

# **TEMPTATION**

**BY JOHN OWEN**

**EDITED AND SIMPLIFIED BY GEOFFREY STONIER**

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**THE NATURE AND POWER OF IT  
THE DANGER OF ENTERING INTO IT  
AND THE MEANS OF PREVENTING THAT DANGER  
WITH  
A RESOLUTION OF DIFFERENT CASES  
RELATING TO IT**

**BY JOHN OWEN**

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“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)

All Bible quotations are from the AV (King James Version)

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## PREFACE BY THE EDITOR, DR. WILLIAM HENRY GOOLD

This small work of Dr. Owen on *Temptation* appeared in 1658. He had been urged to publish it by the solicitations of friends to whose opinion he paid deference. The probability is, that they had already heard the substance of it in discourses from the pulpit; and from an expression in the closing exhortation, the discourses must have been delivered at Oxford. The motives of the author in committing it to the press are still farther evinced in some allusions to the character of the times, which will be found both in the preface and in the treatise itself. The vigilant eye of Owen detected certain mischievous effects accruing from the eminent success which had attended hitherto the efforts of the party with whom he acted. The fear of a common danger had formerly kept them united in their views and movements, while it led them to depend upon the true source of all strength and hope. They were now sinking into those strifes and divisions which paved the way for the restoration of monarchy; and Owen speaks of “a visible declension from reformation seizing upon the professing party of these nations.” There is a tone of indignant and yet pathetic faithfulness in his language, as he recurs to the subject of this declension in the body of the treatise:

“He that should see the prevailing party of these nations, many of them in rule, power, and favour, with all their adherents, and remember that they were a colony of Puritans, whose habitation was a ‘low place’, as the prophet speaks of the city of God, translated by a high hand to the mountains they now possess, cannot but wonder how soon they have forgotten the customs, manners, ways, of their own old people, and are cast into the mould of those that went before them in the places to which they are translated.”

Owen may have feared the issue of prevailing divisions, and anticipated the revival of the intolerant system which the patriotism of the Long Parliament and the military genius of Cromwell overthrew. Under the impression that an hour of temptation had come, and that the best security for religious principles was the advancement of personal godliness, he published the following treatise.

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

From the text (Mt. 26:41), the author considers in succession three topics deduced from it — temptation, the means by which it prevails, and the way of preventing it. The most of the treatise is occupied with the last topic — the means of prevention. It is subdivided into inquiries — as to the evidence by which a man may know that he has

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

## A FULL ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTERS

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## PREFACE BY JOHN OWEN

Dear Christian reader,

If you are in any way awake to the days in which we live, then you will have taken note of the many strong and various temptations with which all kinds of Christians that know the Lord, and profess his name, are experiencing, and to which they are continually exposed. Oh, the success these temptations have had, to the unspeakable scandal of the gospel, and the wounding and ruin of innumerable souls!

I suppose you need no other reasons for the publishing of the warnings and directions that follow. They are designed to be an antidote to the times, and I hope they do something to meet your own concern. This I say to those who think that there is need for such an inquiry that I present in these meditations to public view, for there are many who confess their faith in Christ to the world in personal holiness and in constantly adhering to everything that is made precious by its relationship to Christ. Now, I hesitated from entering upon this work for these reasons: the display of outward providences and dispensations which I myself have seen in this world, with the inward trials that attended them, which have added to my observations concerning the ways and walk of others, leaving a certain impression on my mind and spirit of the power and danger of temptations. Thus I felt bound to issue a serious call to beware, in the light of a discovery of some of the most eminent ways and means that arise from the power of present temptations — in their beginning, their progress, and their endings, and in their rising and falling, found in walk and word, in darkness and in light.

But now, reader, if you are among those who take no notice of these things, or do not care about them, you obviously have no idea of the power and dangers of temptations in your own walk and profession; nor have you taken note of the power of them in others. You have not discerned their strength in these days, where everything has been shaken up. Nor are you troubled or moved over the sad successes they have had among Christians. I suppose you think that all things are well, indoors and out, and things would be even better if you could but obtain better satisfaction for some of your desires in the pleasures and profits of the world. I want you to know that I am not writing for you, nor do I consider you a fit reader or judge of what is to follow. Issues of providence are linked with a public concern for national issues. They are perplexing and tangled, while the footsteps of God are deep, and his paths remain unknown. In particular, unparalleled distresses on the one hand, and strange times of prosperity, are measured out to men, even if they are Christians. A spirit of error, complacency, and delusion prevails with such strength and power that it seems to have received a commission to go out and prosper. There is division, strife, and competition, producing such evil results as anger and revenge, common enough, unfortunately, among the brotherhood. The desperate issues and products of men's temptations are seen daily in partial and total apostasy, with the decline of love and the overthrow of faith. Our days are filled with fearful examples of backsliding, such as former ages never knew. There is a visible decline in reformation in those that make a Christian profession among the nations, both as to personal holiness and to zeal for the interests of Christ.

Let us understand that an "hour of temptation" has come upon the world "to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Revelation 3:10) Those who cannot see it are either at present captivated by the power of some dreadful lust, corruption, or temptation, or

are, indeed, absolutely blind, and know nothing of what it is to serve God in the midst of temptations. To these, I have nothing at present to say. There are some that have a general sense of these things, and believe that the plague has begun. May they be farther awakened to look about them, lest the infection comes near them in some secret and imperceptible way! Let them not be taken unawares by any of those temptations that, in these days, either waste at noon or else walk in darkness! (Psalm 91:10) It is for their sake that this warning is issued.

This book is written for the sake of those that mourn in secret for all the abominations found in those who profess the gospel, and who are under the command of the Captain of their salvation, fighting and resisting the power of temptations from whatever source they come. May our faithful and merciful High Priest, who both suffered and was tempted (Hebrews 4:15), and is, on that account, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, accompany this small discourse with suitable supplies of his Spirit and mercy for those that read it! May this book be made useful to his servants, and achieve the end for which it was designed! These prayers come from one who has received a handful of seed from God's storehouse and treasure.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE WHOLE SUBJECT IS FOUND IN MATTHEW 26:41

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

**The words of the text, which are the foundation of the following discourse — The occasion of the words, with their dependence — The things specially aimed at in them — Things considerable in the words as to the general purpose in hand — Of the general nature of temptation, wherein it consists — The special nature of temptation — Temptation taken actively and passively — How God tempts any — His ends in so doing — The way whereby he doth it — Of temptation in its special nature: of the actions of it — The true nature of temptation stated**

These words of our Saviour are recorded with very little alteration in three of the Gospels. Matthew and Mark write them as above, but Luke with the words — “Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” The entire warning seems to be, “Arise, watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.”

Solomon tells us of those that “lie down on the top of a mast in the midst of the sea” (Prov. 23:34), men who feel secure in the midst of the storm, with possible destruction. If ever poor souls lay down on the top of a mast in the midst of the sea, the disciples did when our Saviour was in the garden of Gethsemane. Their Master, at a short distance from them, was “offering up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears” (Heb. 5:7), having taken in his hand, and begun to taste, the cup that was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins. The Jewish authorities, armed for his destruction, were closing in on them. Our Saviour, just a short time before, had informed them that very night he would be betrayed and delivered up to be slain. They noticed that he was “sorrowful, and very heavy” (Mt. 26:37); indeed, he told them plainly that his “soul was exceeding sorrowful, even to death” (verse 38), and therefore begged them to wait and watch with him now that he was to die for them.

In this condition, he left them for a short time as men who had lost all love towards him, and all care of themselves. Consequently, they fell fast asleep! Even the best of saints, left to themselves, quickly appear to be less than men — to be nothing at all. All our own strength is weakness, and all our wisdom folly. Peter was one of them, who, a little while before, affirmed with so much self-confidence that though all men might forsake him, yet he would never do so. Our Saviour protested with Peter later when he said to him, “Could you not watch with me one hour?” (verse 40), as if he were saying, “Are you not the one, Peter, who boasted of your resolution never to forsake me? Is it likely that you will hold out now, when you cannot watch with me one hour? Is this your dying for me, dead in security when I am dying for you?” It is indeed an amazing thing to consider that Peter should make so great a promise, and yet immediately be so careless and remiss in his keeping of it. We also find the root of the same treachery abiding and working in our own hearts, and we see the fruit of it brought forth every day. The most noble of our promises to obey soon end in deplorable negligence — “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good

thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Rom. 7:18)

In this state, our Saviour warns them of their condition, their weakness, and their danger, and stirs them up to prevent the ruin that lies at their door with these words, "Arise, watch and pray."

I shall not deal with the particular meaning our Saviour had in mind when he issued this warning to those that were present with him — the great temptation that was coming upon them due to the scandal of the cross. But I shall consider the words as containing a general direction to all the disciples of Christ, as they follow him throughout all generations.

There are three things to notice in these words —

- A. The evil they were warned against — temptation.
- B. The way it overcame them — by their entering into it.
- C. The way to prevent it — by watching and praying.

It is not my intention to go into too much detail concerning the nature of temptations, but only their danger in general. I will also speak of the way by which we can prevent that danger. Yet, in order to impress on you the dangers of temptation, let me say something of the general nature of temptation.

**Firstly**, concerning the nature of tempting and temptation, I prefer to leave it to one side. We will try an experiment by piercing a vessel, that the liquid inside might pour out. God is thought sometimes to tempt; and we are commanded as our duty to tempt (test or search) ourselves, to know what is in us, and to pray that God would do so also. Temptation is like a knife that may either cut the meat or the throat of a man. It can be his food or his poison, his health or his destruction.

**Secondly**, temptation has a special nature, insofar as it means any evil, and is to be thought of as either *active*, leading to evil, or *passive*, as it is evil in itself and leads to suffering. Temptation is described as an affliction (Jas. 1:2); for in that sense we are to "count it all joy when we fall into temptation"; in the other that we "enter not into it."

Again, actively considered, it attributes to the tempter a purpose in bringing about the special end of temptation, and a leading into evil. Thus it is written that "God tempts no man" with a view to sin. (Jas. 1:13) The general nature and purpose of temptation is trial; thus "God tempted Abraham" (Gen. 22:1). And God also proves or tempts by false prophets (Deut. 13:3).

Now, as to God's tempting anyone, two things should be considered: **First**, the reason why he does it; and, **second**, the way he does it.

1. As for the first — the reason why he does it — his main purposes are twofold:

(1) God tempts in order to reveal to man what is in him — that is, in the man himself; and to reveal either the working of his grace or man's corruption. (I refer to this now, as it may have a place, and bear a part, in judicial hardening) Grace and corruption lie

deep in the heart; men often deceive themselves in their search for one or the other. When we examine the soul, to test out what grace is there, corruption will appear; and when we search for corruption, grace will appear. That is how the soul is kept in uncertainty, and why we fail in our trials. God comes with a gauge that reaches to the bottom. He inserts his instrument of trial into the heart, and into the deepest parts of the soul, to let man see what is in him, and of what metal he is made. Thus he tempted Abraham to show him his faith. Abraham knew nothing of faith (I mean, the power and vigour of his faith) until God drew it out by great trial and temptation. When God says he knew it, he made Abraham know it. So he tested Hezekiah to discover his pride; God left him that he might see what was in his heart, which was so apt to be lifted up until God tested him, and so let out his filth, and poured it out before his face. The results of such revelations to the saints, in thankfulness, humiliation, and the treasuring up of experiences, I shall not deal with.

**(2)** God does it to reveal himself to man: **first**, by way of preventing grace. Men will see that it is God alone who keeps them from all sin. Until we are tempted, we think that we are living in our own strength. We say, "Although all men stray, we will not." When the trial comes, we quickly discover what is keeping us up, whether we stand or fall. So it was in the case of Abimelech — "I withheld you". (Gen. 20:6) **Second**, he reveals himself by way of renewing grace. He allowed the temptation to continue with Paul in order that he might reveal himself to him in the sufficiency of his renewing grace. (2 Cor. 12:9) We do not know the power and strength that God sends on our behalf, or the sufficiency of his grace, until temptation shows us our weakness. The strength of an antidote is found after poison has been taken; and the usefulness of a medicine is discovered during the course of a disease. We can never know the power of grace until we know the strength of temptation. We must be tested in order that we may be made aware of our preservation. God has many other good and gracious purposes which he accomplishes for his saints in their trials and temptations; unfortunately, it is a subject we cannot go into here.

2. Let us consider now the ways in which God searches the heart and tests it.

**(1)** He requires men to fulfil great duties, such that they cannot apprehend that they have no strength to fulfil them. So he tempted Abraham by putting to him the duty of sacrificing his son — a thing that was opposed to his reason, bitter in nature, and grievous to him in every way. Many do not know what is in them, or rather what is ready for them, until they are required to do something utterly beyond their strength. The duties that God lays upon us are not proportional to our natural strength but to what help and relief is available to us in Christ. We are to make the greatest effort knowing that we do not have the ability to fulfil the least of our duties. This is the law of grace; but yet, when any duty is required that is extraordinary, this secret is not often discovered. Under the yoke of Christ, we enter into a time of trial or temptation.

**(2)** By bringing them into great suffering. How many there are who have unexpectedly found strength to die at the stake, or endure torture for Christ! Yet their calling to such experiences was a trial. This, Peter tells us, is one reason why we are brought into trying temptations. (1 Pet. 1:6-7) Our temptations arise from the "fiery trial"; yet their end is to test our faith.

**(3)** By his providential disposal of things, so as to be great occasions for sin. This is the case mentioned in Deut. 13:1-4 —

“If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”

There are many other instances that could be mentioned.

**3.** A definition of temptation. Now, these are not properly temptations of God, as coming from him with the purpose I have already set out. Therefore, I will put these aside in our present discussion. It is, then, that —

“...temptation”, by its special nature, means an active agent towards sinning (it is from evil, and produces evil). In this sense, temptation may proceed either from Satan, or from the world, or from other men in the world, or from ourselves, or from some or all of them.

**(1)** Satan tempts sometimes solely by himself, without taking advantage of the world, or things, or people in it, or even ourselves; that is when it injects evil and blasphemous thoughts of God into the hearts of the saints. This can only be his work alone, without taking advantage of the world or our own hearts. Nature contributes nothing to it, or anything that is in the world, or anyone in the world; for no one can think of God and think evil of him. Here, Satan is alone in the sin, and will be so in the punishment. His fiery darts are prepared on the forge of his own malice, and will, with all their venom and poison, be returned to the owner’s heart forever.

**(2)** Sometimes, he makes use of the world, and joins forces with it against us, without any help from within. That is how he was able to tempt our Saviour by “showing him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.” (Mt. 4:8; Lk. 4:6) And it is amazing how great the variety of assistance he finds in the world, using them as countless instruments and weapons.

**(3)** Sometimes, he finds assistance in us also. It is not so with us as it was with Christ, when Satan came to tempt him. The devil “had nothing in him”. (Jn. 14:30) It is not so with us. In order to achieve most of his ends, Satan finds an ally within our own breast. (Jas. 1:14-15) Thus he tempted Judas: he was not only at work himself, but he put it into his heart to betray Christ. (Lk. 22:3) “He entered into him” for that very purpose. And he set the world to work by providing him with “thirty pieces of silver” (verse 5), and promised him money. Then Satan also used the men of the world, even the priests and the Pharisees. Finally, he called to his aid Judas’ own corruption, for he was

covetous, “he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.” (John 12:6; 13:29)

I might also show how the world and our own corruptions act alone by themselves, or jointly with Satan, in this business of temptation. But the truth is, the principles, ways, and means of temptations, their variety, degrees, strength, and causes, are inexpressibly great. Their circumstances arising from providence, nature, and conditions spiritual and natural are so many, that to attempt to give an account of them would be endless. I will content myself with giving a description of the general nature of things we should watch against.

Temptation, then, generally speaking, is anything that has such a force or power that it will seduce the mind and heart of a man away from the obedience to God required of him, into any sin, and to whatever degree.

In particular, temptation is anything that causes a man to sin, or take him away from his duty, either by bringing evil into his heart, or by drawing out that evil which is already there. It diverts him from communion with God, and away from Christian obedience.

In conclusion, I can only say that although temptation is thought of in its more active sense, and so refers to the power of seduction to sin itself, yet, in the Scriptures, it is commonly taken in a neutral sense, and refers to the matter of the temptation, or the thing that is the source of the temptation. And this is what I said previously. Be what it will, whatever is within us or without us, it takes advantage of us in order to hinder us in our duty, or provoke us to sin. That is what temptation is. Be it in business, employment, the general course of life, company, thoughts and feelings, nature, or corrupt design, relations, delight, name, reputation, esteem, abilities, pleasures of body or mind, place, dignity, are — so far as they further or promote the promotion the ends mentioned earlier — all of them are no less truly temptations than the most violent seductions of Satan or allurements of the world, and that soul lies at the brink of ruin and cannot see it coming.

