

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 257

## TEMPTATION

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*And lead us not into  
temptation...*

Matthew 6:13

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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## TEMPTATION

# 257

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# WHAT IS TEMPTATION?

John Owen (1616-1683)

*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.—Matthew 26:41*

**T**HESE words of our Savior are repeated with very little alteration by the three Evangelists. Matthew and Mark record them as above. Luke says, “Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (Luk 22:46); the whole caution seems to have been, “Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.”

Solomon tells us of some that lie down on the top of a mast or in the midst of the sea (Pro 23:34). This is an accurate picture of men who are overtaken by a false security at the brink of destruction. If any have ever done so, the disciples in the garden certainly did! Their Master was just a little distance from them offering “up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears” (Heb 5:7) while they slept. He was beginning to taste the cup that was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins. The Jews were nearby and armed for His and their destruction!

Jesus had earlier informed them that this was the night of His coming betrayal and death. The disciples saw that Jesus was “sorrowful and very heavy” (Mat 26:37). He had even told them plainly that His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (v. 38), and He entreated them to wait and watch with Him. He was dying and dying for them! In this condition, as He left them for a little while, like men who had forsaken all their love toward Him or care for themselves, they fell fast asleep! Even the best of saints, being left to themselves, will quickly appear to be less than men—to be nothing.

All our own strength is weakness, and all our own wisdom is folly. Peter was one of those that fell asleep—and that soon after he had expressed such self-confidence that he would not forsake Him even if all others did! Our Savior said to Peter: “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Mat 26:40). It seems to be implied in His words that if Peter could not watch just one hour, he was not likely to fulfil his boast never to forsake Him! As if to say, “Could you really hold out, if you cannot even watch with Me for an hour? Is this how you are going to die for Me, being dead in security while I am dying for you?”

It is an amazing thing to consider that Peter should make so high a

promise, and then immediately be so careless and remiss<sup>1</sup> in the pursuit of it.

We find, however, in our own hearts the same root of treachery abiding and working. It bears fruit in us every day, the most noble promises of obedience quickly ending in deplorable negligence (Rom 7:18).

The Lord Jesus sought to stir them up to see their condition, their weakness, their danger. Ruin lay right at the door! They needed to rise, watch, and pray.

In this study, we will not be considering the specific testing that Christ had in mind that was about to fall upon these disciples in the scandal and events of the cross. My purpose is to consider in these words a general principle that applies to all of Christ's disciples throughout all generations. There are three things in Christ's words:

1. The *evil* cautioned against—*temptation*.
2. The *means* by which it prevails—by our *entering into it*.
3. The *way* of preventing it—*watch* and *pray*.

The word for temptation is used in two ways in the New Testament: (1) In general, *to test* or *to prove*. Thus, God is said to test; and we are commanded as our duty to test, try, or search ourselves to know what is in us and to pray that God would also do so. Affliction tests us, and James exhorts that we count it all joy when we meet trials (Jam 1:2). In Genesis 22:1, we see God testing Abraham. (2) Secondly, testing in the negative sense is to seek to lead the soul into evil. We generally translate it *temptation*. In this sense, God tempts no one, and Christ exhorts us to pray that we do not enter temptation.

Thus, temptation is like a knife. It may be useful to cut the meat or to cut the throat of a man. It may be a man's food or his poison, his exercise or his destruction.

It is not my intention to go deeply into the general nature of testing as seen in the trials mentioned above, but to consider the danger of temptation to sin and the means of preventing that danger...

God in His providence allows occasions of temptation to be administered to men, such as the case of false prophets mentioned in Deuteronomy 13:3. They are not, however, temptations from God. They do not come from Him, and therefore they are different from our previous considerations. This brings us to the main purpose of our study: the consideration of these temptations that do not come from God and

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<sup>1</sup> **remiss** – careless of duty; negligent.

which have as their active purpose to lead us into sin. In this case, temptation may proceed either from Satan alone, from the world, from other men in the world, or from ourselves. Temptation may come from each of these individually, or they may join forces in various combinations.

