sweetness in them, yea, meets in them with its God and Father. Therefore it cannot but of itself delight in them and desire to be in the exercise of them, unless made sick by some temptation. This frame is described in Psalm 119 throughout. It is not, I say, cast out of this frame and temper<sup>33</sup> unless it is oppressed and disordered by one secret temptation or other.

There are various other evidences of a soul’s entering into temptation, which upon inquiry it may discover. I propose this to take off the security that we are apt to fall into, and to show what is the peculiar duty that we are to apply ourselves to in the special seasons of temptation. This is because he who is already entered in temptation is to apply himself to means for disentanglement, not to labor to prevent his entering in. How this may be done I shall afterward declare.

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<sup>33</sup> **temper** – character of mind.

## Chapter 5

# AVOIDING ENTERING INTO TEMPTATION: WATCH AND PRAY

We are considering three particular issues regarding temptation:

- I. How a man may know when he is entered into temptation (ch. 4);
- II. What directions are to be given for the preventing of our entering into temptation (this chapter);
- III. What seasons there are in which a man ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand (ch. 6).<sup>34</sup>

Having seen the danger of entering into temptation, and also having discovered the ways by which men usually do so, our second inquiry is,

*II. What general directions may be given to preserve a soul from entering into temptation?*

We see our Savior's direction in the place spoken of before (Mat 26:41). He sums up all in these two words, "Watch and pray." I shall a little labor to unfold them and show what is wrapped up and contained in them, and that both jointly and separately.

### 1. Apprehension of Danger

*"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."*

—Matthew 26:41

There is included in these two words, "Watch and pray," a clear, abiding apprehension of the great evil that there is in entering into temptation. That which a man watches and prays against, he looks upon as evil to him and by all means to be avoided.

This, then, is the first direction: Always bear in mind the great danger that it is for any soul to enter into temptation.

It is a woeful thing to consider what slight thoughts the most have of this thing. Therefore, if men can keep themselves from sin itself in open action, they are content; they scarce aim at more. And therefore on any temptation in the world, all sorts of men will venture at any time.

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<sup>34</sup> This paragraph is adapted by the editors from chapter 4 and inserted as an aid to the reader.

How will young men put themselves on any company or society! At first, they will be delighted with evil company, then with the evil of the company. How vain are all admonitions and exhortations to them to take heed of such persons, debauched<sup>35</sup> in themselves, corrupters of others, destroyers of souls! At first they will venture on the company, while abhorring the thoughts of practicing their lewdness. But what is the result? Unless it be here or there one whom God snatches with a mighty hand from the jaws of destruction, they are all lost. After a while, they become in love with the evil that at first they abhorred.

This open door to the ruin of souls is too evident. Woeful experience makes it no less evident that it is almost impossible to fasten upon many poor creatures any fear or dread of temptation, who yet will profess a fear and abhorrence of sin. Would it were only thus with young men, such as are unaccustomed to the yoke of their Lord!

What sort of men is free from this folly in one thing or other? How many professing believers have I 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 try all things, whether they came to them in the way of God or no. As a result, they would run to hear and attend to every teacher of false and abominable opinions, every seducer—though marked as dangerous by the main body of the saints. For such a one they had their liberty: they could do it, but the opinions they hated as much as any. What has been the result? I scarce ever knew any to come off without a wound; the most have had their faith overthrown. Let no man, then, pretend to fear sin that does not fear temptation to sin. They are too nearly allied to be separated. Satan has put them so together that it is very hard for any man to put them asunder. He hates not the fruit who delights in the root.

Some men see that such ways, such companies, such courses, such businesses, such studies and aims do entangle them; make them cold and careless; are quench-coals<sup>36</sup> to them; indispose them to even, universal, and constant obedience. Yet, if they then adventure on them, sin lies at the door. In order to perform our duty, we must have a tender frame of spirit, which is sensible of its own weakness and corruption, of the craft of Satan, of the evil of sin, and of the effectiveness of temptation. And yet, until we bring our hearts to this frame, upon the considerations before-mentioned or the like that may be proposed, we shall never free ourselves from sinful entanglements. Boldness upon temptation, springing from several pretenses, has, as is known, ruined innumerable professors in these days, and still continues to cast many down from their excellency. Nor have I the least hope of a more fruitful profession among us until I see more fear of temptation. Sin will not long seem great or heavy unto any, to whom temptations seem light or small.

This is the first thing wrapped up in this general direction: We are required to daily exercise our thoughts to apprehend the great danger that lies in entering into temptation. Grieving the Spirit of God, uneasiness of our own souls, loss of peace, and hazard of eternal welfare lie at the door. If the soul is not prevailed upon to the observation of this direction, all that ensues will be of no value. Temptation minimized will conquer. If the heart be made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing a good behavior is over. Let not him go any further who is resolved not to improve this direction in a daily, conscientious observation of it.

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<sup>35</sup> **debauched** – given over to sensual pleasures.

<sup>36</sup> **quench-coals** – anything which quenches or extinguishes fire.

## 2. Our Need

### a. Why prayer is necessary

There is this in it also: that it is not a thing in our own power to keep and preserve ourselves from entering into temptation. Therefore we are to pray that we may be preserved from it, because we cannot save ourselves.

Prayer is another means of preservation. We have no strength to resist a temptation when it comes, when we are entered into it, but shall fall under it without a sufficient supply of grace from God. In the same way, a preserving principle is 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. We are in all things “kept by the power of God” (1Pe 1:5).

This our Savior instructs us in, not only by directing us to pray that we be not led into temptation, but also by His own praying for us, that we may be kept from it: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (Joh 17:15)—that is, the temptations of the world unto evil, unto sin. “Keep them from the evil” means to keep them “out of” the evil that is in the world—that is, temptation, which is all that is evil in the world; or it means “from the evil one,” who in the world makes use of the world unto temptation. Christ prays His Father to keep us, and 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 so effective and powerful; the entrances of it so deceitful, subtle, insensible, and plausible; our weakness and our unwatchfulness, 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, watching constantly for advantages against my soul. The world is earnest, pressing, and full of deceitful pleas, innumerable pretenses, and ways of deceit. My own corruptions are violent, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and warring in me and against me. Occasions and advantages of temptation are innumerable in all things I have done or suffer, in all businesses and persons with whom I converse. And, the first beginnings of temptation are insensible and plausible; so that, left to myself, I shall not know I am ensnared until my bonds be made strong and sin has got ground in my heart. Therefore, on God alone will I rely for preservation, and continually will I look up to Him on that account.”

### b. The soul’s advantages

This will make the soul be always committing itself to the care of God, resting itself on Him, and doing nothing or undertaking nothing without asking counsel of Him. A double advantage arises from the observation of this direction, both of particular use for the soul’s preservation from the evil feared.

1). *Grace and compassion of God.* One advantage is the engagement of the grace and compassion of God, Who has called the fatherless and helpless to rest upon Him. A soul has never failed of supplies who, in a sense of need, rolled itself on Him on the account of His gracious invitation.

2). *The keeping of the soul in such a frame* as is useful for its preservation on various accounts. He that 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 in this case may easily be apprehended by them who have their hearts exercised in these things.