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “ENTER INTO TEMPTATION”?

**What it is to “enter into temptation” — Not barely being tempted — Not to be conquered by it — To fall into it — The force of that expression — Things required to enter into temptation — Satan or lust more than ordinarily importunate — The soul’s entanglements — Seasons of such entanglements discovered — Of the “hour of temptation” (Rev. 3:10), what it is — How any temptation comes to its hour — How it may be recognised when it comes — The means of prevention prescribed by our Saviour — Of watching, and what is intended by it — Of prayer**

1. Having shown what temptation is, I come now, **secondly**, to show what it means to enter into temptation.

**(1)** This is not merely to be tempted. It is impossible for us to be so freed from temptation as never again to be tempted. While Satan continues in his power and malice while the world and lust are in being, we will be tempted. “Christ”, says someone, “was made like us that he might be tempted; and we are tempted that we may be made like Christ.” Temptation in general is comprehensive of our whole warfare, as our Saviour called the time of his ministry the time of his “temptations”. (Lk. 22:28). We have no promise that we shall never be tempted; nor are to pray for absolute freedom from temptation, because we have no such promise of being heard in this matter. The direction we have from the Lord for our prayers is: “Lead us not into temptation”. (Mt. 6:13) It is “entering into temptation” that we must pray against. We may be tempted, yet not enter into temptation. So that —

**(2)** Something more is intended by this expression than the ordinary work of Satan and our own lusts, which surely tempt us every day. There is something special in this entering into temptation that is not the saints' everyday work. It is something that comes to them particularly with reference to seduction to sin, on one account or other, by way of allurement or terror.

**(3)** It is not to be conquered by a temptation, to fall down under it, to commit the sin or evil that we are tempted to, or to omit the duties that are contrary to it. 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 it, he can break the snare, tread down Satan, and make the soul more than a conqueror, though it has entered into temptation. Christ entered it, but was not in the least defeated by it. But —

**(4)** It is, as the Apostle expresses it in 1 Tim. 6:9, “to fall into temptation”, as a man falls into a pit or deep place where there are traps and snares in which to become entangled. A man is not presently killed and destroyed, but is entangled and detained — he does not know how to get free, or be at liberty. So it is expressed again for the same purpose in 1 Cor. 10:13 — “No temptation hath taken you...”; that is, to be taken by a temptation and be tangled in it, held by its cords, not finding at present a way to escape. Thence, says Peter in his second Epistle 2:9 — “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” They are entangled with them; God knows how

to deliver them from them. When we allow a temptation to enter, then we “enter into temptation.” While it knocks at the door, we are at liberty; but when any temptation comes in and reasons with the heart and the mind, entices and allures the feelings — be it a long or a short time — he does it unconsciously and imperceptibly; before the soul takes note of it, and then we “enter into temptation.”

**2.** So, for our entering into temptation, it is required —

**(1)** That by some advantage, or on some occasion, Satan is more earnest than usual in his solicitations to sin, by terrors or seductions, by persecutions, by himself or others; or that some lust or corruption, under his instigation and advantages of outward objects, provokes us, as in a time of prosperity or terror or trouble, when we are disturbed more than usual within. There is a special acting of the satanic author, and principles of temptation, required for this act.

**(2)** That the heart is so far entangled with it as to be put into dispute, argue in its own defence, and yet not be wholly able to eject or cast out the poison and leaven that has been injected, but is surprised, if it be never so little, off its watch into an entanglement not easy to be avoided: so that the soul may cry, and pray, and cry again, and yet not be delivered, as Paul “besought the Lord” three times for the departure of his temptation, and did not prevail. (2 Cor. 12:8) The entanglement continues. And this usually comes about in one of these two seasons —

**[1]** When Satan, by permission of God, and for ends best known to himself, obtains some peculiar advantage against the soul; as in the case of Peter, when God intended to winnow him, and prevailed — “And the Lord said, Simon, ‘Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.’” (Lk. 22:31-32)

**[2]** When a man's lusts and corruptions meet with particularly provocative objects and occasions through the circumstances of life that a man finds himself in, as it was with David: of both of which see later.

In this state of things, a man enters into temptation; and this is called the “hour of temptation” (Rev. 3:10) — the time when it comes to a head: the discovery of which will shed further light into our present inquiry concerning what it is to “enter into temptation”; for when the hour of temptation comes to us, we will surely enter it. Every great and pressing temptation has its hour, a time when it grows to a head, and during which it becomes most vigorous, active, operative, and prevailing. It may be long in rising, it may be long urging, more or less, but it has its season when, with the joining of other occurrences, such as those mentioned, outward or inward, it has a dangerous hour; and then, for the most part, men will enter it. Hence, that very temptation, which at one time has little or no power over a man — when he quite despised it, scorned its actions, and easily resisted it — at another time, it bears him away before it. It has, from other circumstances and occurrences, enlarged new strength and power, and the man becomes dispirited and weakened; the hour has come, he has entered into it, and it will prevail. David probably had temptations before in his younger days, such as to adultery or murder, as he had in the case of Nabal; but the hour of temptation had not yet come, when it did not gain the advantage, and so he escaped until later. Let

men look to it who are exposed to temptations, as, indeed, who is not? They will have a season where the solicitations of sin will be more urgent, their reasoning made more plausible, their pretences shown as more glorious, their hopes of recovery more appealing, their opportunities more broad and open, the doors of evil made more beautiful than ever they once seemed. Blessed is he who prepares for such a season from which there is no escaping! This, as I said, is the first thing required for entering into temptation; if we remain here, we are safe.

Before I go into other particulars, having now entered into the subject, I will show **firstly**, how or by what means any temptation usually attains its hour; and **secondly**, how we may know when any temptation comes to its high noon, and finds its hour.

**(1)** It does the first — how or by what means usually any temptation attains its hour — in several ways:

**(a)** By long solicitations, forcing the mind to converse frequently with the evil solicited, producing pressing thoughts about it. As it makes this process, 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 for, and cried, “Am I a dog?” (1 Samuel 17:43) If this investigation continues daily, the soul, by conversing with the evil, begins to grow familiar with it (as it were), and is not so startled as formerly, but is rather inclined to cry, “Is it not a little one?” (Gen. 19:20) It is then that the temptation is coming towards its high noon; lust has enticed and entangled the soul, and is ready to “conceive” (Jas. 1:15): of which more later in our inquiry about how we may know whether we have entered into temptation or not. Our present inquiry is about the hour and power of temptation itself.

**(b)** By prevailing in others, when the soul is not filled with hatred and dislike 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 comes to anyone which, at the same time, it has possessed and prevailed with, it has so great and so many advantages then that it is surely growing towards its hour. Its prevailing in others is a means of coming to its hour against us. The falling off of Hymeneus and Philetus was said to “overthrow the faith of some”. (2 Tim. 2:17-18)

**(c)** By complicating itself with many considerations that, perhaps, are not absolutely evil. That is how the temptation of the Galatians caused them to fall from the purity of the gospel — freedom from persecution, union and consent with the Jews. Things in themselves good were pleaded for it, and gave life to the temptation itself. But I am not now insisting on the several advantages that any temptation has in heightening and strengthening itself to make itself prevalent and effective with the contribution that it receives from a knot of various circumstances, opportunities, specious pleas and pretences, necessities for the doing what cannot be done without responding to the temptation, and such like; because I must speak to some of them later.

**(2)** As for the second — how we may know when any temptation has come to its high noon, and has reached its hour — it may be recognised:

**(a)** By its restless urging and arguing. As the temptation nears its hour, it becomes restless; it is the time for battle, and it gives the soul no rest. Satan sees his advantage,

considers his array of forces, and knows that he must now prevail or his cause is lost forever. Here are opportunities, here are advantages, here are devious pleas and lies; some ground has already been won by former arguments. Here are excuses for evil, hopes of pardon after great endeavour, everything being in readiness; if he can do nothing now, he must sit down lost in his undertaking. Thus when he had got all things in readiness against Christ, he made it an “hour of darkness”. When a temptation discovers *mille nocendi artes* (thousands of harmful arts), and presses within doors by imagination and reasoning, without by solicitations, advantages, and opportunities, let the soul know that its hour has come, and the glory of God, with its own welfare, depends on its behaviour in this trial; as we shall see in the particular cases that follow.

**(b)** When it produces a mixture of terrors and allurements, these two comprise the whole force of temptation. Both of them are found in David's case, with in the murder of Uriah. There was the fear of revenge on his wife, and possibly on himself, and fear of the publication of his sin at least; and there was the allurement of his present enjoyment of she whom he lusted after. Men sometimes are carried into sin by love of it, and are kept in it by fear as to what might happen later. But, in any case, where these two come together, something allures us, something frightens us, and the reasoning that run between them are all ready to entangle us — then will come the hour of temptation.

This, then, it is to “enter into temptation”, this is the “hour” of it; of which we will discover more in the course of our discourse.

Now, here are the means of prevention prescribed by our Saviour: they are two in number — “Watch” and “Pray”.

**1.** The first is a general expression by no means to be limited to its normal meaning of waking from sleep. To “watch” is as much as to be on our guard as to take care by considering all ways and means of guarding ourselves, and taking care by considering all ways and means by which the enemy might approach us: so the Apostle in 1 Cor. 16:13 — “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” This it is to “watch” in this business, to “stand fast in the faith”, as good soldiers, to “quit ourselves like men.” It is as much as to “take heed” (*prose>cein* — *prosechein*), or to look to ourselves, as the same thing in our Saviour's expression. See Rev. 3:2. A universal carefulness and diligence, 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, that we may be un-entangled, is what this command should mean to us.

**2.** As for the second direction concerning prayer, I need not speak of here. The duty of prayer and the objectives of prayer are known to all. See my *Discourse of the work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer, with a Brief Enquiry into the Nature and Use of mental Prayer and forms*.

I need only add that watching and praying comprise the whole endeavour of faith for the soul's preservation from temptation.

## CHAPTER 3

### OUR SAVIOUR'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING TEMPTATION

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

Having, then, opened the words of our text in the foregoing chapters, so far as is necessary to discover the foundation of the truth to be urged and improved, I lay down the following observation —

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

I know God is “able to deliver the godly out of temptations”. (2 Pet. 2:9) I know he 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.” (1 Cor. 10:13) Yet I dare say I need to convince all those that attend to what I say and write, that it is our greatest duty and concern to use all diligence, watchfulness, and care that we might not enter into temptation; and I will prove it by the following considerations —

1. In those comprehensive instructions given us by our Saviour concerning what we ought to pray for, this of not entering into temptation is expressly at the top of the list. Our Saviour knew how vital it was for us not to “enter into temptation”, when he gave us this as one special subject of our daily dealing with God — “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”. (Mt. 6:13; Lk. 11:4) The order of the words shows us of how vital it is. If we are led into temptation, evil will follow us, more or less. How God can be said to tempt us, or to “lead us into temptation”, I have explained 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 meant. The last words are, as it were, exegetical, or expository of the former: “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” — in other words, “So deal with us that we may be powerfully delivered from that evil which attends our entering into temptation.” Our blessed Saviour knows full well our state and condition; he knows the power of temptation, having experienced it (Heb. 2:18); he knows our vain confidence, and the reserves we have concerning our ability to deal with temptations, as he told Peter. But he knows our weakness and folly, and how easily we are cast to the ground; that is why, therefore, he laid in this provision for instruction at the beginning of his ministry, to make us careful, if possible, in what is of such

pressing concern to us. If, then, we put any confidence in the wisdom, love, and care of Jesus Christ towards us, we must grant the truth as it stands.

2. Christ promises this freedom and deliverance as a great reward for the most acceptable obedience, as we discover in Rev. 3:10. This is the great promise made to the church of Philadelphia, where Christ found nothing that he could blame — “Thou shalt be kept from the hour of temptation.” Not, “Thou shalt be preserved in it”; but he goes higher: “Thou shalt be kept from it.” Says our Saviour — “There is an hour of temptation coming; a season that will make havoc in the world. Multitudes will then fall away 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 be wounded in their souls that will never completely heal while they live in this world, and have their bones broken, and so go limping all their days.” But, says he, “because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will be tender towards you, and keep you from this hour of temptation.”

Certainly it is that what Christ thus promised his beloved Church as a reward for her service, love, and obedience, is no light thing. Whatever Christ promises 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. For this purpose, let us consider the general issues of men entering into temptation, bad and good men, ungrounded professors and the choicest of saints.

(1) As for the **first**, I offer just one or two texts of Scripture. Lk. 8:13 — “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, and in time of temptation fall away.” Well, how long do they believe? They are affected by the preaching of the Word, and believe, making a profession, and bringing forth some fruit. But how long will they stay like that? Says he, “In the time of temptation they fall away.” When once they enter into temptation they are gone forever. Temptation withers all their profession away and slays their souls. We see this done every day. Men who have attended to the preaching of the gospel, been affected and delighted with it, made a profession of it, and have been looked on, it may be, as believers, and thus have continued for some years; no sooner does temptation come to them that has vigour and permanence in it, but they are turned out of the way, and are gone. They come to hate the Word they have delighted in, despise its professors, and are hardened by sin. So Mt. 7:26 —

“He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth that not, is like to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.”

But what does this house of profession do? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and stands for a while. But then he says in verses 26-27 — “And 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: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Judas followed our Saviour for three years, and all went well with him. But no sooner did he enter into temptation that Satan got him and winnowed him, and he was gone. Demas preached the gospel until the love of the world overcame him, and he

turned utterly aside. (2 Tim. 4:10) It would be endless to give more instances. To enter into temptation is, more or less, with this sort of men, an entrance into apostasy, in part or in whole; it never fails to do this.

**(2)** As for the saints of God, let us see in a few instances what results came after they had entered into temptation. Let me name a few:

*Adam* was the “son of God” (Lk. 3:38), created in the image of God, as full of that integrity, righteousness, and holiness as he could be, bearing an eminent resemblance to the holiness of God. He had a far greater inner stock of ability than we, and had nothing in him to entice or seduce him; yet this Adam no sooner entered into temptation when he was gone, lost, and ruined, he and all his posterity after him. What can we expect from us in similar condition except that we have in our temptations not only a cunning devil to deal with, but a cursed world, and a corrupt heart also?

*Abraham* was the father of the faithful, whose faith is put forward as a pattern for all those who believe; yet he, coming twice into the same temptation — namely, that of fear over his wife, was twice overpowered by it to the dishonour of God, and, no doubt, to the anxiety of his own soul. (See Gen. 12:13, 20:2)

*David* was called a “man after God's own heart” by God himself; yet what dreadful reading is the story of his entering into temptation! He was no sooner entangled by his sexual desires, but he was plunged into adultery; then seeking deliverance by his own invention. Like a poor creature in turmoil, he was entangled more and more, until he lay like someone dead under the power of his sin and folly.

I might also mention Noah, Lot, Hezekiah, Peter, and the rest, whose temptations and falls are on record for our instruction. Certainly, the one that has any heart for these things cannot but say, as the inhabitants of Samaria upon receiving a letter of Jehu, “Behold, two kings stood not before him, how shall we stand?” (2 Kings 10:4) O Lord, if such mighty pillars have been cast to the ground, such cedars blown down, how can I stand before temptations? Oh, keep me from entering in! *Vestigia terrent* (footsteps are terrifying — Horace). Behold the footsteps of those that have gone before us. Whom do you see retiring without a wound? A blemish at least? On this account the Apostle directs us to exercise tenderness towards those who have fallen into sin — “...considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” (Gal. 6:1) He does not say, “Lest you also sin, or fall, or see the power of temptation in others, and do not know how soon you may be tempted, or what will be the state and condition of your soul afterwards.” Assuredly, he who has seen so many better, stronger men than himself fail, and fall down in the trial, will think it is his duty to remember the battle, and, if possible, come there no more. Is it not madness for a man who can scarcely crawl up and down, being so weak (which is the case with most of us), if he cannot fail to see giants defeated in the fight? You are yet whole and sound; take care with temptation lest it be with you like Abraham, David, Lot, Peter, Hezekiah, or 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 in which we live, than in this cursed boldness, after so many warnings from God, and so many sad experiences every day in their sight, by running, and putting themselves, into the way of temptations. Any society, any company, any condition of outward

circumstance, without souls once weighing their strength, or what concern them, they are ripe for picking in the hand of temptation. Though they witness the dead and the slain in those ways and paths that ever did fall before them, yet they go on without regard or trembling. Out of this door have gone hundreds, thousands of professors, within just a few years.