1. *Satan tempts sometimes by himself* without taking advantage from the world, the things and persons in it, or ourselves. He seeks to inject his evil and blasphemous thoughts about God into the hearts of the saints. It is his own work. He does not use the world or our own hearts in this temptation. No one would conceive of God and think evil of Him. Satan is alone in this sin and shall be so in the punishment. These fiery darts are prepared in the forge of his own malice and shall, with all their venom and poison, be returned into his own heart forever.

2. *Sometimes Satan makes use of the world* and joins forces against us without any help from within our hearts. This is the way he tempted our Savior, by showing Him “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them” (Mat 4:8). The variety of assistants that Satan will use from the world to tempt us comprises all sorts and an innumerable number of instruments and weapons.

3. At other times, *Satan seeks assistance from ourselves*. We are not like Christ when Satan came to tempt Him. Jesus declared that Satan had nothing in Him (Joh 14:30). It is otherwise with us. Satan has in us an agreeable party within our very own breasts for most of his ends (Jam 1:14-15). This is how he tempted Judas. He appealed to the lust of Judas himself as he planted in his heart the idea of betraying Christ; he entered him (Luk 22:3). Satan set the things of the world at work in Judas in providing thirty pieces of silver. He used the priests and the Pharisees as instruments and appealed to Judas’ own corruption; for he was covetous, “a thief, and had the bag” (Joh 12:6).

I might show how the world and our own corruptions act independently by themselves and sometimes in conjunction<sup>2</sup> with Satan and one another in this business of temptation. But the truth is that the ways and means of temptations, the kinds, degrees, and efficacy<sup>3</sup> of them, and the causes of them, are so inexpressibly large and various, and the circumstances of them, from providence, nature, conditions spiritual and natural, with particular cases arising, are so innumerable that it is impossible to organize them in a systematic way. To attempt it would be an endless task. I shall be satisfied to give a description of

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<sup>2</sup> **conjunction** – joining; connection.

<sup>3</sup> **efficacy** – power to produce a desired effect.

the general nature of that of which we must beware. This will suffice to accomplish the goal I have set myself.

A temptation, then, in general, is *anything that for any reason exerts a force or influence to seduce and draw the mind and heart of man from the obedience that God requires of him to any kind of sin.*

In particular, it is a temptation if it causes a man to sin, gives him opportunity to do so, or causes him to neglect his duty. Temptation may suggest evil to the heart or draw out the evil that is already there. It is also a temptation to a man if something is by any means able to distract him from his communion with God or the consistent universal obedience that is required of him.

To clarify, I am considering temptation not just as the active force of seduction to sin, but also the thing itself by which we are tempted. Whatever it is, within us or without us, that hinders us from duty or provides an occasion for sin should be considered temptation. It could be business, employment, the course of one's life, company, affections, nature, corrupt purposes, relations, delights, honor, reputation, esteem, position, abilities, gifts, etc., that provide the opportunity to sin or neglect duty. These are true temptations just as much as the most violent solicitations<sup>4</sup> of Satan or allurements<sup>5</sup> of the world. Whoever does not realize this is on the brink of ruin.

From *Temptation Resisted & Repulsed*, abridgement Richard Rushing (Edinburgh; Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), 1-4, 8-11; this book is available in print from [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org); used by permission.

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**John Owen (1616-1683):** English Congregational pastor, author, and theologian; born in Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, England, UK.



It is not at all surprising that God's great enemy, the devil, in his anxiety to ruin God's perfect creation, should first and foremost have attacked the mind. In the temptation of Eve, we read that the devil reasoned with her; he presented a case to her: "Hath God said?" (Gen 3:1). He was appealing to her reason, to her understanding; and in her folly, she listened. "The serpent beguiled Eve," as the apostle Paul puts it (2Co 11:3), and so she fell. And from there on human understanding has been warped, it has been blinded and blunted, it has been rendered incapable of operating as God had originally intended.—*David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

It is our duty, not only to avoid those things that are themselves sinful, but also, as far as may be, those things that lead and expose to sin.

—*Jonathan Edwards*

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<sup>4</sup> **solicitations** – persuasions to do something wrong.

<sup>5</sup> **allurements** – acts of persuading someone to do something wrong.