3). *Faith*. This also is in it: to act faith on the promise of God for preservation. To believe that He will preserve us is a means of preservation; for this God will certainly do, 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 finds relief in this case. James teaches us this in chapter 1:5-7. What we lack we must “ask of God”; but we must “ask in faith,” for otherwise we must not “think that [we] shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

This then, also, is in this direction of our Savior: that we act 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 shall be directed in a way that, though we are fools, we “shall not err therein” (Isa 35:8); that He will lead us, guide us, and deliver us from the evil one. Set faith at work on these promises of God, and expect a good and comfortable result. It is not easily conceived what a train of graces faith is attended with, when it goes forth to meet Christ in the promises, nor what a power for the preservation of the soul lies in this thing; but I have spoken to this elsewhere.<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Prayer

Weigh these things separately, and, first, take prayer into consideration. To pray that we enter not into temptation is a means to preserve us from temptation. Glorious things are spoken of this duty by all men who know aught of those things; and yet the truth is, not one half of its excellency, power, and efficacy is known. It is not my business to speak of prayer in general; but this I say as to my present purpose: he who would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer. This calls in the suitable help and support that is laid up in Christ for us (Heb 4:16). This casts our souls into a frame of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for the taking to ourselves “the whole armour of God,” so that we may resist and stand in the time of temptation, he adds this general close of the whole: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication” (Eph 6:18).

Without this all the rest will be of no effect for the end proposed. And therefore consider what weight he lays on it: “Praying always”—that is, at all times and seasons, or be always ready and prepared for the discharge of that duty (Luk 18:1; Eph 6:18). “With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”—that is, putting forth all kinds of desires unto God that are suited to our condition, according to His will, and which we are assisted in by the Spirit. “And watching thereunto,” lest we be diverted by anything whatever. And we are to do this not for a little while, but “with all perseverance”—that is, continuance lengthened out to the utmost. So shall we stand. The soul so framed is in a sure posture.

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<sup>37</sup> *Mortification of Sin*, chapter 14, section entitled “Faith”; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

And, prayer 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. Let this, then, be another direction: Abide in prayer, and that expressly to this purpose: that we “enter not 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, that we be not entangled; that His good and wise providence will order our ways and affairs, so that no pressing temptation fall upon 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.

## Chapter 6

# WATCHING IN SPECIAL SEASONS OF TEMPTATION

We are considering three particular issues regarding temptation:

- I. How a man may know when he is entered into temptation (ch. 4);
- II. What directions are to be given for the preventing of our entering into temptation (ch. 5);
- III. What seasons there are in which a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand (this ch. 6).<sup>38</sup>

In addition to prayer, the other part of our Savior's direction—namely, to “watch”—is more general and extends itself to many particulars. I shall fix on some things that are contained therein:

*III. Watch the seasons in which men usually do “enter into temptations.”*

There are various seasons in which an hour of temptation is commonly at hand. They will unavoidably seize upon the soul, unless it be delivered by mercy through the use of watchfulness. When we are under such a season, then are we peculiarly to be upon our guard that we enter not into, that we fall not under, the power of temptation. Some of those seasons may be named.

### **1. Unusual Outward Prosperity**

A season of unusual outward prosperity is usually accompanied with an hour of temptation. Prosperity and temptation go together; yea, prosperity is a temptation, many temptations. This is because, without great supplies of grace, prosperity is apt to cast a soul into a frame of mind that is exposed to any temptation. Prosperity provides temptation with fuel and food for all temptations. Prosperity has provision for lust and darts from Satan.

The wise man tells us that “the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Pro 1:32). It hardens them in their way, makes them despise instruction, and puts the evil day (whose terror should influence them to repentance) far from them. Without a special assistance, prosperity 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 thee, and say, Who is the Lord?” (Pro 30:8-9)—that is, lest, being filled with them, he should forget the Lord, as God complains that His people did (Hos 13:6).

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<sup>38</sup> This paragraph is adapted by the editors from chapter 4 and inserted as an aid to the reader.

We know how David was mistaken in this case: “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved” (Psa 30:6). All is well, and will be well. But what was at hand, what lay at the door, that David thought not of? Verse 7: “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” God was ready to hide His face; and David was ready to enter into a temptation of desertion, and he knew it not.

As, then, unto a prosperous condition, I shall not go against Solomon’s counsel: “In the day of prosperity be joyful” (Ecc 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 (v. 14), lest evil lie at the door (Gen 4:7). A man in that state is in the midst of snares. Satan has many advantages against him: he forges darts out of all his enjoyments. And, if that man watches not, he will be entangled before he is aware.

You lack that which should poise and ballast<sup>39</sup> your heart. Formality in religion will be 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, will be apt to grow upon you. In such a time be vigilant, be circumspect, or you will be surprised. Job says in his affliction, “God maketh my heart soft” (Job 23:16).

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

## 2. Cold Formality

As was shown before in part, a time of the slumber of grace, of neglect in communion with God, of formality in duty, is a season to be watched in, as that which certainly has some other temptation attending it.

Let a soul in such an estate awake and look about him. His enemy is at hand, and he is ready to fall into such a condition as may cost him dear all the days of his life. His present estate is bad enough in itself; but it is also an indication of that which is worse lying at the door. The disciples who were with Christ in the garden of Gethsemane had not only a bodily, but a spiritual, drowsiness upon them. What says our Savior to them? “Rise...watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat 26:46, 41). We know how near one of them was to a bitter hour of temptation (that is, Peter); and not watching as he ought, he immediately entered into it.

I mentioned before the case of the spouse (Song 5:2-8). She slept and was drowsy, and was unwilling to gird up herself to a vigorous performance of 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? Or, though it gives to others as great a blaze as formerly, yet do you see not so clearly the face of God in Christ by it as you have done before (2Co 4:6)? Is your zeal cold? Or, if it does the same works as formerly, yet is your heart not warmed with the love of God and to God in them as

<sup>39</sup> **ballast** – add weight at the bottom of a ship for stability; “poise and ballast” is to balance and stabilize.

formerly, but instead you only proceed in the course you have been in? Are you negligent in the duties of praying or hearing? Or, if you do observe them, do you not do it with that life and vigor as formerly? Do you flag in your profession? Or, if you keep it up, are your wheels oiled by some sinister respects from within or without? Does your delight in the people of God faint and grow cold? Or, is your love to them changing from that which is purely spiritual into that which is very carnal, upon the account of suitableness of principles and natural spirits,<sup>40</sup> 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 shall stick by you all the days of your life. Yes, when you awake, you will find that it has indeed laid hold of you already, though you do not perceive it. It has smitten and wounded you, though you have not complained nor sought for relief or healing.

Such was the state of the church of Sardis: “The things which remain...are ready to die” (Rev 3:2). “Be watchful,” says our Savior, “and strengthen” them, or a worse thing will fall upon you. If any who reads the word of this direction be in this condition, if he has any regard of his poor soul, let him now awake before he is entangled beyond recovery. Take this warning from God; despise it not.

### 3. Great Spiritual Enjoyment

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 the case stood with Paul (2Co 12:7). He had glorious spiritual revelations of God and Jesus Christ. Instantly Satan falls upon him, a messenger from him buffets him; so that he earnestly begs its departure, but yet 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. And this is by some notable work of His Spirit, overpowering us with a sense of love in the unspeakable privilege of adoption, and so 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 us to be here...let us make here three tabernacles” (Mat 17:4)—that is, to abide here forever? But yet, very frequently, some bitter temptation is now at hand. Satan sees that, being possessed by the joy before us, we quickly neglect many ways of approach to our souls wherein he seeks and finds advantages against us. Is this, then, our state and condition? Does God at any time give us to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at His right hand, and satisfy our souls with His kindness as with marrow and fatness? Let us not say, “We shall never be moved” (Psa 30:6); we know not how soon God may hide His face, or a messenger from Satan may buffet us.