But —

4. Therefore, let us examine ourselves — what our weakness is, and what temptation is coming our way — its power and strong influence, and what it may lead to —

**(1)** As for ourselves, we are weakness itself. We have no strength, no power to withstand temptation. Confidence of any strength in us is a great part of our weakness; it was so in Peter. We are like those who say they can do anything, but do nothing as they should. And, what is worse, it is the worst kind of weakness that is in us — a weakness from treachery — a weakness arising from that party which every temptation has within us. A castle or fort may be ever so strong and well fortified, yet, if there are traitors within, ready to betray it at every opportunity, there is no preserving it from the enemy. There are traitors in our hearts ready to take part, to join in with every temptation, and give up all to the enemy; yes, to solicit and bribe temptation to do its work as the traitors go over to the other side. Do not flatter yourselves that you can hold out; there are secret lusts that lie lurking in your hearts, which perhaps now lie quietly, but, as soon as any temptation comes along, it will rise, trouble you, cry, disquiet, seduce, and never give up until they are either killed or satisfied. He who promises himself that the frame of his heart will be the same under temptation as it is before is sadly mistaken. “Am I a dog, that I should do this thing?” says Hazael. (2 Kings 8:13) Yes, you will be such a dog if ever you are King of Syria; thinking that temptation is in your interest will unman you. Whoever now hates the thoughts of such and such a thing, once he enters into temptation, he will find his heart inflamed towards it, and all contrary reasoning squashed and silenced. He will deride his former fears, cast out his scruples, and despise his former way of life. Little did Peter think he would deny and forswear his Master as soon as he was questioned as to whether he knew him or not. It was no better when the hour of temptation came; all resolutions were forgotten, all love for Christ buried; the present temptation, joining with his worldly fear, carried all before it.

To look at this a little more closely, I will consider the means of safety from the power of temptation, when we enter into it, that can be expected from ourselves; and, in general as to its spring and rise; and, in particular, the ways of exerting the strength that we have, or seem to have —

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

**Firstly**, suppose a man is not a believer, and is only a professor of the gospel. What is his heart like? Prov. 10:20 declares — “...the heart of the wicked is little worth”; and surely what is of little worth in anything is not much worth in temptation. A wicked man in outward things may be of great use; but when it comes to his heart, we find there something false and of no account. Now, despite the fact that temptation is a heart work, when it comes in like a flood, can such a rotten trifle as the heart of a wicked

man stand before it? But of these things, I have commented before. Entering into temptation and apostasy is exactly the same, as I said before.

**Secondly**, be very careful in your assessment of the heart — “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28:26); he who does so, whoever he is, is foolish. Peter did it in his own temptation; he trusted in his own heart. He declared rashly, “Though all men forsake thee, I will not.” This was his folly; but why was he so silly? Such a declaration did not deliver him; it did not preserve him in the snare; neither did it deliver him from his temptation. The heart of a man will make very fair promises before temptation comes. “But what, is thy servant a dog”, said Hazeal to Elisha, “that he should do this thing?” after the prophet declared, “The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.” (2 Kings 8:13) Peter declared strongly, “Though all men should deny thee, I will not. Shall I do this evil? It cannot be.” (Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:31)

All the arguments that are well thought of to check the heart in such a condition are brought up to muster. Did not Peter, would you think, do so? “What! Deny my Master, the Son of God, my Redeemer, who loves me? Could such ingratitude, unbelief, and rebellion come upon me? I will not do it.” Can a man trust that his heart will remain steadfast? Believe the wise man when he says, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Yes, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” (Jer. 17:9) We would not willingly trust anyone that is full of deceit or craftiness. Yet here is something that is “deceitful above all things.” It has a thousand wiles and treacheries that we must deal with. When it comes to the test, every temptation steals it away — “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.” (Hos. 4:11) Generally, men's hearts deceive them no more often than they trust in them, and that they never fail to do!

[2] Consider the particular ways and means that such a heart can use to safeguard itself in the hour of temptation, and their insufficiency for that purpose quickly becomes apparent. Let me give you a few examples —

**Firstly**, love of honour in the world. Reputation and esteem in the church, obtained by our former way of life, is one of the heart's own weapons to defend itself in the hour of temptation. “Shall such a one as I flee? I who have such a reputation in the church of God? Shall I lose it all now by giving in to this lust and to this temptation? By joining in with this or that evil in public?” This consideration has had a great influence on the spirits of those which they think will act as a shield and buckler against any assaults that come upon them. They will die a thousand times before they forfeit the reputation they have built up in the church of God! But, alas! This is but a withe [a strong flexible twig used to bind something], or a new cord, to bind giant temptation. What do you think of the ability of Satan to bring down “a third part of the stars of heaven?” (Rev. 12:4) Did they not shine in the firmament of the church? Were they not conscious — more than enough — of their own honour, elevation, usefulness, and reputation? But when the dragon came with his temptation, he cast them down to the earth. Yes, great temptations make men who have no better defence, unconsciously to fortify themselves against dishonour and a bad reputation in their life. *Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo Ipse domi stimulat ac nummos contemplant in arc* (the public hiss at me, but I cheer myself when, in my own house, I contemplate the coins in my strong-box). Could we not give instances of some still living that took up company with wicked men after the glory of a long and useful Christian life, but, after a while, found themselves

losing their reputation with the saints, having hardened themselves against temptation, but ended in apostasy? Take the examples of Judas Iscariot, or Hymeneus or Philetus. Their good reputation did not keep them from apostasy. Neither did the good reputation of the stars (angels) in heaven keep them from falling. Nor will it keep you.

**Secondly**, there is, on the other hand, the consideration of shame, reproach, loss, and such like. This also men put their trust in as a defence against temptation, and do not cease to believe that this will save and preserve them. They would not, for all the world, bring shame and reproach on themselves as is with some! Now, this consideration extends itself only to flagrant sins, those that the world takes note of and hates. It is of no use at all in such cases of secret sin that do immense harm to the consciences of people under temptation, nor heart sins when the flag is run up the flagpole and publically displayed. It does not apply to public temptations to loose and careless behaviour, such as we find in our day — in all of which, and in most other cases of temptation, we find ready relief ready to be offered to the heart in these matters. Besides all this, I say, we see by experience how easily this cord is broken when once the heart finds itself entangled. Every corner of the land is full of such shameful examples.

**Thirdly**, they have yet something that outweighs these smaller considerations — namely, that they do not want to wound their consciences and disturb their peace, and bring themselves into danger of hell fire. This, surely, if anything, will preserve men in the hour of temptation. They will not easily give away their peace, or risk their souls, by running onto the thick bosses [ornamentation] of God's buckler [shield]!

Which argument, then, is stronger or all-prevailing? I confess this is of great importance; and oh, that it were more pondered over than it is! Oh, that we laid more weight on the preservation of our peace with God than we do! Yet I say that even this consideration in the one that is caught off guard, and does not bother with the other rules I am urging, will not preserve him; for —

**(1)** The peace of such a one could be a false peace or security, made up of presumption and false hopes. Yes, even though he may be a believer, it may be so. Such was David's peace after his sin, and before Nathan the prophet visited him; such was the church of Laodicea's peace when ready to perish; and the church of Sardis' peace when dying. How can the soul be preserved otherwise, unless it labours hard to keep the word of Christ's patience, and be watchful in all things? Do you think that the professed peace of many in these days will be found to be true peace at the last? Indeed not, for they will go alive down to hell, when death has dominion over them in the morning of their days. Now, if a man's peace is such, do you think it will preserve him when he cannot preserve himself? It will give way at the first vigorous assault of a temptation at its height and in its hour. Like a broken reed, it will run into the hand of the one that leans on it. (See Is. 36:6)

But —

**(2)** Suppose the peace cherished, and proposed to safeguard the soul, is a true and good one; yet, when it comes to the test, when the hour of temptation arrives, so many reliefs will be offered and advised that that "peace" will be rendered useless.

“This evil is small; it is questionable; it does not touch my conscience” he says. “I am afraid of the consequences; but I will keep my peace to the end. Others of the people of God have fallen, yet they kept or recovered their peace. If I lose it for a time, I may get it back again. I will not question my position anymore. Though my peace is lost, safety may remain.”

And a thousand such pleas are made which are all planted as batteries against our fort, so that we cannot hold out for very long.

**(3)** Fixing on this particular alone is enough to secure one passage or entrance, while the enemy assaults us all around. It is true that a little armour will serve to defend a man if he could choose where his enemy might strike him; but we are commanded to put on the “whole armour of God” if we intend to resist and stand. (See Eph. 6:11) We are speaking of just one piece; and when our eye is fixed on that, temptation may enter and prevail in twenty other ways. For instance, a man may be tempted to worldliness, unjust gain, revenge, vainglory, or such like. If he strengthens himself alone with this consideration — that he will not do this thing, and wound his conscience, and lose his peace — but fixing his eye on this particular, and counting himself safe while he is not overcome in this way, he may neglect his private communion with God; or sensuality, and such like, will creep in, and he is not one jot better off than if he had fallen under the power of that part of the temptation which was most visibly pressing in on him. Experience tells us that this strategy will fail also. There is no saint of God but values the peace he has; yet how many fail in the hour of temptation!

**(4)** We must take into account something else, and that is the vileness of sinning against God. How can we do this thing, and sin against God, the God of sure mercies and salvation? How can we wound Jesus Christ, who died for us? The answer is not so easy! I answer —

**Firstly**, we see every day this consideration failing also. There is no child of God that is overcome by temptation but has this thought in his mind. It is not, then, a sure and infallible defence strategy.

**Secondly**, this consideration is twofold: either it expresses the thoughts of the soul at the time of the temptation, but it will not preserve us; or it expresses our universal, habitual frame of heart all the time, and then it provides, as I have already said, the universal medicine and remedy in the case of temptation; which is the subject of this discourse. More of this later.

**(2)** Consider the power of temptation, partly from what I mentioned earlier, with the effects of it in the saints of old, but now partly from other effects in general that we find in the Scriptures; such as —

**[1]** It darkens the mind, so that a man is not able to make a proper assessment of the temptation as he did before he entered into it. In the men of the world, the god of this world has blinded their minds, that they should not see the glory of Christ in the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4), and “whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away their hearts”. (Hos. 4:11) It is in the nature of every temptation, more or less, to steal away the heart, and to darken the understanding of the one being tempted.

And this it does in different ways —

**Firstly**, by fixing the imagination and thoughts on the object to which the temptation tends, so that the mind is diverted from a consideration of the things that would relieve and help it under such an assault. A man may be tempted to apprehend that he has been forsaken by God, that he is an object of his hatred, and that Christ is no value to him. By the craftiness of Satan, the mind is so fixated on a consideration of this state and condition, with the distress it causes, that he is unable to grasp any of the reliefs suggested and offered to him against it; but, so full of his own thoughts, he walks in darkness, and sees no light. I say, a temptation will so possess and fill his mind with thoughts of itself, and the fight against temptation, that it is diverted from a clear sight of things which otherwise could be depended upon to come and help. And those things which would keep the mind vigorous, and keep it from sin, will, by these means, come to have no force or power in them. Indeed, it will usually bring men to that state and condition, so that, when others, who know what they are going through, speak to them of their deliverance and peace, their minds being so taken up with thoughts of their temptation, that they do not at all understand, or scarcely hear one word, that is said to them.

**Secondly**, by sadly entangling their feelings, which, when they are engaged, what a great influence they have in blinding their mind and darkening their understanding! If anyone thinks otherwise, let him open his eyes in these days, and he will quickly learn the truth of it. But the ways and means used to overcome the feelings, and cloud the mind to darken it, is a subject I will not engage in just now. Only, I say, give me a man engaged in hope, love, fear, with reference to any particulars of temptation that pursue him, and I will quickly show you how he becomes darkened and blinded. This, then, is something you will fail in when you enter into temptation — your present judgement will not be completely altered, but darkened, and rendered unable to influence the will and master the feelings. These — both the will and the affections — set at liberty by temptation, will run on in madness. From now on, a detestation of sin, a hatred of it, the fear of the Lord, a sense of love, the presence of Christ crucified, all these will depart, leaving the heart a prey to its enemy.

**Thirdly**, temptation will add oil and fuel to the fire of temptations — incite, provoke, and make then disturbed, and rage beyond measure. Holding onto a lust, a corruption, a suitable object, advantage, occasion, will heighten and set fire to it, making it, for a season, totally predominant. In this, it brought worldly fear to Peter, pride to Hezekiah, covetousness to Achan, immorality to David, worldliness to Demas, and ambition to Diotrephes. It lays the reins on the neck of lust, and spurs it on to make it rush forward like a horse into the battle. A man knows nothing of the pride, fury, and madness of corruption until it meets a suitable temptation. And what now will a poor soul think to do? His mind is darkened, his feelings entangled, his lusts inflamed and provoked, and his relief defeated. So what will be the outcome of such a condition?

**(3)** Consider that temptations are either public or private; so let us view briefly the power of them separately —

**[1]** There are public temptations, such as those mentioned in Rev. 3:10, that will come upon the world “to try them that dwell upon the earth”; or a combination of persecution

and seduction for the testing of a careless generation of professors. Now, concerning such a temptation, consider that —

**Firstly**, it has power in respect to God, who allows it to redress the neglect and contempt of the gospel, on one hand, and the treachery of false professors on the other. Hence, it will certainly accomplish what it receives commission from God to do. Satan offered his services to go and seduce Ahab to bring about his downfall. God allowed him to do so —

“And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, ‘Wherewith?’ And he said, ‘I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.’ (1 Kings 22:21-22)

He was permitted as to his wickedness, and commissioned as to the event and punishment from the Lord. When the Christian world is to be given up to folly and false worship for their neglect of the truth, and their naked, barren, fruitless, Christ-dishonouring profession, it is said of the temptation that it will fall upon it —

“...even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”. (2 Thess. 2:9-11)

Such actions come from God in a judicial way, and have power within them to prevail. In these days, they infect almost the entire body of professors, having received a commission from God to kill hypocrites, wound negligent saints, break their bones, and make them scandalous, so that they might be ashamed. Does it not have the power to do it? What work has the spirit of error done among us! Is it not from this that, as some men no longer delight in retaining God in their hearts, so he has “given them up to a reprobate mind.” (Rom. 1:28) A man would consider it strange — yes, it is matter of amazement to him — to see people of a serious mind pretending to great things in the ways of God, then overcome, captivated, ensnared, destroyed by weak means, stupid opinions, foolish ideas. Such as a man would think it impossible for such things ever to lay hold on sensible or rational men, much less on professors of the gospel. But that which God would 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 that are commissioned by God for any end or purpose whatsoever.

**Secondly**, there is in such temptations a secret worming into those that are accounted godly and are mere professors — “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold...” (Mt. 24:12) The abounding of iniquity in some will certainly throw water on the zeal and love of others, that, little by little, they will grow cold. Some begin to grow negligent, careless, worldly, and wilful. They break the ice towards pleasing the flesh. At first, their love also grows cold; and, having broken the ice, they also conform to others, and are cast into the same mould with them. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Paul repeats this saying twice, in 1 Cor. 5:6 and Gal. 5:9. He obviously wants us take note of it; for it concerns the danger of the infection of the whole body from the bad example of some of whom he is speaking. We know how

imperceptibly leaven proceeds to penetrate the whole loaf; thus it is termed a “root of bitterness” that “springeth up and defileth many”. (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 scattered about! It is easy to follow a multitude and do evil, saying “A conspiracy” to those to whom the people say “A conspiracy.” Would anyone have thought it possible that such and such professors, in our days, should have fallen into selfish ways, ways of the flesh and of the world? To play at cards, dice, revel, and dance? To neglect family prayers and closet duties? To be proud, haughty, ambitious, worldly, covetous, and oppressive? Or that they should turn away after foolish, vain, ridiculous opinions, deserting the gospel of Christ? In this, a great temptation has come upon us from the inhabitants of this world to test us. But cannot everyone see that this has happened? And can we not see how it is so? Some loose, empty professors, who had never more than a form of godliness when they served their turn at it, began this way. Then others began to comply a little, and to please the flesh in doing so. Thus, little by little, it has reached even the top boughs and branches of our profession, until almost all flesh has been corrupted this way, so that he that departs from these iniquities makes his name a prey, if not his person.