# THE FIRST TEMPTATION

Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

**W**E have here an account of the temptation with which Satan assaulted our first parents to draw them into sin, and which proved fatal to them. Here observe,

**The tempter, and that was the devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent.** 1. It is certain [that] it was the devil who deceived Eve. The “old serpent” is the devil and Satan (Rev 12:9), a malignant<sup>1</sup> spirit. By *creation* [he was] an angel of light and an immediate attendant upon God’s throne, but by *sin* [he became] an apostate<sup>2</sup> from his first state and a rebel against God’s crown and dignity. Multitudes of the angels fell; but [the one] that attacked our first parents was surely the prince of the devils—the ringleader in the rebellion. No sooner was he a sinner than he was a Satan, no sooner a traitor than a tempter, as one enraged against God and His glory and envious of man and his happiness. He knew he could not destroy man but by debauching<sup>3</sup> him. Balaam could not curse Israel, but he could tempt Israel (Rev 2:14). The game, therefore, that Satan had to play was to draw our first parents to sin, to separate them and their God. Thus, the devil was from the beginning a murderer and the great mischief-maker. The whole race of mankind had here, as it were, but one neck, and at that Satan struck. That wicked one is the adversary and enemy.

2. It was the devil in the likeness of a serpent. Whether it was only the visible shape and appearance of a serpent (as some think those were of which we read in Exodus 7:12), or whether it was a real living serpent, actuated<sup>4</sup> and possessed by the devil, is not certain; by God’s permission, it might be either. The devil chose to act his part in a serpent (1) because it is a *specious*<sup>5</sup> creature...Perhaps it was a flying serpent, which seemed to come from on high as a messenger from the upper world, one of the seraphim;<sup>6</sup> for the fiery serpents were flying (Isa 14:29). Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in gay, fine colors that are but skin-deep and seems to come from above; for Satan can

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<sup>1</sup> **malignant** – extremely wicked.

<sup>2</sup> **apostate** – one who has fallen away or abandoned the faith.

<sup>3</sup> **debauching** – corrupting by seduction.

<sup>4</sup> **actuated** – motivated; caused to act in a particular way.

<sup>5</sup> **specious** – deceptively attractive.

<sup>6</sup> **seraphim** – angelic beings with six wings, hands and feet, and presumably a human voice.



seem “an angel of light” (2Co 11:14). And (2) because it is a *subtle* creature; this is here taken notice of. Many instances are given of the subtlety of the serpent, both to do mischief and to secure himself in it when it is done. We are directed to “be...wise as serpents” (Mat 10:16). But this serpent, as actuated by the devil, was no doubt more subtle than any other; for the devil, though he has lost the sanctity,<sup>7</sup> retains the sagacity<sup>8</sup> of an angel and is wise to do evil. He knew of more advantage by making use of the serpent than we are aware of. Observe: There is nothing by which the devil serves himself and his own interest more than by unsanctified subtlety. What Eve thought of this serpent speaking to her, we are not likely to tell. I believe she herself did not know what to think of it. At first, perhaps, she supposed it might be a good angel, and yet, afterwards, she might suspect something amiss. It is remarkable that many of the Gentile idolaters did worship the devil in the shape and form of a serpent, thereby avowing their adherence to that apostate spirit and wearing his colors.

**The person tempted was the woman, now alone, and at a distance from her husband but near the forbidden tree.** It was the devil’s subtlety (1) to assault the weaker vessel with his temptations...Some think Eve received the command, not immediately from God, but at second hand by her husband; therefore, [she] might the more easily be persuaded to discredit it. (2) It was his policy to enter discourse with her when she was alone. Had she kept close to the side out of which she was lately taken, she would not have been so much exposed. There are many temptations to which solitude gives great advantage; but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety. (3) He took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree and probably gazing upon the fruit of it to satisfy her curiosity. Those that would not eat the forbidden fruit must not come near the forbidden tree. “Avoid it, pass not by it” (Pro 4:15). (4) Satan tempted Eve that by her he might tempt Adam. [In the same way,] he tempted Job by his wife and Christ by Peter. It is his policy to send temptations by unsuspected hands and theirs that have most interest in us and influence upon us.