Besides, there lies oftentimes a greater and worse deceit in this business. Men cheat their souls with their own imaginations, instead of 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 con-

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<sup>40</sup> **upon the account of...natural spirits** – that is, our love for others becomes based on how well we find them matching our own interests and enjoyments.

sciences from their own foolish imaginations and deceivings, with which they sport themselves? May we not see such every day: persons 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, we must not believe truth itself! How woeful, then, must their condition be!

#### **4. Self-confidence**

A fourth season is a season of self-confidence: then temptation is usually at hand.

The case of Peter is clear in this: “Yet will I not deny thee” (Mat 26:35)—that is, though all men should deny Thee, I will not. Though I were to die for it, I would not do it. This said the poor man when he stood on the very brink of that temptation that cost him such bitter tears afterward. And this taught him so far to know himself all his days. It gave him such acquaintance with the state of all believers that, when he had received more of the Spirit and of power, yet he had less of confidence. He therefore saw it fit that others should have less confidence also, and therefore persuades all men to “pass the time of [their] sojourning here in fear” (1Pe 1:17); and 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 shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Mat 26:33). He fears every man more than himself. But when our Savior afterward comes to him, and puts him directly upon the comparison: “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (Joh 21:15), he is done comparing himself with others, and only cries, “Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” He will lift up himself above others no more.

Such a season often comes. Temptations are abroad in the world, and false doctrines, with innumerable other allurements and provocations. We are ready, every one, to be very confident that we shall not be surprised with them. Though all men should fall into these follies, yet we would not. Surely we shall never go off from our walking with God; it is impossible our hearts should be so stupid and foolish. But says the apostle, “Be not high-minded, but fear...let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (Rom 11:20; 1Co 10:11). Would you think that Peter—who had walked on the sea with Christ, confessed Him to be the Son of God, been with Him in the mount when he heard the voice from the excellent glory (Mat 17:1-8)—should instantly fall a-cursing and swearing that he knew Him not, at the word of a servant-girl (Luk 22:57)—when there was no legal inquisition after him, no process against him, nor against anyone in his condition? Let them take heed of self-confidence who have any mind to take heed of sin.

And this is the first thing in our watching: to consider well the seasons wherein temptation usually makes its approaches to the soul, and be armed against them. And these are some of the seasons wherein temptations are nigh at hand.

## Chapter 7

# WATCHING THE HEART

That part of watchfulness against temptation which we have considered regards the outward means, occasions, and advantages of temptation. We now proceed to that which respects the heart itself, which is wrought upon and entangled by temptation. Watching, or keeping of the heart, which above all “keepings” we are obliged unto, comes within the compass of this duty also. For the right performance of this, take the following directions.

### 1. Know Your Heart

Let him that would not enter into temptations 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 of sin.

Our Savior tells the disciples, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luk 9:55); which, under a pretense of zeal, betrayed them into ambition and desire of revenge. Had they known their hearts, they would have watched over themselves. David tells us that he considered his ways, and “kept myself from mine iniquity” (Psa 18:23)—that is, the iniquity unto which he was particularly prone.

There are advantages for temptations that lie often in men’s natural temperaments and constitutions. Some are naturally gentle, facile, easy to be entreated, pliable. This may be the noblest temper of nature and the best and choicest ground, when well broken up and fallowed,<sup>41</sup> for grace to grow in. However, if not watched over, it will be a means of innumerable surprises and entanglements in temptation. Other natural temperaments are earthy, stubborn, gloomy; so that envy, malice, selfishness, peevishness, harsh thoughts of others, and complaining lie at the very door of their natures. They can scarce step out but they are in the snare of one or other of them. Other natural temperaments are passionate, and the like.

Now, he who would watch that he enter not into temptation needs to be acquainted with his own natural temperament, so that he may watch over the treacheries that lie in it continually. Take heed lest you have a Jehu in you, that shall make you drive furiously; or a Jonah in you, that will make you ready to complain; or a David, that will make you hasty in your determinations, as he was often in the warmth and goodness of his natural temperament. He who watches not 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 peculiar natural temperaments that, according as they are attended or managed, prove either a great encouragement to sin, or advantage to the exercise of grace. In

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<sup>41</sup> **fallowed** – plowed and ready for seeding.

the same way, men may have peculiar lusts or corruptions that, either by their natural constitution or education and other prejudices, have got deep rooting and strength in them. This, also, is to be found out by him who would not enter into temptation. Unless he knows it, unless his eyes be always on it, unless he observes its actings, motions, and advantages, it will continually be entangling and ensnaring him.

This, then, is our sixth direction of this kind.<sup>42</sup> Labor to know your own frame and temperament: what spirit you are of; what associates in your heart Satan has; where corruption is strong, where grace is weak; what stronghold lust has in your natural constitution, and the like. How many have all their comforts blasted 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 facility!

Be acquainted, then, with your own heart. Though it be deep, search it; though it be dark, inquire into it. Though it give all its distempers other names than what are their due, believe it not. Men often are utter strangers to themselves. They give flattering titles to their natural distempers; they strive rather to justify, conceal, or excuse the evils of their hearts that are suited to their natural temperaments and constitutions, rather than to destroy them. By these means, they keep themselves from taking a clear and distinct view of their natural temperaments. Were not men utter strangers to themselves, it would be impossible that they should all their days hang in the same briers without attempting deliverance. Uselessness and scandal in professing believers are branches growing constantly on this root of unacquaintedness with their own frame and temperament. How few are there who will either study them themselves, or bear with those who would acquaint them with themselves!

## 2. Watch against Particular Occasions

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

It may be there are some ways, some societies, or some businesses that you have never in your life escaped, but allow them more or less, through their suitableness to entice or provoke your corruption. It may be you are in a state and condition of life that wearies you day by day, on the account of your ambition, passion, discontent, or the like. If you have any love to your soul, it is time for you to awake and deliver yourself, as 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 battlefield (2Sa 11:1-2).

But the particulars of this instance are so varied, and of such particular natures in respect of individual persons, that it is impossible to enumerate them (Pro 4:14-15). Herein lies no small part of that wisdom which consists in our ordering our behavior aright. Seeing we have so little power over our hearts when once they meet with suitable provocations, we are to keep away from such occasions and opportunities, as a man would do with fire and the combustible parts of the house in which he dwells.

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<sup>42</sup> **six directions of this kind:** 1) pray (ch. 5.3); 2) watch during unusual outward prosperity (ch. 6.1), 3) watch during cold formality (ch. 6.2); 4) watch during great spiritual enjoyment (ch. 6.3); 5) watch during self-confidence (ch. 6.4); 6) watch to know your own heart (ch. 7.1).

### 3. Lay in Store Gospel Provisions

Be sure to lay 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 laid up?” Our hearts, as our Savior speaks, are our “treasury” (Mat 12:35). There we lay up whatever we have, good or bad; and from there we draw it for our use. It is the heart, then, wherein provision is to be laid up against temptation. When an enemy draws nigh to a fort or castle to besiege and take it, often—if he finds it well manned and furnished with provision for a siege, and so able to hold out—he withdraws and assaults it not. If Satan, the prince of this world, comes and finds our hearts fortified against his batteries, and provided for (so to be able to hold out), he not only departs, but as James says, he flees. “He will flee from you” (Jam 4:7).

The provision to be laid up is that which is provided in the gospel for us. Gospel provisions will do this work—that is, 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 then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). And there is the end of the temptation as to him; it lays no hold on him, but departs. He was furnished with such a ready sense of the love of God as temptation could not stand before. “The love of Christ constraineth us,” saith the apostle, to “live...unto him” (2Co 5:14-15); and so, consequently, to withstand temptation.