**Thirdly**, public temptations are usually accompanied with strong reasons and pretences that are too hard for men, or at least unconsciously prevail on them to undervalue the evil to which the temptation leads, giving strength to that complicated temptation which, in these days, has even brought down the people of God from their excellence — and have shorn their locks like Samson, and made them become like other men. How full the world is of false pretences and pleadings! There is the liberty and freedom of Christians, delivered from bondage, out of which door, in my own observation, I have seen many going out to be preyed on by sensuality and apostasy; beginning with a light observance of the Christian life, proceeding to a neglect of the Sabbath in public and private duties, and ending in indulgence and depravity.

And then there is the leaving of public things to Providence, being content with how things are — things good in themselves, but downgraded into wretched, worldly compliance, to the utter ruin of all zeal for God, and the interest of Christ or his people in the world. These and the similar considerations, joined with ease and plenty, the greatness and promotion of professors, have brought things to a pretty pass, that whereas we have by Providence shifted places with the men of the world, we have by sin taken on their spirit also. We are like a company of men carried into a foreign country. In a short time they degenerate from the ways of the people from where they came, and fall into the ways of the people they live among, and are thus transformed. Give me permission a little to expand my parable:

Consider America. Who could believe that the first settlers, whose descendants are now in power and favour with all their people, have now fallen so low, remembering that they were once a colony of Puritans, whose habitation was originally “in a low place”, as the prophet speaks of the city of God, and were translated by a high hand to the mountains they now possess? We cannot but wonder how soon they have forgotten the customs, manners, ways, of their old people, and were originally cast in the mould of those that went before them, in the places to which they are translated.

I am speaking of us all, especially those who are among the lowliest of the people, where perhaps this iniquity most abounds. What were those before us that we are not? What did they do that we do not do? Prosperity has slain the foolish, and wounded the wise.

[2] Suppose the temptation is private. This has been mentioned before, to which I add two further things —

**Firstly**, its union and incorporation with lust, by which it gets within the soul and lies at the bottom of its actions. John tells us that the things that are “in the world” are “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.” (1 Jn. 2:16) Now, it is evident that all these things are mainly in the subject, not in the object — the heart, and not in the world. But they are said to be “in the world” because the world gets into them, mixes itself up with them, and unites with them. As faith and the promises are said to be “mixed” (Heb. 4:2), so are lust and temptation: they twine together, receive mutual help from one another, and grow each of them higher and higher by their mutual strength. Now, by this means, temptation gets so deep in the heart that no opposite reasoning can reach it; indeed, nothing that can kill the lust and conquer the temptation. Like leprosy that mingles with the wall, the wall itself must be pulled down, or the leprosy will not be eliminated nor be cured. Like a gangrene that poisons the blood and body, sin cannot be separated from the place where it festers unless it is removed and the place treated. For instance, in David's temptation to sexual immortality, ten thousand considerations might have been brought in to stop the mouth of the temptation; but it united itself with his lust, and nothing but the killing of it could destroy it, or give him the conquest. This deceives many a one. They have some pressing temptation that, having gained some advantage, becomes urgent to them. They pray against it, and oppose it with strong considerations, of the sort than everyone would find sufficient to conquer and destroy it, or least to overpower it, so it should never be troublesome anymore; but no good come of it, no ground is given or won; yes, it advances more and more. What is the reason for this? It has incorporated and united itself with the lust, and is safe from all opposition. If they would work hard at it, they must set upon the lust itself — their ambition, pride, worldliness, sensuality, or whatever it is that the temptation is united with. All other dealings with it are like putting a bandage over the gangrene: part or whole may be preserved a little while in great agony; but its removal or death must come at last. The soul may agonise for a season with such a procedure; but it must come to this — the lust must die or the soul will die.

**Secondly**, in what part of the soul the lust rules when it is united with the temptation, it draws after it the whole soul by one method or another, and so prevents or anticipates any opposition. Suppose it to be a lust of the mind — as there are lusts of the mind and uncleanness of the spirit, such as ambition, vain-glory, and such like — what a world of ways has the understanding to bridle the feelings and stop a falling away from God, seeing that, in what it is aiming at, there is so much to give them contentment and satisfaction! It will not prevent any reasoning in the mind, which it does automatically — acting like a cataract over the eyes, and presenting other things to the eyes to draw the whole soul, on other accounts and considerations, into the same frame of mind. It promises the whole a share in the spoil aimed at; such as Judas' money, which he first desired out of covetousness, to be shared among all his lusts. Or perhaps it appeals to the more sensual part, and first takes possession of the

feelings. What prejudices they will instil into the understanding, how they bribe it into acquiescence, what arguments they supply, what hopes they holds out to it, cannot be quickly expressed, as I said before. In brief, there is no particular temptation, but, when it comes to its hour, it makes use of whatever assistance it can from things good, evil, indifferent, and is fed by so many considerations that seem not to be most alien and foreign to it, and in some cases becomes immune to lying pleas and pretences. It is thus easy to acknowledge its strength.

**(4)** Consider the aim of any temptation; this is Satan's end and sin's end — that is, to dishonour God and ruin our souls.

**(5)** Consider what has happened to you in your past temptations. Did they not pollute your conscience, disturb your peace, weaken you in your obedience, and cloud over the face of God? Though you were not prevailed upon to commit outward evil in your temptation, yet were you not defeated? Was not your soul tainted and grievously perplexed with it? Yes, have you ever in your life come away without severe loss from any temptation in almost every case? And would you not willingly be entangled again? If you have been set free from your temptation, take care. Enter the place no more, if it is possible, lest a worse thing happen to you.

These, I say, are some of those many considerations I urge upon you, to show the importance of the truth proposed, and the depth of our concern in taking care that you “enter not into temptation.”

Against what I have just said, some objections secretly insinuate themselves into the souls of men, and have power to make them negligent and careless in these things, which is of utmost importance to them — a duty so very necessary to those who intend to walk with God in any peace, or with any faithfulness. These objections must be considered and answered. Here they are:

### **Objection 1**

Why should we so fear and labour to avoid temptation? — when we are commanded to “count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations.” (Jas. 1:2) Now, certainly, I need not be too scrupulous in avoiding the falling into something which, when I have fallen into it, I am to “count it all joy.” To this I reply:

### **Answer**

**1.** You cannot hold this rule in all things — namely, that a man need not seek to avoid that which, when he cannot but fall into, it is his duty to rejoice in it. The same Apostle bids the rich “rejoice that they are made low”. (Jas. 1:10) And, without doubt, to him who is acquainted with the goodness and wisdom and love of God in his dealings with us in every condition that is needful for us, it will be a matter of rejoicing for us. Yet, how few rich, godly men can you persuade not to take heed, and use all lawful means that they should not be made poor and lowly! And, in most cases, the truth is, it is their sin that prevents them from this. It is our legitimate business to make good our way of life, and to live as securely as we can; but, if God alters our condition, we should rejoice in it. If the temptations here mentioned come to us, we may have cause to rejoice; but not if, by a neglect of duty, we fall into them.

**2.** Temptations are taken two ways —

(1) *Passively*, and merely materially, for such things as are (or, in some cases, may be) temptations; or —

(2) *Actively*, for those that 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” (verse 2), he adds in verse 12, “Blessèd is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.” But now, whereas someone might say, “If this is so, then temptations are good, and from God” — “No”, says James; “take temptation in such a sense that it is a thing enticing and leading to sin, so God tempts none; but every man is tempted of his own lust”. (Verses 13-14) “To have such temptations, to be tempted to sin, that is not the blessed thing I mean, but the enduring of afflictions that God sends for the trial of our faith, that is a blessed thing. So that, although I must count it all joy when, through the will of God, I fall into various afflictions for my testing, which yet have the matter of temptation in them, yet I am to exercise all care and diligence that my lust has no occasion or advantage given it to tempt me to sin.”

### **Objection 2**

But was not our Saviour Christ himself tempted; and is it evil to be brought into the same state and condition as him? Yes, it is not only said that he was tempted, but his being so is expressed as a thing advantageous and conducive to his mercy as our priest — “In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Heb 2:17-18) And he makes it a ground of a great promise to his disciples that they “abode with him in his temptations”. (Lk. 22:28)

### **Answer**

It is true that our Saviour was tempted; yet his temptations are reckoned among the evils that came to him in the days of his flesh — things that came to him through the malice of the world and its prince. He did not wilfully cast himself into temptation, which he said was “to tempt the Lord our God” (Mt. 4:7) — as, indeed, willingly to enter into any temptation is highly provocative to God. Now, our condition is this: that we should show the greatest diligence and watchfulness that we can, yet we will be sure to be tempted, and thereby be made more like Christ. This will hinder us; but it is our duty to prevent our falling into temptation to the utmost; and 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 no part in him; but when he comes to us, he has a part in us. But by the effect of temptations, namely trials and disquiet, we are made like Christ, and so, in one way, we should rejoice as far as we may; yet, in another, we are made unlike him — which is the result of our becoming defiled and entangled, and should therefore seek by all means to avoid it. We will never come off like Christ. Who of us can “enter into temptation” and not be defiled?

### **Objection 3**

But what need is there for great endeavour and carefulness? Is it not said that “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but 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” (1 Cor. 10:13); and “He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations”. (2 Pet. 2:9) Why do we need, then, to be so careful as not to enter into them?”

## **Answer**

I much question what assistance he will receive from God in his temptation who willingly enters into it because he supposes God has promised to deliver him from it. The Lord knows that, through the craftiness of Satan, the subtlety and malice of the world, the deceitfulness of sin that “doth so easily beset us”, when we have done our utmost, we will enter into various temptations. In his love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness, he has provided such a sufficiency of grace for us that they will never make an everlasting separation between him and our souls. Yet I have three things to say to this objection:

**(1)** He who wilfully or negligently enters into temptation has no reason in the world to promise himself any assistance from God, or any deliverance from the temptation into which he has fallen. The promise is made to those to whom temptations come in their way, whether they will or not, not those that wilfully fall into them — that run out of their way to meet with them. And therefore the devil (as is usually observed), when he tempted our Saviour, left out that expression of the text of Scripture, which he twisted to suit his purpose. The promise of deliverance is to those that remain faithful in their ways; and this is one reason why we should beware of temptation.

**(2)** Though there is a sufficiency of grace provided for all the elect, that they will by no temptation fall away utterly from God, yet it would make any gracious heart tremble to think what dishonour to God, what scandal to the gospel, what woeful darkness and disquiet they may bring upon their own souls, though they will not perish. And those who are scared by nothing but fear of hell, on whom other considerations fall short and exert no influence, in my opinion, they have more reason to fear hell than perhaps they are aware of.

**(3)** To enter into temptation on this account is to venture on sin (which is the same as “continuing with sin”) — “that grace may abound” (Rom. 6:1-2). This thought the Apostle rejects with the strongest detestation. Is it not madness for a man willingly to suffer the loss on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, because he supposes he can swim safely to shore on a plank? Is it less in him who will hazard the shipwreck of all his comfort, peace, joy, and so much of the glory of God and honour of the gospel that he is entrusted with, merely on the supposition that his soul will escape?

These objections some might think do not deserve to be mentioned; and yet with such as these considerations poor souls sometimes delude themselves.

## CHAPTER 4

### SOME SPECIAL CASES PUT FORWARD FOR CONSIDERATION

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

With these things premised in general, I go on to consider three particular cases arising from the truth proposed: the first one relates to the thing itself; the second to the time or season of it; and the last to behaviour in reference to the prevention of the evil in temptation.

**First**, then, we must ask three things: How can we know when we have entered into a time of temptation; what directions can be given for preventing us from entering into temptation; what seasons there are in which a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand.

1. Our first question is, How can we know whether we have entered into temptation or not?

I say this:

**(1)** When a man is drawn into sin, he may be sure that he has entered into temptation. All sin is from temptation. (Jas. 1:14) Sin is a fruit that comes only from that root. Though a man may be never so suddenly or violently surprised by any sin, yet it is from some temptation or other that he has overtaken him, as the Apostle says — “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” (Gal. 6:1) If a man is surprised, overtaken with a fault, yet he was tempted into it, for says Paul, “...consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted” — that is, when he was surprised, it came unawares. This, men sometimes take no notice of to their great disadvantage. When they are overtaken with a sin, they set themselves to repent of it, but do not consider whether temptation was the cause of it, and so set themselves against it, taking care that they are not caught twice. Hence, they quickly get entangled by it, though they have the greatest detestation of the sin itself that can be expressed. He who indeed would get the conquest over any sin must consider his temptations, and strike at that root. Without deliverance from it, he will not be healed.

This is a folly that possesses many who still have a lively and conscious sense of sin. Yes, they are sensible of their sins, but not of their temptations. They are displeased with the bitter fruit, but cherish the poisonous root. Hence, in the midst of their humiliation over sin, they will continue in those ways, those societies, in pursuit of those ends that gave rise to that sin. I will say more about this later.

**(2)** Temptations come in several degrees. Some rise to such a height that they oppress the soul, cause it agony, and disquiet it. It fights against all opposition that may be made to it; such is the special nature of temptation that he must wrestle with it. When a fever rages, a man knows he is sick, unless his high temperature puts him into a

coma. The lusts of men, as James tells us, “entice, draw away”, and seduce them to sin; but this they do of themselves, without any special instigation. If lusts grow violent, if they shake the soul up and down, and give it no rest, the soul will know that temptation has arrived.

Take an empty vessel and throw it into some stream that is on the way to the sea, and it will infallibly be carried there according to the course and speed of the stream; but let strong winds get behind it, and it will be driven with violence onto every bank and rock, until, being broken in pieces, it is swallowed up by the ocean. Men's lusts will infallibly (if not mortified in the death of Christ) carry them to eternal ruin, but often enough without much noise according to the course of the stream of their corruptions. But let the wind of strong temptations drive them, and they will be hurried into many scandalous sins, and so, broken up, are swallowed in eternity. So is it with men, of whom we have some notable examples. Hezekiah had the root of pride in him always; yet it did not make him run up and down to show his treasure and riches until he fell into temptation through the ambassadors of the King of Babylon. So David; yet he kept off numbering the people until Satan stood up and provoked him, and suggested that he do it. Judas was covetous from the beginning; yet he did not plan on satisfying it by the selling of his Master until the devil entered him and pushed him into temptation. Similar cases can be found in Abraham, Jonah, Peter, and others. So that when any lust or corruption whatsoever puts the soul into turmoil and disquiets it, urging it with violence to commit sin, let the soul know that it has got the advantage of some outward temptation, though as yet it does not see how a particular temptation, by being incited or provoked, is bringing it to it, and should to be looked at with more than ordinary caution.

**(3)** Entering into temptation can be seen in the lesser degrees of it; as, for instance, when the heart begins secretly to like the cause of that temptation, and is content to feed it and increase it anyway it can without downright sin.

In particular, a man is held in repute for his piety, wisdom, learning, and such like — he is spoken of much in these things; his heart is tickled to hear of it, and his pride and ambition are moved by it. If this man, now, with all his strength, considers these things from which come his reputation and esteem and glory among men, with a secret eye to have his reputation increased, he is entering into temptation; which, if he does not take care, will quickly make him a slave to lust. So it was with Jehu. He perceived that his reputation for zeal began to grow abroad, and he was honoured for it. Jonadab comes across as a good and holy man. “Now”, thought Jehu, “I have an opportunity to grow in honour of my zeal.” So he called Jonadab to him, and began to work on him seriously. The things he did were good in themselves, but he had entered into temptation, and served his lust in what he did. So is it with many scholars. They find themselves respected and favoured for their learning. This takes hold of the pride and ambition of their hearts. Hence, they set themselves to study with all diligence day and night — a thing good in itself; but they do it so that they might satisfy the thoughts and words of men, which delights them; thus in all they do, they make provision for the flesh to fulfil its lusts.

It is true that God often brings light out of this darkness, and turns things to a better end. After, it may be, a man has studied many years with an eye to his lusts — his ambition, pride, and vain-glory — rising early and going to bed late to give them

satisfaction. God comes in with his grace, turns the soul towards himself, robs those Egyptian lusts, and so consecrates the scholar's gifts for the use of the tabernacle, which once were in service to idols.

Men can become entangled in better things than learning, even in their profession of piety in their labour in the ministry, and such like. Some men's profession is a snare to them. They have a good reputation, and are much honoured on account of it and their strict behaviour. This often falls out in the days in which we live, where all things are carried along in various parties. Some find themselves on that account, perhaps, to be the darlings of their clique, and *ingentia decora* (the glory of their party). If such thoughts secretly insinuate themselves into their hearts, and influence them into more than ordinary diligence and activity in their way and profession, they have become entangled; and instead of aiming at more glory, they should lie in the dust, with a sense of their own vileness. And so private is this temptation, that oftentimes it requires no food to feed it except the one that is entangled in it, needing to enhance, by all means, his honour and reputation; so that all it needs to do is whisper that the work being done in the heart is honourable. The same may be the condition with men, as I said, in preaching the gospel and in the work of the ministry. Many things in that work bring them esteem — their abilities, their outspokenness, their giving of time, and their success: and all this, in a sense, adds fuel to temptation. Let, then, a man know that when he likes what he is feeding to his lust, and keeps it up by ways that are either good in themselves or not downright sinful, he has entered into temptation.