**The temptation itself and the artificial management of it:** We are often told in Scripture of our danger by the temptations of Satan—“his devices” (2Co 2:11), his “depths” (Rev 2:24), his “wiles” (Eph 6:11). The greatest instances we have of them are in his tempting of the two Adams, here and Matthew 4:1-11. In this, he prevailed; but in that he

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<sup>7</sup> **sanctity** – quality of being sacred or holy.

<sup>8</sup> **sagacity** – acuteness of mental discernment.

was baffled. What he spoke to them, of whom he had no hold by any corruption in them, he speaks in us by our own deceitful hearts and their carnal reasonings. This makes his assaults on us less detectable but not less dangerous. That which the devil aimed at was to persuade Eve to eat forbidden fruit; and, to do this, he took the same method that he does still. He questioned whether it was a sin or no (Gen 3:1). He denied that there was any danger in it (3:4). He suggested much advantage by it (3:5). And these are his common topics.

**1. He questioned whether it was a sin or no to eat of this tree and whether the fruit of it really was forbidden.** Observe, (1) He said to the woman, “Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat?” The first word intimated something said before, introducing this and with which it is connected, perhaps some discourse Eve had with herself, which Satan took hold of and grafted this question upon. In the chain of thoughts, one thing strangely brings in another and perhaps something bad at last. Observe here: [1] He does not reveal his design at first, but puts a question that seemed innocent: “I hear a piece of news: pray is it true? Has God forbidden you to eat of this tree?” Thus, he would begin a discourse and draw her into a parley.<sup>9</sup> Those that would be safe have need to be suspicious and shy of talking with the tempter. [2] He quotes the command fallaciously, as if it were a prohibition, not only of that tree but of all. God had said, “Of every tree you may eat, except one.” He, by aggravating the exception, endeavors to invalidate the concession: “Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?” (Gen 3:1). The divine law cannot be reproached unless it be first misrepresented. [3] He seems to speak it tauntingly, upbraiding<sup>10</sup> the woman with her shyness of meddling with that tree; [it is] as if he had said, “You are so nice<sup>11</sup> and cautious, and so very precise, because God has said, ‘You shall not eat.’” As the devil is a liar, so he is a scoffer from the beginning: and the scoffers of the last days are his children. [4] That which he aimed at in the first onset was to take off her sense of the obligation of the command. “Surely you are mistaken, it cannot be that God should tie you out from this tree; He would not do so unreasonable a thing.” See here that it is the subtlety of Satan to blemish the reputation of the divine law as uncertain or unreasonable to draw people to sin. It is therefore our wisdom to keep up a firm belief *of* and a high respect *for* the command of God. “Has God said, ‘You shall not lie, nor take His name in vain, nor be drunk, etc.’?” “Yes, I am sure He has; and it is

<sup>9</sup> **parley** – discussion between enemies.

<sup>10</sup> **tauntingly, upbraiding** – persuasively, scolding.

<sup>11</sup> **nice** – strict in conduct.

well said, and by His grace I will abide by it, whatever the tempter suggests to the contrary.”

(2) In answer to this question, the woman gives him a plain and full account of the law they were under (Gen 3:2-3). Here observe, [1] It was her weakness to enter discourse with the serpent. She might have perceived by his question that he had no good design and should therefore have started back with, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me” (Mat 16:23). But her curiosity, and perhaps her surprise to hear a serpent speak, led her into further talk with him. Note, it is a dangerous thing to treat with<sup>12</sup> a temptation, which ought at first to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence. The garrison that sounds a parley is not far from being surrendered. Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm’s way (see Pro 14:7; 19:27). [2] It was her wisdom to take notice of the liberty God had granted them in answer to the serpent’s sly suggestion, as if God has put them into Paradise only to tantalize them with the sight of fair but forbidden fruits. “Yea,” says she, “we may eat of the fruit of the trees, thanks to our Maker; we have plenty and variety enough allowed us.” Note, to prevent our being uneasy at the restraints of religion, it is good often to take a view of the liberties and comforts of it. [3] It was an instance of her resolution that she adhered to the command and faithfully repeated it as of unquestionable certainty: “God hath said, I am confident He hath said it, You shall not eat of the fruit of this tree”; and that which she adds, “Neither shall ye touch it” (3:3), seems to have been with a good intention... “We must not eat, therefore we will not touch. It is forbidden in the highest degree, and the authority of the prohibition is sacred to us.” [4] She seems a little to waver about the threatening and is not so particular and faithful in the repetition of that as of the precept. God has said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17); all she makes of that is, “Lest ye die” (3:3). Note, wavering faith and wavering resolutions give great advantage to the tempter.