A man may—nay, 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; nay, they will never stand alone against a vigorous assault. They are conquered in convicted persons every day; hearts stored with them will struggle for a while, but quickly give over. But store 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 the shedding of His own blood; get a relish of the privileges we have thereby (our adoption, justification, 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—and you will, in an ordinary course of walking with God, have great peace and security against 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 that we have in the blood of Christ, I know not what they can have to keep them from falling into snares. The apostle tells us that “the peace of God...shall keep your hearts” (Phi 4:7). “Keep” denotes a military word, a garrison;<sup>43</sup> and so the Greek can be translated, “shall keep as in a garrison.” Now, a garrison has two things attending it: first, that it is exposed to the assaults of its enemies; secondly, that safety lies in it from their attempts. It is so with our souls. They are exposed to temptations and assaulted continually; but if there be a garrison in them, or if they be kept as in a garrison, temptation shall not enter, and consequently we shall not enter into temptation.

Now, how is this done? The apostle says, “The peace of God” shall do it. What is this “peace of God”? It is a sense of His love and favor in Jesus Christ. Let this abide in you, and it shall garrison you against all assaults, whatever they may be. Besides, there is that, in a special manner, which is also in all the rest of the directions—namely, that the peace of God itself lies in a direct opposition to all the ways and means that temptation can make use of to approach

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<sup>43</sup> **garrison** – small body of troops stationed in a fortified place.

unto our souls. Contending to obtain and keep a sense of the love of God in Christ, in the nature of it, prevents all the gradual workings and subtle introductions of temptation.

Let this be a third direction, then, in our watching against temptation: Lay in store gospel provisions, which may make the soul a fortified place against all the assaults of temptation upon it.

#### **4. At Temptation's First Approach**

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

##### **a. Be always awake**

Be always awake, that you may have an early discovery of your temptation, that you may know it to be so. Most men perceive not their enemy until they are wounded by him. Others may sometimes see them deeply engaged, while they themselves are utterly insensible. They sleep without any sense of danger, until others come and waken them by telling them that their house is on fire! There is a neutral sense of temptation: namely, as it denotes such a way, thing, or matter as is or may be made use of for the purpose of temptation. This sense of temptation is not easily discoverable. Few take notice of it until it is too late, and they find themselves entangled, if not wounded. Watch, then, to understand early the snares that are laid for you. Watch to understand the advantages your enemies have against you before they get strength and power, and before they are incorporated with your lusts, and have distilled poison into your soul.

##### **b. Consider temptation's aim**

Consider the aim and tendency of the temptation, whatever it be, and of those that are concerned in it. Those who have an active cooperation in your temptation are 1) your own lusts and 2) Satan.

1). *For your own lust*, I have shown elsewhere what it aims at in all its actings and enticings. It never rises up but its intention is the worst of evils. Every acting of it would be a formed enmity against God. Therefore, look upon it in its first attempts, whatever pretenses may be made, as your mortal enemy. "I hate" the working of lust in me, says the apostle (Rom 7:15)—that is, "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 cursed, sworn enemy is at hand and is setting upon you, and that for the purpose of your utter ruin. Therefore, it would be the greatest madness in the world to throw yourself into his arms to be destroyed. But of this I have spoken in my discourse on mortification.<sup>44</sup>

2). *Has Satan*, who is a sharer in every temptation, any more friendly aim and intention towards you? To beguile you as a serpent, to devour you as a lion, is the friendship that he owes you. I shall only add that the sin against the Law which he tempts you to, 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 a "better" ground (in his view), in order to assault you as to your interest in

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<sup>44</sup> *Mortification of Sin*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY. "Mortification" means putting to death, rendering the dominant power of something to become no longer dominant.

Christ. He who perhaps will say today, “You may venture on sin, because you have an interest in Christ,” will tomorrow tell you that you have no such interest, because you have ventured so upon sin.

### c. Show faith

Meet your temptation, in its entrance, with thoughts of faith concerning Christ on the cross. This will make temptation sink before you. Entertain no discussion, no dispute with it, if you would not enter into it. Say, “‘It is Christ that died’ (Rom 8:34)—that is, that died for such sins as these.” This is called “taking the shield of faith...to quench all the fiery darts” of Satan (Eph 6:16). Faith does this by laying hold on Christ crucified, His love therein, and what He suffered for sin. Let your temptation be what it will—be it unto sin, to fear or doubting for sin, or about your state and condition—it is not able to stand before faith lifting up the standard of the cross. We know what means the Roman Catholics, who have lost the power of faith, use to keep up the form. They will sign themselves with the sign of the cross, or make crosses in the air; and by virtue of that work done, think to scare away the devil. But to *act faith on Christ crucified* is really to sign ourselves with the sign of the cross, and thereby shall we overcome that wicked one (1Pe 5:9-10).

## 5. After Being Entangled by Temptation

Suppose the soul has been surprised by temptation, and entangled in it unawares, so that now it is too late to resist the first entrances of it. What shall such a soul do that it be not plunged into it, and carried away with the power of it?

### a. Ask God to deliver

Do as Paul did: beseech God again and again that the temptation may “depart from” you (2Co 12:8). And if you abide in this, you shall certainly either be speedily delivered out of it, or receive sufficient grace not to be foiled utterly by it. Only, as I said in part before, do not so much employ your thoughts 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. When that is taken away, the things themselves may be more calmly considered.

### b. Fly to Christ

Fly to Christ, in a special manner, because He was tempted, and beg of Him to give you assistance in this “time of need” (Heb 4:16)—that is, this time of trouble. The apostle instructs us herein: “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour<sup>45</sup> them that are tempted” (2:18). This is the meaning of it: When you are tempted and are ready to faint, when you need help—to the point that you must have it or you will die—act faith peculiarly 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 not merely on His own account, but for us, seeing for our sakes He submitted to be tempted. (He conquered in and by Himself, but He conquered *for* us.) And draw, yea, expect help from Him (Heb 4:15-16). Lie down at His feet, make your complaint known to Him, beg His assistance, and it will not be in vain.

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<sup>45</sup> **succour** – assist or support in time of need.

**c. Consider Christ's faithful promises**

Look to Christ, Who has promised deliverance. Consider that He is faithful, and “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1Co 10:13). Consider that He has promised a comfortable result of these trials and temptations. Call to mind all the promises of assistance and deliverance that He has made; ponder them in your heart. And rest upon it, that God has innumerable ways to give you help in deliverance that you know not of; as,

1). *He can send an affliction that will mortify your heart* to the matter of the temptation, whatever it be; so that that which was before a sweet morsel under the tongue, shall neither have taste or relish in it to you. Your desire to it shall be killed, as was the case with David.

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

3). *He can tread down Satan under your feet*, that he shall not dare to suggest anything anymore to your disadvantage (the God of peace shall do it!), so that you shall hear of him no more.

4). *He can give you such supply of grace* as that you may be freed, though not from the temptation itself, yet from the tendency and danger of it—as was the case with Paul (2Co 12:8-10).

5). *He can give you such a comfortable persuasion of good success* in the result as that you shall have refreshment in your trials, and be kept from the trouble of the temptation—as was also the case with Paul.

6). *He can utterly remove it*, and make you a complete conqueror.

And innumerable other ways He has of keeping you from entering into temptation, so as to be defeated by it.

**d. Make up the breach**

Consider where the temptation with which you are surprised has made its entrance, and by what means—and with all speed make up the breach.<sup>46</sup> Stop that passage which the waters have made to enter in at. Deal with your soul like a wise physician. Inquire when, how, and by what means you fell into this distemper. If you find negligence, carelessness, or lack of keeping watch over yourself to be the cause of it, fix your soul there. Bewail that before the Lord, make up that breach, and then proceed to the work that lies before you.