**(4)** When, by a man's state or condition of life, or any means whatever, it comes to pass that his lust and any temptation match with occasions and opportunities for its provocation and stirring up, let that man know, whether he sees it or not, that he has certainly entered into temptation. I told you before, that to enter into temptation is not merely to be tempted, but to be so under the power of it as to become entangled by it. Now, it is almost impossible for a man to have opportunities, occasions, 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 becomes King of Syria, his cruelty and ambition will make him rage savagely against Israel. If the priests come with their pieces of silver, Judas's covetousness will instantly go to work to sell his Master. And many instances of similar kind may, in the days in which we live, be given. Some men think they will play on the hole of the asp and not be stung, to touch pitch and not be defiled, to catch their clothes alight and not be burnt; but they are mistaken. If your business, way of life, societies, or whatever else, casts you in the way of such things, ways, and persons, that suit your lust or corruption, know that you have entered into temptation; how it will turn out, God alone knows. Let us suppose a man has the seed of sexual lust in his heart, is he finds the same in the course of his life, in society, however vain, and foolish — whatever the circumstances, be they great, or low — if he entertains sexual misbehaviour, he has undoubtedly entered into temptation. So it is with ambition in high places; passion in a multitude of perplexing affairs; polluted corrupt fancy in vain society, and the perusal of useless books or treatises containing vanity and folly. Fire and things combustible are often brought together without affecting each other, but given the spark of a particular lust, and suitable objects or occasions for their exercise, and you will have a raging fire.

**(5)** When a man is weakened, made negligent or formal in his duties, and when he can omit them or content himself with a careless, lifeless performance of them, without

delight, joy, or satisfaction in his soul, when it was not so formerly, let him know that though he may not be acquainted with the particular problem he is facing, he has entered into temptation, which, at length, will bring him trouble and peril. How many have we seen and known in our days, who, from a warm profession, have fallen into negligence, carelessness, indifference in praying, reading, hearing, and such like. Give an instance of one who has come off without a wound, and I dare say you will find a hundred that have shown themselves to have been asleep on the top of the mast; that they were in the jaws of some vile temptation or other, and that afterwards they produced bitter fruit in their lives and ways. From a few returners from folly, we hear every day these mournful complaints:

“Oh! I neglected private prayer; I did not meditate on the Word, nor attend to hearing the preaching, but rather despised these things. I said I was rich, and lacked nothing. Little did I consider that this unclean lust was ripening in my heart, this atheism, these abominations fermenting there.”

Here is a sure rule —

If a man's heart grows cold, negligent, or formal in duties concerning the worship of God, including their matter or manner, then he has come into another frame of mind, and one temptation or other has taken hold of him. Worldliness or pride or sexual lust or self-seeking or malice and envy, or one thing or other, has taken possession of his spirit, “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.” (Hos. 7:9)

And this is to be seen in the manner of duties, as well as in the matter. Men may, on many sinister accounts, especially for the satisfaction of their consciences, keep up frequent duties of religion, in their substance and performance of them, when they have no heart for them, no life in them, no spirituality in their performance. The church of Sardis kept up the performance of duties, and had therefore a name that they lived; but they displayed no spiritual life in their performance, and were, therefore, “dead”. (Rev. 3:1) As in illness of the body, if a man find his spirits low, his heart oppressed, his head heavy, the whole person indisposed, though he is not yet actually burning up, he will cry out, “I fear I have a fever; I feel so unwell and indisposed!” So a man may do so in this sickness of his soul. If he finds his spiritual pulse beating too fast and unevenly towards duties of worship and communion with God — if his spirits become low, and his heart faint in them — let him conclude, though his lust does not yet burn nor rage, that he has entered into temptation, and it is high time for him to consider the particular causes of his disorder. If the head grows heavy, and slumbers in the things of grace, if the heart becomes cold in duties, then evil lies at the door. And if such a soul escapes a great temptation to sin, yet it may not escape a great temptation to desert. The spouse cried, “I sleep” (Song 5:2); and that she has “put off her coat, and could not put it on — a picture

of indisposition to duties and communion with Christ. What is the next news you have of her? Verse 6 states that her “Beloved had withdrawn himself” — Christ was gone; and she seeks him long and does not find him.

There is such a suitability between the new nature that is wrought and created in believers, and the duties of the worship of God, so that they cannot be parted nor kept asunder, unless it be by the intervening of some disturbing disorder. The new creature feeds upon grace, is strengthened and increased by the things concerning salvation, and finds sweetness there, yes, meets there with its God and Father; so it cannot go wrong of itself unless made sick by some temptation in which it delights, and desires to exercise. The spiritual mind is described in detail throughout the whole of Psalm 119. It will not, I say, cast out of this frame and temper unless there is some intervention by sin and temptation. Various other evidences there are of a soul entering into temptation, which upon inquiry it may discover.

I mention this to take away any security we are wrongly apt to enjoy, and to show the special duty we must apply ourselves to in seasons of temptation; for he that has already entered into temptation should apply himself to what will disentangle him from sin, and not to labour to prevent sin entering in. How this can be done, I will demonstrate.

## CHAPTER 5

### “WATCH AND PRAY”

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

Our **second** question is this: What directions can be given for preventing us entering into temptation? Having seen the danger of such a thing, and also discovered the ways and seasons by which, and in which, men are usually tempted, our second question looks for general directions to preserve the soul from temptation? And that is why we are considering our Saviour's direction in Mt. 26:41, which he sums it up in three words: “Watch and pray.” I shall labour a little to explain them, and show what is wrapped up and contained in them, both jointly and individually.

**(1)** There is included in them a clear, abiding apprehension of great evil that goes with entering into temptation. That which a man watches and prays against, he looks upon as evil to him, and is, by all means, to be avoided.

This, then, is our first direction — WATCH. Always bear in mind the great danger there is for any soul to enter into temptation.

It is so sad to consider what slight thoughts most Christians have of this thing. If men can keep themselves from sin in open action, they are content, scarcely aiming for more. With any temptation in the world, all sorts of men will venture at any time. How many young men put themselves into company, or any society: at first, they are delighted with evil company, and then with the evil of such company! How vain are all admonitions and exhortations to them to stay clear of such people, debauched in themselves, corrupters of others, and destroyers of souls! At first they venture into the company, hating all thoughts of practising their immoralities; but what is the result? Unless it is here or there, there is someone whom God snatches with a mighty hand from the jaws of destruction; if not, they are all lost, and, after a while, fall in love with the evil which at first they hated. This open door to the ruin of souls is too evident; and many sad experiences make it no less evident that it is almost impossible to fix in many poor creatures any fear or dread of temptation, who yet profess a fear and hatred of sin. Would that it were only thus with young men, whom we could excuse as being unused to the yoke of their Lord! What sort of man is free from this folly in one thing or other? How many professors have I known that plead for their “liberty”, as they call it! They could hear anything, all things — all sorts of men, all men. They would try all things whether they came to them from God or not; and, on that account, run to hear and to attend to every babbling of false and abominable opinions, every seducer, though avoided by most of the saints. For such a one, they demand their liberty — they can do it; but the opinions they hated they now love as much as any. What is the result? I scarcely ever knew any come off without a wound; the majority have had their faith overthrown. Let no one, then, pretend to fear sin that does not fear the temptations that go with it. They are too nearly allied to be separated. Satan puts them

together, so it is very hard for anyone to put them asunder. There is no one who does not hate the fruit who does not also delight in the root.

When men see that such ways, such companies, such courses, such businesses, such studies and aims, entangle them, make them cold, and careless, and act as dampers on them, indisposing them to even, universal, and constant obedience if they venture on them, for sin lies at the door. The Christian way is a tender frame of spirit, conscious of its own weakness and corruption, of the craftiness of Satan, of the evil of sin, of the power of temptation that can outperform his duty. Until we bring our hearts into this frame, upon the considerations mentioned earlier, or something similar, we will never free ourselves from sinful entanglements. The boldness of temptation, springing from several pretences, has, as is known, ruined countless professors in these days, and still continues to bring many down from their excellence. Nor have I the least hope of a more fruitful profession among them until I see more fear of temptation. Sin will not long seem great or heavy to anyone to whom temptations appear light or small.

This, then, is the first thing contained under this general direction. The daily exercise of our thoughts with an apprehension of the great danger that lies in entering into temptation is seriously required of us. The grief of the Spirit of God, the disquieting of our souls, the loss of peace, the risk of eternal welfare, all lie at the door. Unless the soul is prevailed upon to follow my directions, all that follows will be of no value. Until temptation is taken seriously, sin will win. But when the heart is made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing a good life is over. Let him go no further unless he is resolved to improve this direction in a daily, conscientious observance of it.

**(2)** There is this in it also, that we have no personal 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.

This is another means of preservation. As we have no strength to resist temptation when it arrives, when we enter into it, and when we fall under it, we need a supply of sufficiency of grace from God. We reckon that we have no power or wisdom to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, but we must be kept by the power and wisdom of God. This is our preserving principle. We are in all things “kept by the power of God.” (1 Pet. 1:5) This our Saviour instructs us in, not only by directing us to pray, so that we should not be led into temptation, but also by his praying for us, so that we may be kept from it, as we find in Jn. 17:15 — “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” — that is, the temptations of the world (ejk tou~ ponhrou — ek tou ponérou = from the evil one), and from sin, which is all that is evil in the world; or from the evil one, who, in the world, makes use of the world to produce temptation. Christ prayed his Father to keep us, and instructed us to pray so that we may be kept. It is not, then, a thing in our power. The ways of our entering into temptation are so many, varied, and imperceptible — the means so useful and powerful — our weakness, our unwatchfulness, so indescribable — that we cannot in the least keep or preserve ourselves from it. We fail both in wisdom and power in 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 lying pleas, numerous pretences and ways of deceit; my own corruption is violent and tumultuous, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and warring in me and against me. Occasions and advantages of temptation are numberless in all the things I have done or suffer, in all my businesses and people I meet. The first beginnings of temptation are insensible and plausible, so that, left to myself, I will not know I am ensnared until my bonds are made strong, and sin gets a grip on my heart. Therefore, on God alone will I rely for preservation, and continually look up to him on that account. This will make the soul always commit itself to the care of God, resting itself on him, and doing nothing, undertaking nothing etc., without asking counsel from him. So a double advantage arises from observing this direction, both singularly useful for the soul's preservation from the evil of which we are afraid —

**[1]** The engagement of the grace and compassion of God, who has called the fatherless and helpless to trust in him; nor did any soul lack in supplies who, with a sense of need, rolled himself upon him on account of his gracious invitation.

**[2]** The trusting in God's assistance, borne in on several counts to the conscience, is useful for the soul's preservation. Whoever looks to God for assistance in the right way is both conscious of his danger, and is scrupulously careful in the use of the means of preservation: which two things — and they are both important — may easily be considered by those that have a heart to exercise them.

**[3]** This also is involved — an act faith in God's promise to preserve us. To believe that he will preserve us is itself a means of preservation; for this, God will certainly do, or make a way for us to escape from the temptation, if we approach it in such a believing frame of mind. We are to pray for what God has promised. Our requests must conform to his promises and commands, which are comprehensive. Faith embraces the promises, and so finds relief in this case. This, James instructs us in chap. 1:5-7 —

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”

Whatever we need, we must “ask of God”; but we must also “ask in faith”, otherwise we must not “think that we shall receive anything of the Lord.” This then, also, is implied in this direction from our Saviour that we must act in faith on the promises of God for our preservation out of temptation. He has promised that he will keep us in all our ways; that we will be directed in a way that, 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. Put faith to 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 out to meet Christ in the promises, nor what power for the preservation of the soul lies in this whole enterprise. But I have written of this elsewhere in my books:

1. *The Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God as Revealed in His Word, with Assurance therein;*

2. *A Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit; the reason of faith;*
3. *Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect;*

3. Weigh these things together; but first, take the importance of prayer into consideration. To pray that we do not enter into temptation is a means of preserving us from it. Glorious things, by all that know something of those things, are spoken of this duty; yet the truth is, not half of its excellence, power, and use, are known. It is not my business to speak of this subject here; but I say this relating to my present purpose: he that would experience little in temptation let him be much in prayer. This brings to us the suitable help and succour that is laid up in Christ for us. (Heb. 4:16) It hardens our souls into an attitude of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for the putting on of “the whole armour of God” that we might resist and stand in the time of temptation, he adds this ending in Eph. 6:18 —

“...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance and supplication.”

Without this, all the rest is useless for the end proposed. Therefore consider the weight he lays on the words “Praying always” — that is, at all times and seasons, being always ready and prepared for the discharge of this duty — “that men ought always to pray and not to faint”. (Lk. 18:1) See Eph. 6:18, which I referred to earlier — “...with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” — putting out all kinds of desires for God that suit our condition, according to his will, lest we be diverted by anything whatsoever; and not for a little while, but “with all perseverance” — that is, continue to the utmost, so that we shall “stand”. The soul thus armed will be in a winning position; and this is one of the means without which the work cannot be done. If we do not abide in prayer, we will abide in cursèd temptations. Let this, then, be yet another direction —

Abide in prayer — and that expressly for this purpose — that we “enter not into temptation.” Let this be one part of our daily communion with God — that he might preserve our souls, and guard our hearts and our ways, so that we should not be entangled by temptation.

May his good and wise providence order our ways and affairs that no pressing temptation come to us! May he give us diligence, carefulness, and watchfulness over our ways! So shall we be delivered when others remain bound with the cords of their own folly.

## CHAPTER 6

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WATCH AGAINST TEMPTATION?

**Of watching, that we do not enter into temptation — The nature and power of that duty — The first part of it, as to the special seasons of temptation — The first in unusual prosperity — The second in a slumber of grace — The third a time of great spiritual enjoyment — The fourth a time of self-confidence**

Our **third** question is this: What seasons are there in which a man may and ought to fear that an hour of temptation is at hand? Our Saviour's direction was to "watch". I will deal with this in detail.

Watch out for the times when men usually "enter into temptations" —

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations". (Jas. 1:2)

"...wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations". (1 Pet. 1:6)

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations", and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgement to be punished. (2 Pet. 2:9)

There are various times when an hour of temptation can usually be found, and will unavoidably seize upon the soul unless it is delivered in mercy by the use of watchfulness. When we come into such a season, then we must particularly be on our guard, so that we may not fall into, or fall under, the power of temptation. Some of those times can be named:

**(1)** At a time of unusual outward prosperity, usually accompanied by an hour of temptation. Prosperity and temptation go together; yes, prosperity can be a temptation — perhaps many temptations — and that because, without eminent supplies of grace, it is liable to cast a soul into a frame and temper which exposes it to any temptation, and provides it with fuel and food in everything. It lays in provision for lust, and darts for Satan.

The wise man tells us that "the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." (Prov. 1:32-33) Prosperity can harden them in their ways, make them despise instruction, and brings the evil day (whose terror should influence them into mending their ways) near them. Without God's special assistance, it will exercise an unthinkable malignant influence on believers themselves. Hence, Agur prayed against riches because of the temptation that comes with them: "Lest", says he, "I be full and deny thee, and say, 'Who is the Lord?'" (Prov. 30:8-9) — lest, being filled with them, he should forget the Lord, as he complained that his people did — "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me." (Hos. 13:6) We know how David was mistaken in this case — "I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved." (Ps. 30:6) "All is well, and all will be well", he thought. But what was at hand, what lay

at the door that David did not consider? Verse 7 tells us — “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.” God was ready to hide his face when David entered into a temptation, and that meant desertion from God.

As, then, concerning a day of prosperity, I do not disagree with Solomon's counsel — “In the day of prosperity, rejoice”. (Eccles. 7:14) Rejoice in the God of your mercies, who does you good in his patience and forbearance, despite all your unworthiness. Yet I may add from the same fount of wisdom these words — “Consider” also, lest evil lie at the door. A man in that state is in the midst of snares. Satan has many advantages over him; he forges the darts in all his enjoyments; and, if he does not watch out, he will become entangled before he is aware of it.