**2. He denies that there was any danger in it, insisting that, though it might be the transgressing of a precept, yet it would not be the incurring of a penalty: “Ye shall not surely die” (3:4).** “You shall not dying die,” so the word is, in direct contradiction to what God had said. Either (1) “It is not certain that you shall die,” so some [think]. “It is not so sure as you are made to believe it is.” Thus, Satan endeavors to shake that which he cannot overthrow and invalidates the force of divine threatening by questioning the certainty of them; and, when once it is supposed possible

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<sup>12</sup> **treat with** – negotiate with.

that there may be falsehood or fallacy in any word of God, a door is then opened to downright infidelity.<sup>13</sup> Satan teaches men first to doubt and then to deny; he makes them skeptics first, and so by degrees makes them atheists. Or (2) “It is certain you shall not die,” so others [think]. He avers his contradiction with the same phrase of assurance that God had used in ratifying the threatening. He began to call the precept in question (3:1), but, finding that the woman adhered to that, he quitted that battery and made his second onset upon the threatening, where he perceived her to waver; for he is quick to spy all advantages and to attack the wall where it is weakest: “You shall not surely die.” This was a lie—a downright lie! For, [1] it was contrary to the Word of God, which we are sure is true (*see* 1Jo 2:21, 27). It was such a lie as gave the lie to God Himself. [2] It was contrary to his own knowledge. When he told them there was no danger in disobedience and rebellion, he said that which he knew by woeful experience to be false. He had broken the law of his creation and had found to his cost that he could not prosper in it. Yet he tells our first parents they shall not die. He concealed his own misery that he might draw them into the like: thus, he still deceives sinners into their own ruin. He tells them that, though they sin, they shall not die, and gains credit rather than God Who tells them, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Note, hope of impunity is a great support to all iniquity and impenitency in it. “I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart” (Deu 29:19).

**3. He promises them advantage by it (3:5).** Here he follows his blow, and it was a blow at the root, a fatal blow to the tree we are branches of. He not only would undertake that they should be no losers by it, thus binding himself to save them from harm; but (if they would be such fools as to venture upon the security of one that had himself become a bankrupt) he undertakes they shall be gainers by it, unspeakable gainers. He could not have persuaded them to run the hazard of ruining themselves if he had not suggested to them a great probability of bettering themselves.

(1) He subtly suggests to them the great improvements they would make by eating of this fruit. And he suits the temptation to the pure state they were now in, proposing to them, not any carnal pleasures or gratifications, but intellectual delights and satisfactions. These were the baits with which he covered his hook. [1] “Your eyes shall be opened” (Gen 3:5)—you shall have much more of the power and pleasure of contemplation than now you have; you shall fetch a larger compass in your

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<sup>13</sup> **infidelity** – unbelief in God and the truth of God’s Word.

intellectual views and see further into things than now you do. He speaks as if now they were but dim-sighted and short-sighted in comparison of what they would be then. [2] “Ye shall be as gods” (3:5): as Elohim, mighty gods; not only omniscient, but omnipotent too; or “You shall be as God Himself, equal to Him, rivals with Him; you shall be sovereigns and no longer subjects, self-sufficient and no longer dependent.” A most absurd suggestion! As if it were possible for creatures of yesterday to be like their Creator that was from eternity. [3] “You shall know good and evil, that is, everything that is desirable to be known.” To support this part of the temptation, he abuses the name given to this tree: it was intended to teach the practical knowledge of good and evil, that is, of duty and disobedience; and it would prove the experimental knowledge of good and evil, that is, of happiness and misery. In these senses, the name of the tree was a warning to them not to eat of it; but he perverts the sense of it, and wrests it to their destruction, as if this tree would give them a speculative notional knowledge of the natures, kinds, and originals of good and evil. And [4] all this presently: “In the day you eat thereof you will find a sudden and immediate change for the better.” Now, in all these sly suggestions, he aims to beget in them, first, discontent with their present state, as if it were not so good as it might be and should be. Note, no condition will of itself bring contentment unless the mind be brought to it. Adam was not easy,<sup>14</sup> no, not in paradise nor the angels in their first state (Jude 1:6). Secondly, ambition of preferment, as if they were fit to be gods. Satan had ruined himself by desiring to “be like the most High” (Isa 14:14), and therefore seeks to infect our first parents with the same desire that he might ruin them too... Thus still the devil draws people into his interest by suggesting to them hard thoughts of God, false hopes of benefit, and advantage by sin. Let us therefore, in opposition to him, always think well of God as the best good and think ill of sin as the worst of evils. Thus, let us “resist the devil, and he will flee from [us]” (Jam 4:7).