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<sup>46</sup> **breach** – break or gap in a fortification.

## Chapter 8

# KEEPING THE WORD OF CHRIST'S PATIENCE

*“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”—  
Revelation 3:10*

The directions insisted on in the former chapters are partly such as are given us, in their several particulars, up and down the Scripture; and they partly arise from the nature of the thing itself. There is one general direction that remains, which is comprehensive of all that went before, and also adds many more particulars to them. This contains an approved antidote against the poison of temptation—a remedy that Christ Himself has marked with a note of effectiveness and success. It is given to us in the words of our Savior Himself to the church of Philadelphia. “Because,” He says, “thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation.” Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb 13:8). As He dealt with the church of Philadelphia, so will He deal with us. If we “keep the word of [His] patience,” He will keep us “from the hour of temptation.” This, then, requires our peculiar attention, because it is a way of rolling the whole care of this weighty affair onto Him Who is able to bear it.

Therefore, I shall show what it is to “keep the word of Christ’s patience,” so that we may know how to perform our duty. Then I will consider how this will be a means of our preservation, which will establish us in the faith of Christ’s promise.

### 1. “Christ’s Patience”

The word of Christ is the word of the gospel; the word by Him revealed from the bosom of the Father; the word of the Word, the word of the eternal Word spoken in time. So it is called “the word of Christ” (Col 3:16), or “the gospel of Christ” (Rom 1:16; 1Co 9:12), and “the doctrine of Christ” (Heb 6:1). “Of Christ”—that is, as its author (Heb 1:1-2); and of Him as the chief subject or matter of it (2Co 1:20). Now, this word is called “the word of Christ’s *patience*,” or tolerance and forbearance, upon the account of that patience and long-suffering which, in the administration of it, the Lord Christ exercises towards the whole and to all persons in it. He does this both actively and passively, in His bearing with men and enduring from them:

*a. He is patient towards his saints.* He bears with them, suffers from them. He is “longsuffering to us-ward” (2Pe 3:9)—that is, 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 therein 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 done to His grace, so many violations of engagements, as He does—it manifests His gospel to be 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. He also suffers in His people, because, in all their afflictions, He is afflicted (Isa 53:7).

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

*c. To the perishing world.* Hence the time of His kingdom in this world is called the time of His “patience” (Rev 1:9). He “endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath” (Rom 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?” (Psa 13:1-2; Rev 6:10). The world mocks at Him as if He were only a powerless idol (2Pe 3:4). He endures from them bitter things—in His name, ways, worship, saints, promises, threats, and all His interest of honor and love—and yet passes by them, lets them alone, and does them good. Nor will He cut this way of proceeding short until the gospel shall be preached no more. Patience must accompany the gospel.

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

## 2. Three Things Implied

Three things are implied in the keeping of this word: a) Knowledge; b) Valuation; and c) Obedience.

### a. Knowledge

He that will keep this word must know it, be acquainted with it; and this under a fourfold notion: 1) As a word of grace and mercy, to save him; 2) As a word of holiness and purity, to sanctify him; 3) As a word of liberty and power, to ennoble him and set him free; 4) As a word of consolation, to support him in every condition.

#### 1). *Grace and mercy*

He that will keep this word must know it as a word of grace and mercy that is able to save us. It is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16); “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” (Ti 2:11); “the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Act 20:32); the “word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam 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 such to itself, it will strive to keep it.

#### 2). *Holiness and purity*

He that will keep this word must know it as a word of holiness and purity that is able to sanctify him. “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you,” says our Savior

(Joh 15:3). To that purpose is His prayer, “Sanctify them” (17:17). He that knows not the word of Christ’s patience as a sanctifying, cleansing word—in the power of it upon his own soul—neither knows it nor keeps it. The empty profession of our days knows not one step towards this duty; and it is from this that most are so overborne under the power of temptations. Men full of self, of the world, of fury, ambition, and almost all unclean lusts, do yet talk of keeping the word of Christ! (See 1 Peter 1:2 and 2 Timothy 2:19.)

### 3). *Liberty and power*

He that will keep this word must know it as a word of liberty and power, to ennoble him and set him free. And it is a word of liberty not only from the guilt of sin and from wrath, for that it does as it is a word of grace and mercy; not only from the power of sin, for that it does as it is a word of holiness; but it is a word of 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 (Joh 8:32; 1Co 7:23). We are not by it freed from due subjection to superiors, nor from any duty, nor unto any sin (1Pe 2:16); but in two respects it is a word of freedom, liberty, largeness of mind, power, and deliverance from bondage:

a). *In respect of conscience* as to the worship of God (Gal 5:1).

b). *In respect of ignoble, slavish respects unto the men* or things of the world, in the course of our pilgrimage. The gospel gives a free, large, and noble spirit 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” (2Ti 1:7); a mind “in nothing terrified” (Phi 1:28)—not swayed with any consideration whatever. There is nothing more unworthy of the gospel than a mind in bondage to persons or things, prostituting itself to the lusts of men or fears of the world.

And he that thus knows the word of Christ’s patience, really and in power, is even thereby freed from innumerable and unspeakable temptations.

### 4). *Consolation*

He that will keep this word must know it as a word of consolation, to support him in every condition, and to be a full portion in the lack of everything. It is a word attended with “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). It gives support, relief, refreshment, satisfaction, peace, consolation, joy, boasting, glory, in every condition whatever.

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.

### b. *Valuation*

To value what is thus known belongs to the keeping of this word of Christ’s patience. It is to be kept as a treasure: “that good thing” (*Greek*: that excellent deposit, that is, the word of the gospel). “Keep” it, the apostle says, “by the Holy Ghost” (2Ti 1:14); and, “holding fast the faithful word” (Ti 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. They that will have a regard from Christ in the time of temptation are not to be regardless of His concerns.

### c. *Obedience*

Personal obedience, in the universal observation of all the commands of Christ, is the keeping of His word (Joh 14:15). Close adherence, then, unto Christ in holiness and universal obe-

dience—when the opposition that the gospel of Christ meets with in the world renders it notably the word of His patience—is the life and soul of the duty required.

Now, all these are to be so managed with that effort of mind and spirit (that care of heart and diligence of the whole person), as to make up a keeping of this word; which evidently includes all these considerations.

We are arrived, then, to the sum of this safeguarding duty, of this condition of freedom from the power of temptation. A man must have a due acquaintance with (that is, *knowledge* of) the gospel in its excellencies, so that it is to him as a word of mercy, holiness, liberty, and consolation. He must then *value* it, in all its concerns, as his choicest and only treasure. He must also make it his business and the work of his life to give himself up unto it in universal *obedience*, especially when opposition and apostasy put the patience of Christ to the utmost. If he does these three things, he shall be preserved from the hour of temptation.

This comprehends all that went before, and is exclusive of all other ways for the obtaining of the result purposed. Nor let any man think without this to be kept one hour from entering into temptation. Wherever he fails, there temptation enters.

### 3. A Sure Preservative

That this “keeping the word of Christ’s patience” will be a sure preservative may appear from the following considerations.

#### a. Promise

It—and it alone—has the promise of preservation. It is solemnly promised on this account, in the place mentioned to the church of Philadelphia (Rev 3:10). When a great trial and temptation was to come on the world, at the opening of the seventh seal, a caution is given for the preservation of God’s sealed ones (Rev 7:3), which are described to be 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 matter of it; and 3) the power and effectiveness of the Holy Ghost, which puts the promise into execution. All these are engaged for the preservation of such persons from the hour of temptation.