Do you want something that will steady, and provide ballast for, your heart? Formality in religion is apt to creep in on you, laying the soul open to all temptations with their ferocious power and strength. Satisfaction and delight in creature-comforts, the poison of the soul, will be apt to grow in you. At such a time, be vigilant, be circumspect, or you will be surprised. Job says that, in his affliction, “God maketh my heart soft”. (Job 23:16) There is a hardness, an unconscious lack of spiritual sense, which gathers in prosperity, that, if not watched against, will open the heart to the deceits of sin and the baits of Satan. “Watch and pray” at this time. Many men have found their negligence cost them dear; their sad experience cries out to us to take care. Blessed is he that fears always, but especially in a time of prosperity.

**(2)** As I showed partly before, a time of the slumber of grace, of neglect in communion with God, of formality in duty, is a season to be watched out for, for there are definitely some other temptations attending it.

Let a soul in such a state awake and look about him. His enemy is at hand, and he is ripe and ready to fall into such a condition that will cost him dear all the days of his life. His present is bad enough; but it is an indication of what is worse, and is lying at the door. The disciples that were with Christ in the mount had not only a bodily but a spiritual drowsiness upon them. What did our Saviour say to them? “Arise; watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” We know how near one of them was to his bitter hour of temptation, and was not watching out as he ought, for he soon fell into it.

I mentioned before the case of the spouse. (Song 5:2-8) She slept, and was drowsy, and was unwilling to dress up for a vigorous performance of her duties, by way of a lively, active communion with Christ. Before she was aware of it, she had lost her Beloved; then she moaned, made urgent inquiry, cried, and endured wounding, reproach, and many things, before she found him again. Consider, then, O poor soul, your state and condition! Does your light burn dim? Does it give out to others as great a blaze as formerly, as you do not see so clearly the face of God in Christ as you used to? (2 Cor. 4:6) Has your zeal grown cold? Or, if it does the same works as formerly, is your heart no longer so warmed with the love of God as formerly, unless you proceed in the course I have suggested? Are you negligent in the duties of praying or hearing? Or, if you perform them, do you not pursue them with as much life and vigour as formerly? Are you flagging in your profession? Or if you are trying to keep it up, have your wheels become oiled by some dark aspects within or without? Has your delight in the people of God grown faint and cold? Or is your love for them changing from something that is purely spiritual into something that is very worldly, on the account of

suitableness of principles and natural spirits, and, if not worse, what are now the foundations? If you are drowsing in such a condition, take care; you are falling into some deplorable temptation that will break all your bones, and give you wounds that will be with you all the days of your life. Yes, when you awake, you will find that it has indeed got a grip on you already, though you do not know 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 — “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” (Rev. 3:2) “Be watchful”, says our Saviour, “and strengthen your ways, or a worse thing will come upon you.” If anyone that reads the words of this direction finds himself in this condition, if he has any regard for his poor soul, let him now wake up before he is entangled beyond recovery. Take this warning from God; do not despise it.

**(3)** A time of great spiritual enjoyment is often, by the malice of Satan and the weakness of our hearts, turned into a time of danger in this business of temptation.

We know how the case stood with Paul. (2 Cor. 12:7) He had glorious spiritual revelations of God and Jesus Christ. Instantly Satan fell upon him, and a messenger from him buffets him. So he earnestly begged for it to depart, but was left to struggle with it. God is pleased sometimes to give us special discoveries of himself and his love, to fill the heart with his kindness. Christ takes us into the banqueting-house, and gives our hearts their fill of love (Song 2:4); and this by some special work of his Spirit, overpowering us with a sense of love in the unspeakable privilege of adoption, filling our souls with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” (1 Pet. 1:8) 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” (Mt. 17:4; Mk. 9:4; Lk. 9:33) — that we might abide here forever. But then, very frequently, some bitter temptation comes on the scene. Satan sees that, possessed by the joy before us, we quickly neglect many ways of approach to our souls, and then he seeks and takes advantage of 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? (Ps 63:5) Let us not say, “We shall never be moved”, as we do not know how soon God may hide his face, or a messenger from Satan may buffet us.

Besides, often enough there is a greater and worse deceit in this business. Men cheat their souls with their own fancies instead of looking to a sense of God's love by the Holy Spirit. When they are lifted up with their imaginations, I cannot stress enough just how fearfully they are exposed to all kinds of temptations. How, then, are they able to find relief against their consciences from their own foolish fancies and deceit, which they hang on to so stubbornly? Do we not observe such every day — people walking in the vanities and ways of this world, yet boasting of their sense of the love of God? Do we believe them? We do not! We believe only the truth itself; and how sad, then, must their condition be!

**(4)** A **fourth** season is a time of self-confidence; then usually temptation is at hand.

The case of Peter is clear on this point — “Peter said unto him, ‘Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.’” I will not deny you; though all men should deny you,

I will not; though I were to die for it, I would not do it.” (Mt. 26:35; Mk. 14:31) This was said by a poor man, as he stood on the very brink of a temptation that cost him many bitter tears. (Mt. 26:75; Mk. 14:72; Lk. 22:62) And it was a lesson, as far as I know, that stayed with him all his days, and gave him a true acquaintance with the state of all believers, after he had received more of the Spirit and of power on the day of Pentecost. Yet he had less confidence in himself, and saw it was right that others should be like it also, thus persuading all men to “pass the time of their sojourning here in fear”. (1 Pet. 1:17) They should not be confident, and think too highly of themselves, as he did, lest they fall as he did. At the first time of temptation, he compared himself with others, and put himself above them — “...I will not deny thee in any wise.” He was afraid of his reputation before others. But when our Saviour afterward came to him, and compared him directly with others — “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (Jn. 21:15) — he had done with comparing himself with others, and only cried out, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” (Jn. 21:55-17) He lifts himself up above others no more. That is how such seasons turn out. Temptations are abroad in the world, false doctrines, with uncountable other seductions and provocations. We tell everyone that is self-confident not to be surprised at them. Though all men should fall into these follies, yet we will not. Surely we will never go away from walking with God; it is impossible for our hearts to be so stupid! But, says the Apostle, “Be not high-minded, but fear; let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (Rom. 11:20) How could 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, at the word of a servant-girl, when there was no legal questioning of him, no process set up against him, instantly fell to cursing and swearing that he did not know him? Let them take heed of self-confidence who have any hankering after of sin! And this is the first thing in our watching: which is to consider well the times in which temptation usually makes its approaches to the soul, and be forearmed against them. And these are some of the times when temptations are close at hand.

## CHAPTER 7

### HOW TO WATCH AGAINST TEMPTATION

**Several acts of watchfulness against temptation proposed — Watch the heart — What it is to be watched in and about — Of the snares lying in men's natural temperament — Of peculiar lusts — Of occasions suited to them — Watching to have foresight against temptation — Directions for watchfulness in the first approaches of temptation — Directions after entering into temptation**

After that part of watchfulness against temptation, in which we have considered the outward means, occasions, and advantages of temptation, we now go on to something regarding the heart itself, which is worked on and entangled by temptation. Watching or keeping of the heart, which above all things we are obliged to do, comes within the compass of this duty also. For the right performance of this, here are some more directions —

**(1)** Let him that does not want to enter into temptation labour to know his own heart, and be acquainted with his own spirit, his natural frame and temperament, his lusts and corruptions, his natural, sinful, or spiritual weaknesses, that, finding where his weakness lies, he is careful to keep at a distance from all occasions of sin.

Our Saviour told his disciples that they did not know what spirit they were of; which, under pretence of zeal, betrayed them into ambition and a desire for revenge. (Lk. 9:54) Had they known it, they would have watched over themselves. David tells us in Ps. 18:23 that he considered his ways, and “kept himself from his iniquity”, which he was particularly prone to do.

There are advantages for temptations, lying often in men's natural temperament and constitution. Some are naturally gentle, simple, easy to entreat, and pliable; which, though these things belong to the noblest temperament, and provide the best and choicest ground, and when well broken up and fallowed are suitable for grace to grow in, yet, if not watched over, can be the means of countless surprises and entanglements in temptation. Others are earthy, obstinate, and sullen, so that envy, malice, selfishness, grumpiness, critical thoughts of other, and complaints lie at the very door of their natures, so that they can hardly step out without being caught in the snare of one or two of them. Others are hot-tempered, passionate, and such like. Now, whoever watches so as not to enter into temptation had better become acquainted with his own natural temperament that he may watch over the treacheries that work there continually. Take care that you do not have a Jehu son of Nimshi within you, who makes you drive furiously (2 Kings 9:20); or a Jonah, making you ready to complain; or a David, that will make you hasty in your judgements, as he often was, despite the warmth and goodness of his natural temperament. Whoever does not seek these things out thoroughly, who is not exactly skilled in the knowledge of himself, will never be disentangled from one temptation or another all his days.

Again, as men have their own peculiar temperaments, which, unless they are attended or managed, prove to be great fomes [fungal cultures] of sin, or even an advantage to the exercise of grace. Men may have peculiar lusts or corruptions, which, either by

their natural constitution or education, and other prejudices become deeply rooted and strong in them. This, also, must be examined by the one who does not want to enter into temptation. Unless he knows it, unless his eyes are always on it, unless he observes its actions, motions, and advantages, temptation will constantly be entangling and ensnaring him.

This, then, is our **sixth** direction of this sort. Labour to know your own frame and temperament; what spirit you are of; what associates Satan has in your heart; where corruption is strong, and where grace is weak; what stronghold lust has set up in your natural constitution, and such like. How many have had all their comforts blasted, and peace disturbed, by natural passion and pettiness! How many are made useless in the world by obstinacy and discontent! How many are disturbed even by their own gentleness and simplicity! Become acquainted, then, with your own heart. Though it is deep, search it out; though it is dark, shine the light of inquiry into it; though it calls all its conditions by other names, do not believe it. Oh, that men were not utter strangers to themselves! Oh that they did not give flattering titles to their natural disorders! Oh that they do not strive to justify or excuse the evils in their hearts that are suited to their natural temperament and constitution! Oh that they had a mind rather to destroy them, and by these means keep themselves away from their influence as much as possible! It is impossible that they should, all their days, hang by their hair in the same briars without calling for help and deliverance. Uselessness and scandal in professors are branches growing constantly from this root of being unacquainted with their own frame and temperament. How few there are who will either study themselves, or bear with those who would acquaint themselves with them!

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

It could be there are some ways, some societies, and some businesses that you never in your life escaped, but allow them, more or less, through their suitability, to entice or provoke your corruption. It could be you are in a state and condition of life that wearies you day by day on account of your ambition, passion, discontent, or such like. If you have any love for your soul, it is time for you to awake and to deliver yourself as a bird from the evil snare. Peter will not come again in haste to the high priest's hall; nor will David walk again on the top of his house, when he should have been in the high places in the field of battle. But the particulars of this kind are so varied, and of such different natures with regard to people, that it is impossible to number them — “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” (Prov. 4:14-15) In this, lies no small part of that wisdom which consists in the ordering of our lifestyle properly. Seeing we have so little power over our hearts, when once they meet with suitable provocations, we must keep them apart, as a man would do fire and the combustible parts of the house where he lives.

**(3)** Be sure to lay by provision against the approach of any temptation.

This also is part of our watchfulness over our hearts. You ask, “What provision do you mean, and where can it laid up?” Our hearts, as our Saviour says, are our treasury. There we lay up whatever we have, whether good or bad; and from there we draw it

out for our use, whatever we have, be it good or bad — “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.” (Mt. 12:35) It is the heart, then, where provision can be laid up against temptation. When an enemy draws near a fort or castle to besiege and take it, often enough, if he finds it well manned and well provided for a siege, and is thus able to hold out, he withdraws his troops. If Satan, the prince of this world, comes and finds our hearts fortified against his batteries, and with enough provision to hold out, he departs. As James puts it — “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (Jas. 4:7) That provision to be laid up is what we find in the gospel for us. Gospel provision is well able to do this work; that is, it keeps the heart full of a sense of the love of God in Christ. This is the greatest preservative in the world against the power of temptation. Joseph had it; and, therefore, on the first appearance of temptation, he cried out, “How can I do this great evil, and sin against God?” And that was the end of the temptation in his case; it laid no hold on him, but departed. He was equipped with such a ready sense of the love of God that temptation could not stand before it. (Gen. 39:9) “The love of Christ constraineth us”, says the Apostle, “to live to him” (2 Cor. 5:14); and so, consequently, to withstand temptation. A man may, indeed he ought to, lay in provisions of the law also — fear of death, hell, punishment, with the terror of the Lord in them. But these are far more easily conquered than the other; indeed, they will never stand alone against a vigorous assault. They are conquered in convicted souls every day; hearts stored with them will struggle for a while, but quickly give up. But store the heart with a sense of the love of God in Christ, and his love in the shedding of his blood. Get a relish for the privileges we have by it — our adoption, justification, acceptance with God. Fill the heart with thoughts of the beauty of his death — and you will, in the ordinary way of walking with God, have great peace and security whenever temptations cause a disturbance. When men live and plod on in their profession, and are not able to say when they had any living sense of the love of God, or of the privileges they receive in the blood of Christ, I do not know what they can have to stop them falling into snares. The Apostle tells us that the peace of God shall keep our hearts. (Phil. 4:7) The Greek word *phroua* is a military word, meaning a garrison; and so the verse means — “shall keep you secure as in a garrison”. Now, a garrison has two characteristics — first, that it is exposed to the assaults of its enemies; secondly, that safety lies in it against their attempts. It is so with our souls: they are exposed to temptations, and are assaulted continually; but if there is no garrison in them, and if they are kept as in a garrison, temptation will not enter; and, consequently, we will not enter into temptation. Now, how is this done? Says he, “The peace of God will do it.” What is this “peace of God?” A sense of his love and favour in Jesus Christ. Let this abide in you, and it will “garrison” you against all assaults whatsoever. Besides, there is that, in a special way, which is also in all the rest of the directions — meaning that temptation can find nothing to use as it approaches our souls. Contend to obtain and keep a sense of the love of God in Christ, and the nature of it, militating against all the working and insinuation of temptation.

Let this be a third direction, then, in our watching against temptation. Lay in store gospel provisions that will make the soul a defended place against all its assaults.

**(4)** At the first approach of any temptation, as we are being tempted, the following directions are also suitable for carrying on the work of watching against temptation —

**[1]** Always be awake, so that you may make an early discovery of your temptation, and easily recognise it. Most men do not see their enemy until they are wounded by him. Yes, others may sometimes see others deeply engaged in battle, but stand by, utterly unconscious of their danger. They go on, as some do, sleeping, until others come and wake them up by telling them that their house is on fire! Temptation in a neutral sense is not easy to uncover — namely, pointing out such a way, or thing, or matter that suit the ends of sin. Few take note of it until it is too late, and they find themselves entangled, if not wounded. Watch, then, to understand the traps that are laid for you — to understand the advantages your enemies have against you, before they get strength and power, and before they are incorporated with your lusts, and inject poison into your soul.

**[2]** Consider the aim and tendency of the temptation, whatever it is, and of everything that is concerned in it. Those that are actively involved with your temptation are Satan and your own lusts. As for your own lust, I have shown elsewhere what it aims for in all its actions and seductions. It never rises up but with the intention of forwarding the worst of evils. Every one of its actions comes from sworn enmity against God. Hence, look upon it in its first attempts, and what pretences it makes, as your mortal enemy. “I hate it”, says the Apostle (Rom. 7:15) — that is, the working of lust in me. “I hate it; for it is the greatest enemy I have. Oh, that it were killed and destroyed! Oh, that I may be delivered from its power!” Know, then, that in the first attempt or assault in any temptation, a most cursèd, sworn enemy is at hand, which has designs on you, and that for your utter ruin. Thus it is the greatest madness in the world to throw yourself into its arms to be destroyed.

But of this subject, I have spoken largely in my book on *The Mortification of Sin in Believers, the Necessity, Nature and Means of it, with a Resolution of various Cases of Conscience Relating to it*.

Now, has Satan any friendly aim and intention towards you, who are a sharer in every temptation? To beguile you as a serpent, to devour you as a lion, is the only friendship he offers. I shall only add that the sin he tempts you with is against God’s Law, which is not actually the thing he is aiming at. No, his design is to undermine your interest in the gospel. He would make sin a bridge to get over to better ground and assault you as to your interest in 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 none.