From “Genesis 3:1-5” in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 10-11, in the public domain.

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**Matthew Henry (1662-1714):** Presbyterian preacher, author, and commentator; born at Broad Oak, on the borders of Flintshire and Shropshire, England, UK.



It is the tendency of all sin, eternally to undo the soul.—*Jonathan Edwards*

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<sup>14</sup> easy – content.

# A TEMPTED SAVIOR

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil.—Luke 4:1-2*

**T**HE first event recorded in our Lord's history, after His baptism, is His temptation by the devil. From a season of honor and glory He passed immediately to a season of conflict and suffering. First came the testimony of God the Father: "Thou art my beloved Son." Then came the sneering suggestion of Satan: "If thou be the Son of God..." The portion of Christ will often prove [to be] the portion of Christians. From great privilege to great trial there will often be but a step.

Let us first mark in this passage, *the power and unwearied malice of the devil*. That old serpent who tempted Adam to sin in Paradise was not afraid to assault the second Adam, the Son of God. Whether he understood that Jesus was "God...manifest in the flesh" (1Ti 3:16) may perhaps be doubted. But that he saw in Jesus one who had come into the world to overthrow his kingdom is clear and plain. He had seen what happened at our Lord's baptism. He had heard the marvelous words from heaven. He felt that the great Friend of man was come and that his own dominion was in peril. The Redeemer had come. The prison door was about to be thrown open. The lawful captives were about to be set free. All this, we need not doubt, Satan saw and resolved to fight for his own. The prince of this world would not give way to the Prince of peace without a mighty struggle. He had overcome the first Adam in the Garden of Eden; why should he not overcome the second Adam in the wilderness? He had spoiled man once of Paradise; why should he not spoil him of the kingdom of God?

Let it never surprise us if we are tempted by the devil. Let us rather expect it as a matter of course if we are living members of Christ. The Master's lot will be the lot of His disciples. That mighty spirit who did not fear to attack Jesus Himself, is still going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That murderer and liar, who vexed Job and overthrew David and Peter, still lives and is not yet bound. If he cannot rob us of heaven, he will at any rate make our journey thither painful. If he cannot destroy our souls, he will at least bruise our heels (Gen 3:15). Let us beware of despising him or thinking lightly of his

power. Let us rather put on the whole armor of God and cry to the strong for strength. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam 4:7).

**Let us mark, secondly, *our Lord Jesus Christ’s ability to sympathize with those that are tempted.*** This is a truth that stands out prominently in this passage. Jesus has been really and literally tempted Himself. It was meet that He Who came to “destroy the works of the devil” should begin His own work by a special conflict with Satan. It was meet that the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls should be fitted for His earthly ministry by strong temptation, as well as by the Word of God and prayer. But above all, it was meet that the great High Priest and advocate of sinners should be one who has had personal experience of conflict and has known what it is to be in the fire. And this was the case with Jesus. It is written that “He...suffered being tempted” (Heb 2:18). How much He suffered, we cannot tell. But that His pure and spotless nature did suffer intensely, we may be sure.

Let all true Christians take comfort in the thought that they have a Friend in heaven Who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities (Heb 4:15). When they pour out their hearts before the throne of grace and groan under the burden that daily harasses them, there is One making intercession Who knows their sorrows. Let us take courage. The Lord Jesus is not an austere man. He knows what we mean when we complain of temptation and is both able and willing to give us help.