#### 1). *The faithfulness of the Father*

The faithfulness of God accompanies the promise. On this account is our deliverance laid. Though we be tempted, yet we shall be kept from the hour of temptation. It shall not grow too strong for us. What comes on us we shall be able to bear, and what would be too hard for us we shall escape. But what assurance do we have of this? Even the faithfulness of God: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1Co 10:13). And wherein is God’s faithfulness seen and exercised? “He is faithful that promised” (Heb 10:23). His faithfulness consists in His discharge of His promises. “He abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2Ti 2:13). So that by being under the promise, we have the faithfulness of God engaged for our preservation.

### 2). *The grace of the Son*

The grace of the Son is in every promise of the covenant. That is the subject-matter of all promises: “I...will keep thee” (Rev 3:10). How? “By My grace with thee.” Therefore, in the hour of temptation, a soul that has a right in this promise shall enjoy the assistance which the grace of Christ can give. Paul’s temptation grew very high; it was likely to have come to its prevalent hour. He “besought the Lord”—that is, the Lord Jesus Christ—for help (2Co 12:8), and received the answer from Him: “My grace is sufficient for thee” (12:9). That it was the Lord Christ and His grace with Whom he had peculiarly to do, is evident from the close of that verse: I will “glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”—that is, the efficacy of the grace of Christ in my preservation may be made evident (see also Heb 2:18).

### 3). *The effectiveness of the Spirit*

The effectiveness of the Spirit accompanies the promises. He is called the “Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph 1:13); not only because He is promised by Christ, but also because He effectually makes good the promise and accomplishes it in our souls. He also, then, is engaged to preserve the soul walking according to the rule laid down (Isa 49:21).

Thus, where the promise is, there is all this assistance. The faithfulness of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the power of the Spirit are all engaged in our preservation.

## b. **Sure**

This constant, universal keeping of Christ’s word of patience will keep the heart and soul in such a frame that no especially effective temptation, by virtue of any advantages whatever, can seize upon the soul so as totally to prevail against it. So David prays, “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me” (Psa 25:21). This integrity and uprightness is the Old Testament’s “keeping the word of Christ”: universal close walking with God. Now, how can integrity and uprightness 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 (Isa 57:21). To keep the word of Christ is to do this universally, as has been shown.

Upholding integrity and uprightness exercises grace in all the faculties of the soul and compasses it with the whole armor of God. The understanding is full of light; the affections, of love and holiness. Let the wind blow from what quarter it will, the soul is fenced and fortified. Let the enemy assault when or by what means he pleases, all things in the soul of such a one are on guard. “How can I do this [thing], and sin against God?” is his response (Gen 39:9).

Especially upon a twofold account does deliverance and security arise from this:

### 1). *Mortification*

Security arises by the mortification of the heart to the matter of temptations.<sup>47</sup> The power of any temptation arises from the heart being ready to close with the matter of it. There are lusts within, suited to the proposals of the world or Satan without. Thus James resolves all temptations into our “own lust” (Jam 1:14); because either they proceed from or are made effectual by our lusts, as has been declared.

<sup>47</sup> See *Mortification of Sin* by John Owen, and Free Grace Broadcaster 201, *Mortification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

Why does terror or threats turn us aside from a due constancy in the performance of our duty? Is it not because there is unmortified, carnal fear abiding in us, which greatly disturbs us in such a season? Why is it that the charms of the world and compliances 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, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20). He that keeps close to Christ is crucified with Him, and is dead to all the desires of the flesh and the world (as more fully declared in 6:14). Here the match is broken, and all love, entangling love, is dissolved. The heart is crucified to the world and all things in it. Now the matter of almost all temptations comes from the world; it is comprised of the men or things of the world. "As to these things," says the apostle, "I am crucified to them" (and it is so with every one that keeps the word of Christ). "My heart is mortified unto them. I have no desire after them, nor affection to them, nor delight in them. They are crucified unto me. The crowns, glories, thrones, pleasures, profits of the world, I see nothing desirable in them. The lusts, sensual pleasures, love, respect, honor, of men, name and reputation among them—they are all as nothing. I have no value or estimation of them." This soul is safeguarded from assaults of manifold temptations.

When Achan saw the "goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold," first he "coveted them," then he "took them" (Jos 7:21). Temptation subtly spreads before the eyes of men the Babylonish garment of favor, praise, peace, and the silver of pleasure or profit, with the golden satisfactions of the flesh. If now there be that in them alive, unmortified, which will presently fall to coveting—even though fear of punishment follows—the heart or hand will be put forth unto iniquity.

Herein, then, lies the security of such a frame as that described: It is always accompanied with a mortified heart, crucified unto the things that are the matter of our temptations; without which it is utterly impossible that we should be preserved one moment when any temptation falls on us. If liking and love of the things proposed, insinuated, and commended in the temptation, is living and active in us, we shall not be able to resist and stand.

## *2). Heart filled with better things*

In this frame, the heart is filled with better things and their excellency, so far as to be fortified against the matter of any temptation. See what resolution this puts Paul upon: all is "loss" and "dung" to him (Phi 3:8). Who would go out of his way to have his arms full of loss and dung? And from what does he have this estimation of the most desirable things in the world? It is from that dear estimation he had of the excellency of Christ. Therefore, when the soul is exercised to communion with Christ and to walking with Him, he drinks new wine (3:10), and cannot desire the old things of the world; for he says in effect, "The new is better." He tastes every day how gracious the Lord is, and therefore longs not after the sweetness of forbidden things, which indeed have none. He that makes it his business to eat daily of the tree of life will have no appetite for other fruit, though the tree that bears them seems to stand in the midst of paradise.

This the spouse makes the means of her preservation: even the excellency that, by daily communion, she found Christ and His graces to be above all other desirable things (Song 5:15). Let a soul exercise itself to 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 shall have a mighty preservative against all temptations. The full soul loathes the honeycomb (Prov 27:7); and a soul filled with carnal, earthly, sensual satisfactions finds no relish nor savor in the sweetest spiritual things. In the same way, he who is satisfied with the kindness of God—as with marrow and fatness, which is every day entertained at the “feast of wines upon the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6)—has a holy contempt of the baits and charms that lie in prevailing temptations, and is safe.

### **c. Preserving considerations and principles**

He that so keeps the word of Christ’s patience is always furnished with preserving considerations and preserving principles—moral and real advantages of preservation.

#### **1). Preserving considerations**

He that keeps the word of Christ’s patience 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, he considers the following.

##### *a). The concern Christ has for him*

First, the concern of Christ (Whom his soul loves) for him and his careful walking. He considers that the presence of Christ is with him, His eye upon him; that He ponders his heart and ways, as one greatly concerned in his conduct in a time of trial. So Christ manifests Himself to do (Rev 2:19-23). He considers all: both what is acceptable and what is to be rejected. He knows that

- Christ is concerned in his honor, so that His name be not evil spoken of by reason of him.
- Christ is concerned in love to his soul, having that design upon him to “present [him] holy and unblameable and unreprougeable in his sight” (Col 1:22), and Christ’s Spirit is grieved where He is interrupted in this work.
- Christ is concerned on the account of His gospel, the progress and acceptance of it in the world. Its beauty would be slurred, its good things reviled, its progress stopped, if such a one be prevailed against.
- Christ is concerned in his love to others, who are grievously scandalized, and perhaps ruined, by the miscarriages of such. When Hymenaeus and Philetus fell, they overthrew the faith of some.

And then says such a soul, who is exercised to keep the word of Christ’s patience, when intricate, perplexed, entangling temptations—public, private, or personal—do arise: “Shall I now be careless? Shall I be negligent? Shall I comply with the world and the ways of it? Oh, what thoughts of heart has Christ concerning me, Whose eye is upon me! Shall I reject 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, but is full of this soul-pressing consideration. It dwells on his heart and spirit. The love of Christ constrains Him so to keep his heart and ways (2Co 5:14).