**[3]** Meet your temptation at its entrance with thoughts of faith concerning Christ on the cross; this will make it shrink back from you. Entertain no talk, no dispute with it, if you do not want it to enter. Say, “It is Christ that died” — who died for such sins as these. This is called “taking the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of Satan.” (Eph. 6:16) Faith does it by laying hold of Christ crucified, his love there, and how he suffered for sin. Let your temptation be what it will — be it to sin, fear or doubting because of sin, or about your state and condition — it cannot stand before faith which lifts up the standard of the cross. We know what the Papists mean, who have lost the power of faith, but are used to keeping up the form of it. They sign themselves with the cross, or lift up crosses; and by virtue of their work, they hope to scare away the devil. To act with the

shield of faith of Christ crucified is really to sign ourselves with the sign of the cross; and in this way we shall we overcome the wicked one. (1 Pet. 5:9)

**[4]** Suppose that the soul has been surprised by temptation, and is entangled in it unawares; but now it is too late to resist the first entrance of it. What can the soul do to prevent it being plunged into temptation and carried away with its power?

**Firstly**, do as Paul did: beseech God again and again that it may “depart” from you. (2 Cor. 12:8) And, if you stand your ground here, you will certainly either be quickly delivered from it, or receive sufficient grace not to be utterly defeated by it. Only, as I said partly before, do not so much centre your thoughts on the things to which you are tempted (which often leads to further entanglement) but set yourself against the temptation itself. Pray against the temptation that it may depart; and when it is taken away, other things may be more calmly considered.

**Secondly**, flee to Christ in a special way, as he was tempted, and beg him to give you help in this “needful time of trouble.” In Heb. 4:16, the Apostle instructs us in this way — “In that he hath been tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” This is what it means — “When you are tempted and are ready to faint, when you look for help (you must have it or die), look to Christ as he was tempted; that is, consider that he was tempted himself — that he suffered in it — but he conquered all temptations, and that not merely on his own account, seeing for our sakes he submitted himself to be tempted; and for us he conquered temptation by himself, and just for us. Draw, yes, expect, help from him. (Heb. 4:15-16) Lie down at his feet; make your complaint known to him; beg for his assistance, and it will not be in vain.

**Thirdly**, look to Him who has promised deliverance. Consider that he is faithful, and will “not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able to bare”. Consider that he has promised you a comfortable outcome from these trials and temptations. Call all the promises to mind that he has made for assistance and deliverance, and ponder them in your heart. Trust that God has uncountable ways, that are not known to you, to give you deliverance, such as —

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

**(b)** He can, by some providence, alter the whole state of things from which your temptation arose, so taking fuel away from the fire, causing it to go out by itself; as it was with the David in the day of battle.

Or,

**(c)** He can tread down Satan under your feet, effectively muzzling him so that he does not dare suggest anything anymore to your disadvantage (yes, the God of peace can do it), and you will hear nothing from.

Or,

**(d)** He will give you such supplies of grace that you may be freed, though not from the temptation itself, but from the tendency and danger of it; as was the case with Paul; or,

**(e)** He can give you such a comfortable conviction of good success in the matter that you will receive refreshment in your trials, and be kept from the trouble of the temptation, as was the case again with Paul; or,

**(f)** He can utterly remove the temptation and make you a complete conqueror. And many, many, other ways he has to stop you from entering into temptation and be defeated by it.

**Fourthly**, consider where the temptation that has come to surprise you made its entrance, and by what means, and, with all speed, make the breach. Stop up that passage that let the waters in. Deal with your soul like a wise physician. Inquire when, how, by what means, you fell into this condition; and if thou find negligence, carelessness, lack of keeping watch over yourself, which are at the bottom of the affair, fix your soul there — confess it before the Lord, make up the breach, and then proceed to the work that lies before you.

## CHAPTER 8

### KEEPING THE WORD OF CHRIST'S PATIENCE

**The last general direction from Revelation 3:10 — Watch against temptation by constantly “keeping the word of Christ’s patience” — What that word means — How it is kept — How the keeping of it will keep us from the “hour of temptation”.**

The directions urged in the former chapters are found partly in several ways up and down the Scripture, and partly from the nature of the thing itself. There is one general direction remaining, which takes in all that has gone before, and also adds many more details concerning them. This is an approved antidote against the poison of temptation — a remedy that Christ himself marked out with a note of power and success. It is found in Rev. 3:10, in the words of our Saviour himself to the church of Philadelphia —

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

Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Heb. 13:8) As he dealt with the church of Philadelphia, so he will deal with us. If we “keep the word of his patience” he will “keep us from the hour of temptation.” This, then, being a way of rolling the whole care of this weighty affair upon him who is able to bear it, it requires our urgent attention.

Therefore, I will show: What it is to “keep the word of Christ's patience”, that we may know how to perform our duty; and, How this will be a means of our preservation, which will establish us in the faith of Christ's promise.

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

**[1]** He is patient towards his saints; he bears with them, suffers from them. He is “patient to us-ward” (2 Pet. 3:9) — that is, those that believe. The gospel is the “word of Christ's patience” particularly to believers. Christ was made more glorious in it than that of his patience. That he should bear with so many unkindnesses, so many needless breaches, so many neglects of his love, so many affronts done to his grace, so many violations of engagements, as he does, it proves 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; and he suffers in them; for in all their afflictions, he himself is afflicted.

[2] Towards the elect, not yet effectively called. In Rev. 3:20, he stands at the door of their hearts, and knocks to gain admittance. He deals with them by all means, and yet stands and waits until “his head is filled with the dew, and his locks with the drops of the night” (Song 5:2); enduring the cold and inconvenience of the night, that when his morning comes, he may enter. Oftentimes for a long season he is scorned in his Person by them, 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 poor rebellious souls.

[3] To the perishing world. Hence, the time of his kingdom in this world is called the time of his “patience”. (Rev. 1:9) He “endures the vessels of wrath with much long-suffering”. (Rom. 9:22) While the gospel is administered in the world, he is patient towards men, until the saints in heaven and earth are astonished, and cry out, “How long?” (Ps. 13:1-2; Rev. 6:10) And they mock at him as if he were an idol. (2 Pet. 3:4) He endures from them bitter things in his name, ways, worship, saints, promises, threats, all his interest of honour and love; and yet he lets it pass by, leaves them alone, does them good. Nor will he cut this way of procedure short until the gospel is preached no more. Patience accompanies the gospel.

Now, this is the word that keeps us, for we are kept from “the hour of temptation.”

(2) Three things are implied in the keeping of this word: Knowledge, Evaluation, and Obedience.

[1] *Knowledge*. He that keeps this word must know it, be acquainted with it, under a fourfold notion — **first**, as a word of grace and mercy to save him; **second**, as a word of holiness and purity to sanctify him; **third**, as a word of liberty and power to ennoble him and set him free; **fourth**, as a word of consolation to support him in every condition.

Thus —

**Firstly**, as a word of grace and mercy, able to save us — “...the power of God to salvation”, (Rom. 1:16); “the grace of God that bringeth forth salvation” (Tit. 2:11); “the word of grace that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32); and “the word that is able to save our souls” (Jas. 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 conveyer of an eternal inheritance; when the soul finds it so, and applies it to itself, it will strive to keep it.

**Secondly**, as a word of holiness and purity, able to sanctify him — “Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you”, said our Saviour. (Jn. 15:3) For that purpose was his prayer. (Jn. 17:17) He that knows not the “word of Christ's patience” as a sanctifying cleansing word in the power of it in his own soul neither knows it nor keeps it. The empty profession of our days moves not one step towards this duty; and there it is that the majority are overcome by the power of temptations. Astonishingly, men full of self, of the world, of fury, ambition, and almost all unclean lusts, admiringly speak of keeping the word of Christ! (See 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:19)

**Thirdly**, as a word of liberty and power, to ennoble him and set him free — and this not only from the guilt of sin and from wrath, in that it does it by being a word of grace and mercy; not only from the power of sin, in that it does it as a word of holiness; but also from all outward aspects 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. (Jn. 8:32; 1 Cor. 7:23) We are not freed by it from proper subjection to superiors, nor from any duty, nor any sin (1 Pet. 2:16); but in two respects it is a word of freedom, liberty, largeness of mind, and power and deliverance from bondage —

**(a)** In respect of conscience as to the worship of God — “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” (Gal. 5:1)

**(b)** In respect of ignoble, slavish respect for men or things of the world, during the course of our pilgrimage. The gospel gives us a free, large, and noble spirit, in subjection to God and no one else. There is administered in it a spirit “not of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7); a mind that is “in nothing terrified” (Phil. 1:28) — not swayed by anything at all. There is nothing more unworthy of the gospel than a mind in bondage to people or things, prostituting itself to the lusts of men or frightening threats from the world. And he that knows the “word of Christ's patience” really and in power is even now freed from uncountable and unspeakable temptations.

**Fourthly**, as a word of consolation, to support him in every condition, and be a full portion for the needs of all. It is a word attended with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It gives support, relief, refreshment, satisfaction, peace, consolation, joy, boasting, glory, in every condition whatever it is. Thus to know the “word of Christ's patience” is to know the gospel, which is the first part, and it is a great part of this condition of our preservation from the hour and power of temptation.

**[2]** *Valuation* of what is thus known belongs to the keeping of this word. It is to be kept as a treasure, as in 2 Tim. 1:14 — that excellent *depositum* which is the word of the gospel) — “keep it”, says the Apostle, “by the Holy Spirit”; and “Hold fast the faithful word.” (Tit. 1:9) It is a good treasure, a faithful word; hold it tight. It is a word that takes in the whole interest of Christ in the world. To value that as our greatest treasure is to keep the “word of Christ's patience”. Those that are supported by Christ in the time of temptation should not be regardless of his concern.

**[3]** *Obedience*. Personal obedience in the universal observance of all the commands of Christ is the keeping of his word. (Jn. 14:15) Close adherence to Christ in holiness and universal obedience, then, when the opposition that the gospel of Christ meets with in the world renders it particularly the “word of Christ's patience, and is the life and soul of the duty required.

Now, all these should be so managed with that intention of mind and spirit, in the care of heart, and diligence of the whole person, so as to fulfil the keeping of this word; which evidently includes all these considerations.

We arrive, then, at the sum of this safeguarding duty, of this condition of freedom from the power of temptation — he that has a due regard for the gospel in all its excellence,

to him it is a word of mercy, holiness, liberty, and consolation, which he values in all its concerns as his choicest and only treasure — thus making it his business, and the work of his life, to give himself up to it in universal obedience, especially when opposition and apostasy tries the patience of Christ to the utmost. Yes, he will be preserved from the hour of temptation.

This is what is comprehensive of all that has gone before, and is exclusive of all other ways for the obtaining of the end proposed. Nor let anyone think that without this, he can survive one hour from entering into temptation; wherever he fails, there, temptation enters. That this is a sure preservative appears from the following considerations —

**(1)** It has the promise of preservation, and this alone is wonderful. It is solemnly promised, in the passage mentioned, to the church of Philadelphia. When a great trial and temptation comes on the world at the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 7:3), a caution is given for the preservation of God's sealed ones, who are described as those that keep the word of Christ; for the promise is for them.

Now, in every promise, there are three things to be considered: the faithfulness of the Father who gives it; the grace of the Son, which is at the heart of it; and the power and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit, who puts the promise into execution. And all these are engaged in the preservation of believers from the hour of temptation.

**[1]** The faithfulness of God that accompanies the promise. On this account comes our deliverance — "...a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13) Though we are tempted, yet we will be kept from the hour of temptation; it will never grow too strong for us. What comes against us, we will be able to bear; and what would normally be too hard for us, we will escape. But what security do we have in this? This is in the faithfulness of God — "God is faithful, who will not suffer you..." And how is God's faithfulness seen and discharged? "...he is faithful that promised". (Heb. 10:23). His faithfulness consists in the fulfilling of his promises. "He abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself". (2 Tim. 2:13) So that being inheritors of the promises, we have the faithfulness of God to preserve us.

**[2]** There is in every promise of the covenant the grace of the Son; he is the subject-matter of all of them. He declares, "I will keep you." How? "By my grace with you", which "...is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9) So whatever assistance the grace of Christ gives a soul that has a right to this promise, it will enjoy in the hour of temptation. Paul's temptation grew very strong; it looked as if it might prevail. He besought the Lord (that is, the Lord Jesus Christ) three times for help. (2 Cor. 12:8), and received this answer from him: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (Verse 9) That is, the Lord Christ and his grace, with whom he had a unique relationship, was the One on whom the Apostle completely rested, which is evident at the close of the verse — "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The power of the grace of Christ in his preservation was evident. See also Heb. 2:18 — "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

**[3]** The effectiveness of the Holy Spirit comes with the promises. He is called “the holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13), not only because he was promised by Christ, but also because he effectively makes good the promise, and applies it to our souls. He also, then, is engaged in preserving the soul, in walking according to the rule laid down. “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed’, saith the Lord, ‘from henceforth and for ever.’” (Is. 59:21) Thus, where the promise is, there will also be this assistance: the faithfulness of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Spirit all are engaged in our preservation.

**(2)** This constant, universal keeping of Christ's “word of patience” will keep our heart and soul in such a frame where no prevailing temptation, despite any diabolical advantages, can seize sin, and totally prevail against it. So David prays in Ps. 25:21 — “Let integrity and uprightness preserve me.” This integrity and uprightness is the Old Testament keeping of the word of Christ accompanies a universal close walk 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 and take hold of him. When a man fails in his integrity, he opens a door for temptation to enter. “I create the fruit of the lips; ‘Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near’, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘There is no peace’, saith my God, ‘to the wicked.’” (Isa. 57:19-21) To keep the word of Christ is to do it completely, as I said before. This exercises grace in all the faculties of the soul, and is effective against temptation in the putting on of the whole armour of God. The understanding is full of light, and the feelings with love and holiness. Let the wind blow from whatever quarter, the soul is fenced and fortified. Let the enemy assault when or by whatever means it pleases; all things in the soul of such a one are upon the guard — “How can I do this thing, and sin against God?” is a declaration always close at hand.

Especially on a twofold account does deliverance and security come from his hand —

**[1]** By the mortification of the heart in the matter of temptation. The prevailing of any temptation rises from here, when the heart goes out to the temptation. There are lusts within, suited to the proposals of the world or Satan without. Hence, James identifies all temptations with our “own lusts” (chap. 1:14), because either they proceed from, or are made effective by, them, as I have already said. Why does terror or threats turn us aside from a true constancy in the performance of our duty? Is it not because there is unmortified, wordly fear abiding in us, that comes to a head at such a season? Why is it that the allurements of the world and compliance with men entangle us? Is it not because our feelings are entangled with the things and considerations proposed to us by sin? Now, keeping the “word of Christ's patience” in the way declared, keeps the heart mortified to these things, and so is not easily entangled by them. Says the Apostle in Gal. 2:20 — “I am crucified with Christ”. Whoever keeps close to Christ is crucified with him, and is dead to all the lusts of the flesh and the world; as you will see also and more fully in Gal. 6:14 — “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Here the match is broken off, and all entangling love dissolved. The heart is crucified to the world and all things in it.

Now, the matter of almost all temptations is taken from the world; worldly men, or the things of the world, make them up. "As to these things", says the Apostle effectively, "I am crucified to them"; and this is true of everyone that keeps the "word of Christ". He is saying in effect, "My heart is mortified to them. I have no desire for them, or feeling towards them, or delight in them", for they are crucified to me. Crowns, glory, thrones, pleasures, profit in the world, I see nothing desirable here. Their reputation comes to nothing. I put no value or estimation on them." When Achan saw the "goodly Babylonian garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold", he at first "coveted them", and then "took them". (Josh. 7:21) Temptation subtly spreads out the Babylonish garment of favour, praise, peace, the silver of pleasure or profit, with the golden contentment of the flesh before the eyes of men. If now anything remains in the heart alive and unmortified, it will soon fall prey to coveting. Whatever fear of punishment is felt, the heart will stretch out its hand to iniquity.

It is here, then, that there lies the security of such a frame of mind as has been described. It is always accompanied with a mortified heart, crucified to the things that are the matter of our temptations, without which it is utterly impossible for us not to be preserved at the moment when any temptation approaches. If desiring and loving the things proposed, insinuated, and commended in temptation, are living and active in us, we will not be able to put up any resistance, and stand.