**Let us mark, thirdly, *the exceeding subtlety of our great spiritual enemy, the devil.*** Three times we see him assaulting our Lord and trying to draw Him into sin. Each assault showed the hand of a master in the art of temptation. Each assault was the work of one acquainted by long experience with every weak point in human nature. Each deserves an attentive study.

**Satan’s first device was to persuade our Lord to distrust His Father’s providential care.** He comes to Him, when weak and exhausted with forty days’ hunger, and suggests to Him to work a miracle to gratify a carnal appetite. Why should He wait any longer? Why should the Son of God sit still and starve? Why not “command this stone that it be made bread” (Luk 4:3)?

**Satan’s second device was to persuade our Lord to grasp at worldly power by unlawful means.** He takes Him to the top of a mountain and shows Him “all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Luk 4:5). All these he promises to give Him if He will but “fall down and worship him” (Luk 4:7). The concession was small. The promise was large. Why not by a little momentary act obtain an enormous gain?

**Satan's last device was to persuade our Lord to an act of presumption.** He takes Him to a pinnacle of the temple and suggests to Him to cast Himself down (Luk 4:9). By so doing He would give public proof that He was one sent by God. In so doing, He might even depend on being kept from harm. Was there not a text of Scripture which specially applied to the Son of God in such a position? Was it not written that angels should bear Him up (Luk 4:10-11)?

On each of these three temptations, it would be easy to write much. Let it be sufficient to remind ourselves that we see in them the three favorite weapons of the devil. Unbelief, worldliness, and presumption are three grand engines that he is ever working against the soul of man, and by which he is ever enticing him to do what God forbids and to run into sin. Let us remember this and be on our guard. The acts that Satan suggests to us to do are often in appearance trifling and unimportant. But the principle involved in each of these little acts, we may be sure, is nothing short of rebellion against God. Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices.

**Let us mark lastly, *the manner in which our Lord resisted Satan's temptations.*** Three times we see Him foiling and baffling the great enemy who assaulted Him. He does not yield a hair's breadth to him. He does not give him a moment's advantage. Three times we see Him using the same weapon in reply to Satan's temptations: "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17). He Who was "full of the Holy Ghost" (Luk 4:1) was yet not ashamed to make the Holy Scripture His weapon of defense and His rule of action.

Let us learn from this single fact if we learn nothing else from this wondrous history: the high authority of the Bible and the immense value of a knowledge of its contents. Let us read it, search into it, pray over it, diligently, perseveringly, unweariedly. Let us strive to be so thoroughly acquainted with its pages that its text may abide in our memories and stand ready at our right hand in the day of need. Let us be able to appeal from every perversion and false interpretation of its meaning to those thousand plain passages, which are written as it were with a sunbeam. The Bible is indeed a sword, but we must take heed that we know it well if we would use it with effect.

From *Expository Thoughts on Luke*, Vol. 1, in the public domain.

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**J. C. Ryle (1816-1900):** Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.





# HOW THE DEVIL TEMPTS

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

*And lead us not into temptation.—Matthew 6:13*

**T**HERE are temptations from Satan...who is called the tempter (Mat 4:3). Now, the devil's temptations *are* evil and *for* evil. How doth the devil tempt?

[1] **By propounding<sup>1</sup> objects:** He “shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time” (Luk 4:5). He had nothing to work upon within, therefore he propounds outward objects. So, the devil still tempts us with a curious eye to take in the object that it may be a bait and snare to the soul. Achan takes notice of it himself: “When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment...and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them” (Jos 7:21). I *saw*, I *coveted*, and I *took*: the eye awakens desire, and desire that inclines to practice. So, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright” (Pro 23:31). Unless we shut the windows of the soul, this pestilent plague gets in by the senses! The heart is corrupted by objects that we take in by the senses, as it corrupted Eve. [It] dealt with her first by the sense: the forbidden fruit was full in her way, then the devil sets upon her.