*b). The conquest Christ made for him*

The great consideration of the temptations of Christ in his behalf, and the conquest He made in all assaults for his sake and his God, dwell also on his spirit. The prince of this world came upon Christ. Everything in earth or hell that has either allure or terror in it was proposed to Him, to divert Him from the work of mediation<sup>48</sup> that He had undertaken for us. His whole life on earth He calls the time of His “temptations” (Luk 22:28). But He resisted all, conquered all, and is become a Captain of salvation to them that obey Him (Heb 2:10). “And,” says the soul, “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 Him Who went before me in the ways of all temptations, to which His holy nature was subjected, for my good?”

*c). The loss of Christ's love*

Gloomy thoughts of the loss of love, the loss of the smiles of the countenance of Christ, do 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. Perhaps he has been sometimes at some loss in this thing, and so knows also what it is to be in the dark, distanced from Him. See the conduct of the spouse in such a case (Song 3:4). When she had once found Him again, she holds Him—she will not let Him go; she will lose Him no more.

**2). Preserving principles**

He that keeps the word of Christ's patience has preserving principles upon which he acts. Some of them may be mentioned.

*a). Faith*

In all things, he lives by faith, and acts by faith in all his ways (Gal 2:20). Now, when faith is improved, the power of preservation from temptation is added to it for two reasons.

1). *Because it empties the soul of its own wisdom*, understanding, and fulness, that it may act in the wisdom and fulness of Christ. The only advice for preservation in trials and temptations lies in that of the wise man: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Pro 3:5). This is the work of faith. It is faith; it is to live by faith.

The great cause of men's falling in trials is their leaning upon their own understanding and counsel. What is the result of it? “The steps of his strength shall be straitened,<sup>49</sup> and his own counsel shall cast him down” (Job 18:7). First, he shall be entangled, and then cast down; and all by his own counsel, until he comes to be ashamed of it—as Ephraim was (Hos 10:6). Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, hearken to self-reasonings, though they seem to be good and tending to our preservation, yet the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we shall in the end be cast down by our own counsels. Now, nothing can empty the heart

<sup>48</sup> **mediation** – Christ's work as a go-between to reconcile God and man. “It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest and king; head and savior of the church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.” (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1) See also Free Grace Broadcaster 183, *Christ the Mediator*; both available from CHAP-EL LIBRARY.

<sup>49</sup> **straitened** – constricted.

of this fullness of self but faith: living by faith, not living to ourselves; and having Christ live in us, by our living by faith on Him.

2). *Faith—making the soul poor, empty, helpless, destitute in itself—engages the heart, will, and power of Jesus Christ for assistance.* Of this I have spoken more at large elsewhere.<sup>50</sup>

b). *Love to the saints*

Love to the saints, with care that they suffer not upon our account, is a great preserving principle in a time of temptations and trials. How powerful this was in David, he declares in that earnest prayer: “Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel” (Psa 69:6)—that is, “O let me not so miscarry that those for whom I would lay down my life should be put to shame, be evil spoken of, dishonored, reviled, condemned on my account, 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 with which those are attended, who keep the word of Christ’s patience in the way and manner before described. But I shall content myself to have pointed out these mentioned.

#### 4. Why Many Fall to Temptation

And will it now be easy to determine why it is that so many in our days are prevailed on in the time of trial, 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 professing believers that we have, there are few that keep the word of the patience of Christ? If we willfully neglect or cast away our part in the promise of preservation, is it any wonder if we are not preserved?

There is an hour of temptation come upon the world to try them who dwell therein. It variously exerts its power and effectiveness. There is not any way or thing wherein it may not be seen acting and putting itself forth. It appears in worldliness; in sensuality; in looseness of 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, and selfishness; in atheism and contempt of God. They are but branches of the same root, bitter streams of the same fountain, cherished by peace, prosperity, security, apostasies of professing believers, and the like.

And, alas, how many fall daily under the power of this temptation in general! How few keep their garments girt about them and undefiled! And if any urging, particular temptation falls upon some, what instances almost have we of any that escape? May we not describe our condition as the apostle did of the Corinthians, in respect of an outward visitation: “Many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1Co 11:30)? Some are wounded, some defiled, and many 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 lose the benefit of the promise given and added to it.

Should I go about to give instances of this thing, of professing believers coming short of keeping the word of Christ, it would be a long work. These four heads would comprise the most of them:

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<sup>50</sup> *Mortification of Sin*, chapter 7, “Faith”; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

First, conformity to the world (which Christ has redeemed us from), almost in all things, with joy and delight in indiscriminate conformity with the men of the world.

Secondly, neglect of duties that Christ has commanded, from close meditation to public ordinances.

Thirdly, strife, variance, and debate among ourselves, woeful judging and despising one another, upon account of things foreign to the bond of communion that is between the saints.

Fourthly, self-dependence as to principles, and selfishness as to goals.

Now, where these things are, are not men carnal? Is the word of Christ's patience effective in them? Shall they be preserved? They shall not.

## 5. Cautions to Avoid Falling to Temptation

Would you, then, be preserved and kept from the hour of temptation? Would you watch against entering into it? Then, based on what has been delivered in this chapter, take the following cautions:

### a. Beware leaning on deceitful assistance

Take heed of leaning on deceitful assistances; as,

1). *On your own counsels*, understandings, reasonings. Though you argue in them ever so plausibly in your own defense, they will leave you, betray you. When the temptation comes to any height, they will all turn about and take part with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation, whatever it be, as they pleaded against the [sinful] end and consequences of it before.

2). *The most vigorous actings*, by prayer, fasting, and other such means, *against that particular lust*, corruption, temptation, wherewith you are exercised and have to do. This will not avail you if, in the meantime, there be neglects on other accounts. To hear a man wrestle, cry, contend as to any particular of temptation, and then immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly conformity, looseness, and negligence in other things—it is right in the eyes of Jesus Christ to leave such a one 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 purpose, and then we use it for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the general assurance of preservation from total apostasy, in order to support the spirit in respect of a particular temptation, will not advantage the soul in the end, because, notwithstanding, the temptation may prevail. Many relieve themselves with this, until they find themselves to be in the depth of perplexities.

### b. Apply yourself to faithful “keeping”

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

1). *Consider from where temptation is most likely to come*

In particular, wisely consider from where the word of Christ's patience is most likely to suffer in the days wherein we live and the seasons that pass over us, and so vigorously set yourselves especially to keep it in that particular. You will say, “How will we know wherein the

word of Christ's patience in any season is likely to suffer?" I answer, Consider what works He peculiarly performs in any season; and neglect of His word in reference to them is that in which His word is like to suffer. The works of Christ in which He has been engaged peculiarly in our days and seasons seem to be these:

a). *The pouring of contempt upon the great men and great things of the world*, with all the enjoyments of it. Christ has discovered the nakedness of all earthly things, by overturning both men and things to make way for the things that cannot be shaken.

b). *The owning of 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.

c). *In being nigh to faith and prayer*, honoring them above all the strength and counsels of the sons of men.

d). *In 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.

Wherein, then, in such a season, must lie the peculiar neglect of the word of Christ's patience? Is it not in setting value on the world and the things of it, which He has stained and trampled underfoot? Is it not in the slighting of His special lot, His people, and casting them into the same considerations with the men of the world? Is it not in leaning to our own counsels and understandings? Is it not in the defilement of His ordinances, by giving the outward court of the temple to be trod upon by unsanctified persons?<sup>51</sup> Let us, then, be watchful and keep the word of the patience of Christ in these things, if we love our own preservation.