**[2]** In this spiritual frame of mind, the heart is filled with better things and their excellence, so as to be fortified against the onslaught of any temptation. See what resolution Paul shows in Phil. 3:8 — when all is "loss and dung" to him. Who in his rightful mind would go out of his way to have his arms full of loss and dung? And how did he come to have this estimation of all the most desirable things in the world? It was from that dear estimation he had of the excellence of Christ. So, in verse 10, he continues —

"...that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

When the soul is exercised in communion with Christ, and is walking with him, it drinks the new wine, and cannot any longer desire the old things of the world, for it declares, as the governor of the feast did at the wedding in Cana in Galilee, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." (Jn. 2:10) The soul drinks deeply every day how gracious the Lord is; and therefore does not long for the sweetness of forbidden things — which indeed have no appeal to it. Whoever makes it his business to eat daily of the tree of life will have no appetite for other fruit, though the tree that bears the fruit seems to stand in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 21:1-2) This, the spouse of the Song makes the means of her preservation, even the excellence which, in daily communion, she found in Christ and his graces, far above all other desirable things. Let the soul exercise itself in communion with Christ and the good things of the gospel — pardon of sin, the fruits of holiness, a hope of glory, peace with God, joy in the Holy Spirit, dominion over sin — and he will find a mighty preservative against all temptation. As a full soul loathes the honeycomb — like a soul filled with

worldly, earthly, sensual contentment, finding no relish or savour in the sweetest spiritual things, so the one that is satisfied with the kindness of God, is like one who feasts on marrow and fatness — and every day is entertained at the banquet of wine. “And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” (Is. 25:6). Thereby comes a holy contempt of the baits and allurements that are found in prevailing temptations; and he remains safe.

**(3)** Whoever keeps the “word of Christ's patience” is always full of preserving considerations and preserving principles — moral and real advantages of preservation.

**[1]** He is full of preserving considerations that powerfully influence his soul in his diligent walk with Christ. Besides the sense of duty that is always with him, he considers —

**Firstly**, that there is the concern of Christ, whom his soul loves, in him and in his careful walk. He considers that the presence of Christ is with him, and his eye upon him. Thus he ponders his heart and ways as one greatly concerned with his behaviour during the time of temptation. This is what Christ himself does for us. (Rev. 2:19-23) He considers everything in that light — what is acceptable, and what is to be rejected. He knows that Christ is concerned with his honour, that his name should have no evil spoken of because of him; that Christ is concerned to love his soul, having this design, to —

“...present him holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight” (Col. 1:22)

— and his Spirit is grieved when he is interrupted in this work, concerned on account of his gospel, and its progress and acceptance in the world, that its beauty should be sullied, its good things reviled, its progress stopped, if such a believer should lose the battle against sin; concerned in his love for others, who are severely scandalised, and perhaps ruined, by the behaviour of the vanquished. When Hymeneus and Philetus fell, they overthrew the faith of some — “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who, concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2 Tim. 2:16-18) And such a faithful soul who is exercised to keep the “word of Christ's patience”, amid complex and perplexing, entangling temptations — public, private, personal — rises up and says —

“Shall I now be careless? Shall I be negligent? Shall I comply with the world and its ways? Oh what heartfelt thoughts he has concerning me, whose eye is upon me! Shall I despise his honour, scorn his love, trample his gospel in the mud under men's feet, and turn away others from his ways? Shall such a man as I run away and offer no resistance? No way!”

There is no one who keeps the “word of Christ's patience” but is full of this soul-constraining consideration. It dwells deeply in his heart and spirit where the love of Christ constrains him, thus keeping his heart and ways. (2 Cor. 5:14)

**Secondly**, there is the great consideration of the temptations of Christ on his behalf, and the conquests he made of all assaults, for his sake and his God. The prince of this world came to him, when everything on earth or hell that has any allure or terror in it was proposed to him, to divert him from his work of mediation which he had undertaken for us. This whole period of his life he calls the time of his “temptations”; but he resisted all, conquered all, and is the Captain of salvation to those who obey him. “And”, says the soul, “shall this temptation, these arguments, this plausible pretence, this laziness, this self-love, this sensuality, this bait of the world, turn me aside and prevail over me, to desert him who went before me in all the ways of all temptations that his holy nature is capable of, for my good?”

**Thirdly**, dismal thoughts concerning the loss of love and smiles from the face of Christ also frequently exercise such a soul. He knows what it is to enjoy the favour of Christ, to have a sense of his love, to be accepted in his approach to him, to speak with him, perhaps of things that bring puzzlement. He knows what it is to be in the dark, and at a distance from him. See the behaviour of the spouse in such a case. (Song 3:4) When she found him again, she held onto him and would not let him go; she will lose him no more.

**[2]** Whoever keeps the “word of Christ's patience” discovers preserving principles for his actions. Some of them may be mentioned here —

**Firstly**, in all things, he lives by faith, and acts in all his ways with faith. (Gal. 2:20) Now, on a twofold account, faith, when deepened, has added to it the power of preservation from temptation —

**(a)** Because it empties the soul of its own wisdom, understanding, and self-sufficiency, to act in the wisdom and fullness of Christ. This advice for preservation in trials and temptations comes from a wise man in Prov. 3:3-6 —

“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

This is the work of faith; it *is* faith; it is to live by faith. The real reason for the falling away of men in temptation is their relying on their own understanding and counsel. What is the result? See Job 18:6-10 —

“The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.”

First of all, he will be entangled, and then cast down; and all by his own counsel until he is ashamed of it, just like Ephraim — “The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Bethaven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to King Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame,

and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.” (Hos. 10:5-6) In our temptations, whenever we consult our own understandings, and listen to self-reasonings — however good they seem in tending to our preservation — the principle of living by faith becomes stifled, and we will, in the end, be brought down by our own counsels. Now, nothing can empty the heart of this self-sufficiency except faith, and living by it and not living in our own strength, and having Christ live in us by faith.

**(b)** Faith, in making the soul appear poverty-stricken, empty, helpless, and destitute, engages the heart, which, through the power of Jesus Christ, finds the assistance it needs. Concerning faith, I have written at length elsewhere in ten of my books on the Holy Spirit:

*A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit; the Reason of Faith  
Gospel Grounds and Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect*

**Thirdly**, love for the saints, ensuring that they do not suffer on our account, is a great preserving principle at a time of temptation. How powerful this was in the case of David, who declares in his earnest prayer in Ps. 69:5-6 —

“O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. 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.”

— in other words, “Oh, let me not do wrong, that those for whom I would lay down my life should be put to shame, be badly spoken of, dishonoured, reviled, and despised on my account because of my failings.” A selfish soul, whose love is turned wholly inward, will never pass the test of temptation.

Many other considerations and principles concerning those who keep the “word of Christ's patience” in the way and manner before described can be added; but I am content to stay with those I have already mentioned.

It is it easy to see why so many of us in our day are hard-pressed during the time of trial — when the hour of temptation comes upon us to bring us down, more or less, before it. Is it not because, among the great many professors that we can see, there are only a few that keep the “word of Christ's patience”? If we wilfully neglect or cast out our interest in the promise of preservation, is it any wonder that we are not preserved? There comes an hour of temptation upon the world to test those who dwell there, variously exerting its power and effectiveness. There is not any way or thing where it cannot be seen acting and putting itself forward in worldliness, sensuality, looseness of life, neglect of spiritual duties — private or public — foolish, stupid, devilish opinions, pride and ambition, envy and anger, strife and debate, revenge and selfishness, atheism and contempt for God.

These are just branches of the same root, bitter streams from the same fountain, with so many professors longing for peace, prosperity, security, apostasies, and such like. Alas! How many fall daily under the power of temptation alone! How few there are that keep their garments wrapped around them, and remain undefiled! “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this...to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (Jas. 1:27) And if any urgent, particular temptation comes along, what

instances do we have of anyone escaping? May we not describe our condition, as the Apostle that of the Corinthians, with regard to outward visitation — “...some are sick, and some are weak, and many sleep.” Some are wounded, some are defiled, and many are utterly lost. What is the spring and fountain of this sad condition? Is it not true, as I said before, that we do not keep the “word of Christ's patience” in a constant, close walk with God, and so lose the benefit of the promise given and added to it?

Shall I go on to give further instances? Of professors coming short of keeping the word of Christ? Well, it would certainly make this book very long! These four heads comprise most of them — **First**, conformity to the world from which Christ has redeemed us, in almost all things, with joy and delight in wanton compliance with the men of the world. **Second**, neglect of duties which Christ has commanded, from private meditation to public ordinances. **Third**, strife, arguments, and debate among ourselves, a critical judging and despising of one another on account of things foreign to the bond of communion between the saints. **Fourth**, self-sufficiency as to principles, and selfishness as to ends.

Now, where these things can be found, are not men worldly? Does the “word of Christ's patience” have any effect on them? Will they be preserved? Indeed, they will not!

Do you, then, want to be preserved and kept from the hour of temptation? Will you not watch against entering into it?

As deductions from what I have written in this chapter, here are some further precautions —

1. Take care that you do not rely on deceitful helps, such as —

(1) Your own counsel, understanding, and reasons. Though you argue with them ever so credibly in your own defence, they will leave you and betray you. When temptation comes to any height, they will all turn round and side with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation, whatever it may be, as they pleaded against the end results before.

(2) The most vigorous actions by prayer, fasting, and other such means, against a particular lust, corruption, or temptation with which you are being tempted. This will not be of help to you if, in the meantime, you become negligent in some things. To hear a man wrestle, cry, and contend in any part of the temptation, and immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly compliance, looseness, and neglect of other things — it is right for Christ to leave him alone in the hour of temptation.

(3) The general security of the saints' perseverance and preservation from total apostasy. Every security that God gives us is good in itself for the purpose for which it was given to us, but when it is given for one end, and used for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the assurance of preservation from total apostasy, to support the soul in respect of a particular temptation, will not in the end be an advantage, because this or that temptation will prevail. Many rely on their security until they find themselves in the depths of perplexity.

2. Apply yourselves to this great preservation of the faithful keeping the “word of Christ's patience” in the midst of all trials and temptations —

(1) In particular, consider wisely where the “word of Christ's patience” is most likely to suffer in the days in which we live, and as the seasons pass over us, and vigorously set yourselves to apply it in that particular of temptation.

### **Question**

You might ask, “How will we know where the “word of Christ's patience”, in any season, is likely to suffer?”

### **Answer**

I reply: consider the works you excel in during any season; but a neglect of his Word in reference to them is something where his Word is like to come off second best. The works of Christ in which he needs to be specially engaged in our days and seasons are these —

[1] The pouring of contempt on the great men and great things of the world, with all their pleasures in the world. The believer discovers the nakedness of all earthly things, in overturning constantly both men and things, to make way for spiritual things that cannot be shaken.

[2] The acceptance of the lot of his own inheritance in a distinguished way, making a difference between the precious and the vile, and accepting that his people cannot be reckoned among the nations.

[3] In sticking to faith and prayer, honouring them above all the strength and counsels of the sons of men.

[4] In recovering God's ordinances and institutions from the worldly administrations that they were in bondage to through the lusts of men, displaying them in the beauty and power of the Spirit.

### **Question**

Where, then, in such a season of temptation, lies the particular neglect of the “word of Christ's patience”?

### **Answer**

Is it not in setting a value on the world, and the things of the world, which he once rejected and trampled underfoot? Is it not in the slighting of the special lot of God's people, and comparing them unfavourably with the men of the world? Is it not in relying on our own counsel and understanding? Is it not in the defilement of his ordinances by allowing the outward court of the temple to be trodden on by unholy and unbelieving people?

Let us, then, be watchful; and in these things keep the “word of Christ's patience”, if we love our own preservation.

(2) In this frame of mind, let us urge the Lord Jesus Christ to keep his blessed promises with all the considerations that may be urged upon the King in his throne room, and

will work in the heart of our blessed and merciful High Priest, who will come to give suitable help in time of need.

## CHAPTER 9

### A FINAL EXHORTATION

#### General exhortation concerning the duty laid down

Having considered the duty of watchfulness so as not to enter into temptation, I suppose I need not go into the reasons for such a duty. Those who are not moved by their own sad experiences, or the importance of the duty as set out at the beginning of this discourse, must be left to the further patience of God. I conclude, then, with a general exhortation to those who are in anyway preparing for temptation by considering carefully my words.

Should you go into hospital, and see many patients lying there sick and weak, in pain, and suffering from many serious diseases and viral infections, you might inquire how they got into this condition; and they might agree to tell you that such or such a thing was the start of it. "This is how I got my wound", says one, "And this is how I contracted my disease", says another. Would these observations not make you a little more careful in where you go, and what you do? Surely, yes! Should you go to the prison cells, and there see many miserable prisoners being prepared for their approaching day of execution, and ask how they were brought to that state, they would all say this to you: "Take care to avoid our end?" So it is when you enter into temptation.

Ah, how many poor, miserable, spiritually-wounded souls can be found everywhere! Here is one wounded by a certain sin, here is another fallen into another kind of sin! Here is one that has fallen into the filthiness of the flesh, and another of the spirit. Ask them, now, how they came to be in this condition? They all answer: "Alas, we entered into temptation, and fell into cursed snares and entanglements! It is this that has brought us into our sad condition, as that you can see!" Indeed, if a man could look into the dungeons of hell and see the poor damned souls lying bound in chains of darkness, and hear their cries, what lessons he would learn? What do they say? Are they not cursing their tempters, and the temptations they entered into? So, should we be slack in these things? Solomon tells us that the simple one that follows the strange woman does not know that "her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life." (Proverbs 2:18-19) This warning is repeated in Prov. 7:25 — "Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

This is the reason for not venturing into her snares. If you knew what comes from entering into temptation, perhaps you would be more watchful and careful. Men may think that they have control over such things, but —

"Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burnt? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" (Proverbs 6:27-28)

Absolutely not!

Men do not come out of their temptations without wounds, burns, and scars. I do not know any place in the world where there is more need of exhortation than right here. Go to our different colleges, and ask about the welfare of their students. What is the answer with regard to many? "Ah, such a one was very hopeful for a while! But he fell into bad company, and is now quite lost! Another one started with the beginnings of religion, and we had high hopes of him; but he has fallen into temptation." In another case: "Such a one was useful and humble, and adorned the gospel; but now he is so sadly entangled with the world that he has grown all selfish, with no sap or savour." Another one: "He was humble and zealous; but now he has fallen away, and has gone astray and lost his first love." Oh, how full is the world of these sad examples, to say nothing of those uncountable poor creatures that have fallen into temptation by their delusions of religion! Is it not time for us to awake before it is too late, and watch against the first rising of sin, the first attempts of Satan, and all the ways in which he makes his approaches to us, be they never so harmless in themselves?

Have we not experienced our weakness, our folly, and the overwhelming power of temptation, when once it gets within us? As for this duty that I have insisted on, to "keep the word of Christ's patience", consider the following:

1. If you neglect what remains as the only means prescribed by our Saviour, you will certainly enter into temptation, and, as certainly, fall into sin. Never flatter yourselves, particularly if you are "old disciples". You say that you have a great hatred of sin; you think it is impossible for you to be seduced, and so on. "Let him (whoever he is) that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. 10:12) It is not by any grace received, it is not by any experience obtained, and it is not by any resolution made, that will preserve you from evil unless you stand on your watch. "What I say to you", says Christ, "I say to all: Watch." Perhaps you may be successful for a time in your carelessness; but wake up, admire God's tenderness and patience, or evil will lie at the door. (Genesis 4:7) Whoever you are, if you will not perform this duty, then, one way or other, in one thing or other, spiritual or fleshly, wickedness will enter, and you will be tempted and defiled. And what will be the end of it? Remember Peter!

2. Consider that you are always under the eye of Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, who warned us to watch carefully, and pray that we do not enter into temptation. What do you think are the thoughts and the heart of Christ when he sees temptation hastening on towards us, when a storm rises around us, and we remain fast asleep? Does it not grieve him to see us expose ourselves to danger after he has given us warning upon warning? When, in the days of his flesh, he saw his temptation, while it was still coming he armed himself against it. "The prince of this world cometh", says he, "but hath no part in me." (Jn. 14:30) Why are we so negligent under his eye? Does he not come to you as he did to Peter when he was asleep in the garden, with the same reproof — "What! Could you not watch with me one hour?" (Mt. 26:40) Would it not be a great grief to you to be so reproved, or to hear him thundering from heaven against your neglect, as he did against the church of Sardis?

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. (Rev. 3:2)

**3.** Consider that if you neglect this duty, and so fall into temptation (which you will surely do), that when you are entangled, God may bring some heavy affliction or judgement upon you. By reason of your entanglement, you will not see these things in any other light but as evidence of his anger and hatred. And then, what will you do with your temptation and affliction together? All your bones will be broken, and your peace and strength will disappear in a moment.

This caution might seem just words at present; but if ever temptation becomes your condition, you will find it to be full of sadness and bitterness. Oh, then, let us strive to keep our souls unentangled, avoiding all appearance of evil and all ways leading to it, especially in business, society, and employment!