## 2). *Plead Christ's promises*

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<sup>52</sup>—which may work on the heart of our blessed and merciful High Priest to give suitable help at our time of need.

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<sup>51</sup> **outward court...unsanctified persons** – reference is to the Jewish Temple. It was surrounded by a large outer wall, within which was the outer court (the “court of the Gentiles,” Rev 11:2). Gentiles were allowed into this outer court. However, only true Israelites could enter the inner court, and there have access to the altar with its sacrifices. Owen's allusion here is to those who allow the ungodly to partake of the holy ordinances of Christ.

<sup>52</sup> **King in His galleries** – (*galleries: rooms or passageways*) The palace of a king had many rooms surrounding the throne room. When the king was in these rooms, it was still possible for him to return to the throne room in order to hold court, make decisions, and provide for his subjects.

## Chapter 9

# MOTIVES FOR WATCHING AGAINST TEMPTATION

### 1. Know the Consequences

Having thus passed through the considerations of the duty of watching that we enter not into temptation, I suppose I need not add motives to the observance of it. Those who are not moved by their own sad experiences, nor the importance of the duty as laid down at the beginning of this discourse, must be left by me to the further patience of God. I shall only conclude the whole discourse with a general exhortation to them who are in any measure prepared for it by the consideration of what has been spoken.

Suppose you were to go into a hospital and see many persons lying sick and weak, sore and wounded, with many filthy diseases and maladies. And then you inquired of them how they fell into this condition. Suppose they all agreed in telling you that one thing was the occasion of their illnesses or injuries: “By that, I got my wound,” says one. “And by that same thing, I got my disease,” says another. Would it not make you a little careful how or what you had to do with that one thing or place? Surely it would.

Suppose you were to go to a dungeon and see many miserable creatures bound in chains for an approaching day of execution. And then you inquired the way and means whereby they were brought into that condition. Suppose they should all fix 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 have we everywhere!—one wounded by one sin, another by another; one falling into filthiness of the flesh, another of the spirit. Ask them, now, how they came into this state 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!”

Nay, 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 learn? What do they say? Are they not cursing their tempters, and the temptations that they entered into? And shall we be negligent in this same thing? Solomon tells us that the simple one who follows the strange woman knows not that the dead are there, that her house inclines to death, and her paths to the dead (which he repeats three times in Proverbs 5, 6, and 7); and that is the reason that he ventures on her snares.

If you knew what has been done by entering into temptation, perhaps you would be more watchful and careful. Men may think that they shall do well enough notwithstanding; but, “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals,

and his feet not be burned?” (Pro 6:27-28). No such thing: men come not out of their temptation without wounds, burnings, and scars.

I know not any place in the world where there is more need of pressing this exhortation than in this place. Go to our various colleges<sup>53</sup> and inquire for such and such young men; what is the answer in respect of many? “Ah! Such a one was very hopeful for a season; but he fell into ill company, and he is quite lost. Such a one had some good beginning of religion; we were in great expectation of him, but he is fallen into temptation.” And likewise in other places: “Such a one was useful and humble, and adorned the gospel; but now he is so woefully entangled with the world that he is grown all self, has no sap nor savor. Such a one was humble and zealous; but he is ‘advanced,’ and has lost his first love and ways” (Rev 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 are 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 rising of sin, the first attempts of Satan, and all ways by which he has made his approaches to us, be they ever so harmless in themselves? Have we not experience of our weakness, our folly, the invincible power of temptation, when once it has gotten within us?

## 2. Final Considerations

As for this duty that I have insisted on, take these considerations.

**a. If you neglect watchfulness,** which is the only means prescribed by our Savior to avoid temptation, you will certainly enter into temptation, and as certainly fall into sin.

Do not flatter yourselves. Some of you are “old disciples” and have a great abhorrence of sin. You think it impossible that you should ever be seduced into some particular sins. But “let him [whoever he is] that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). 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 unto you,” says Christ, “I say unto all, Watch” (Mar 13:37). Perhaps you may have had some good success for a time in your careless frame; but awake, admire God’s tenderness and patience, or “sin lieth at the door” (Gen 4:7). If you will not perform this duty, whoever you are, then in one way or other—in one thing or other, spiritual or carnal wickedness—you will be tempted, you will be defiled. And what will be the result of this? Remember Peter (Mat 26:75)!

**b. Consider that you are always under the eye of Christ,** the great Captain of our salvation, Who has enjoined us to watch thus, and to pray that we enter not into temptation. What do you think are the thoughts and the heart of Christ, when He sees a temptation hastening towards us, a storm rising about us, and we are fast asleep? Does it not grieve Him to see us expose ourselves so 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 yet coming, and armed Himself against it. “The prince of this world cometh,” says He, “and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30).

And shall we be negligent under His eye? Imagine Him coming to you, as He did to Peter when he was asleep in the garden, with the same reproof: “What, could ye not watch with me

<sup>53</sup> **several colleges** – Owen wrote this while serving as vice-chancellor of Oxford University, which is comprised of multiple colleges.

one hour?” (Mat 26:40). Would it not be a grief to you to be so reprov'd, or to hear Him thundering from heaven against your neglect, as against the church of Sardis (Rev 3:2)?

**c. Consider that if you neglect this duty**, and so fall into temptation—which assuredly you will—that when you are entangled, God may bring some heavy affliction or judgment upon you, which, by reason of your entanglement, you shall not be able to look on any other way than as an 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.

This may seem but as a noise of words for the present; but if ever it be your condition, you will find it to be full of woe and bitterness. Oh, then, let us strive to keep our spirits disentangled, avoiding all appearance of evil and all ways leading to it; especially all ways, businesses, societies, and employments that we have already found disadvantageous to us.



*Thus the author ends this great and important work on temptation to sin. Let all God's people take to heart their serious duty continually to watch and pray, in order to have consistent victory over temptation.*

“Let no man, then, pretend to fear sin that does not fear temptation to sin. They are too nearly allied to be separated. He hates not the fruit who delights in the root.”

“Sin will not long seem great or heavy unto any to whom temptations seem light or small.”

“To ‘watch’ is a universal carefulness and diligence that we be not entangled by temptation, exercising itself in all ways prescribed by God over our hearts and ways, the baits and methods of Satan, and the occasions and advantages of sin in the world.”

“He who would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer.”

# Questions for Study and Discussion

## Chapter

1. What is temptation?
2.
  - a. What is it *not* to “enter into temptation”?
  - b. What is it *to* “enter into temptation”?
3.
  - a. What is Christ’s promise of preservation from temptation?
  - b. How does the heart protect itself during temptation?
  - c. Describe Satan’s goal during temptation.
  - d. What are some common objections to this teaching, and what are the answers to each?
4. How can we know when we have entered into temptation?
5.
  - a. Why is prayer important in avoiding entering into temptation?
  - b. How does prayer keep us from entering into temptation?
6. How must we be especially watchful during each special season of temptation?
7.
  - a. What is it to “know your heart”?
  - b. What is meant by “laying gospel provisions in store” against temptation?
  - c. What must we do at temptation’s first approach? Why?
  - d. What must we do after becoming entangled in temptation? Why?
8.
  - a. What is meant by “the word of Christ’s patience”?
  - b. What is it to “keep the word of Christ’s patience”?
  - c. Why is this a “sure preservative” against temptation?
  - d. Why do so many fall to temptation?
  - e. How can we avoid falling to temptation?
9. List four motives for watching against temptation.  
Why is each important?