[2] **He tempts by the persuasion of instruments, who are the devil's spokesmen.** Thus was Joseph tempted by the enticements and blandishments<sup>2</sup> of his mistress (Gen 39:7). And many times, the devil sets nearest friends and relations to weaken their zeal and withdraw their hearts from God: Saith Christ to Peter, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Mat 16:23). It was Peter [who] said it; yet Christ rebuked Satan, for the devil had a hand in it. He makes one of Christ's disciples his instrument.

[3] **He doth it by internal suggestion.** “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (1Ch 21:1), that is, by internal suggestion. The devil “put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him” (Joh 13:2). He haunts and pesters the hearts of men by vain thoughts and carnal imaginations. So “the god of this world” is said to blind their minds (2Co 4:4).

[4] **By stirring up the [inclinations] of our body.** When he seeth men

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<sup>1</sup> **propounding** – putting forward for the consideration of others.

<sup>2</sup> **enticements and blandishments** – seductions and flattering statements used to persuade.

inclined to wrath and angry motions or lust, the devil joins and makes the tempest the more violent. He knows what use to make of an angry look, a wanton<sup>3</sup> glance. He knows how to tempt by awakening the inclinations of our own body against us.

Take some observations here: (1) *In all sins Satan joineth*. He is not idle but makes use of every inclination of ours. As he sees the tree leaning, he joins issue.<sup>4</sup> But some sins are purely of his suggestion—horrid sins and such as are so very evil that they could come from no other but from the devil. Such sins could not be acted by man in an ordinary course of sinning. [For example,] Judas’ treason: though he were devil enough to plot such a thing, yet it is said [that] Satan put it into his heart (Joh 13:2). And such singular diabolical suggestions may be darted into the bosom of believers sometimes—thoughts of atheism, blasphemy, unnatural sins, self-murder, suspicion of the gospel. These things the devil throws in. Therefore, believers are warned to quench these fiery darts that the devil hurls into the souls of men (Eph 6:16).

(2) *Every man is haunted with special temptations*—temper, sex, age, custom, calling, company, course of affairs. These things are often spoken of in Scripture. From temper: God makes use of temper. For though He plants all grace in the hearts of the regenerate, yet there are certain graces wherein they are eminent, such as Timothy for temperance and Moses for meekness. Thus, Paul speaks of the law in his members (Rom 7:23). The devil may find forces from the temper of the body to destroy the soul. So also, from sex:<sup>5</sup> as he “beguiled Eve” (2Co 11:3). And from age: we read of “youthful lusts” (2Ti 2:22). And how strong the devil is about young ones: “I have written unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one” (1Jo 2:13). They are most assaulted with pride, with youthful lusts suitable to their age. So from custom and education: “I kept myself from mine iniquity” (Psa 18:23). Every man hath *his* iniquity; that is, such as his education and custom hath wrought upon him, which makes the sin prevail over other sins. A child of God hath a predominant sin; not over grace, for that is inconsistent with sincerity, but some master sin that prevails over the rest. According as the channel is cut, so corrupt nature runs; but some in this channel and some in that. Every man hath his special sin, and accordingly the devil plies<sup>6</sup> him. Then our calling is a special temptation: the apostle speaks that a bishop should not be “a novice, lest being

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<sup>3</sup> wanton – lustful.

<sup>4</sup> joins issue – agrees with the inclination.

<sup>5</sup> sex – either of the two categories, male and female, into which humans are divided.

<sup>6</sup> plies – attacks repeatedly.

lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1Ti 3:6)—pride, ostentation<sup>7</sup> of gifts, and vainglory<sup>8</sup> in such public service. Many other sins follow every calling; therefore, if you would be skilled in Satan’s enterprises, you must mind temper, age, calling. [It is so with] company: as a man’s company is, his soul is insensibly tainted. As a man that walks in the sun is tanned before he is aware, so are the souls of men sullied<sup>9</sup> and defiled by carnal company before they be aware. A man would think [that] of all sins, passion is so uncomely that it should not tempt another man. Yet it is said, “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Pro 22:24-25). For the more accustomed to them, the less odious<sup>10</sup> they seem; so, little by little, our spirits are shaped and fitted for such a sin. There are certain sins that are more special temptations. Look, as every disease hath a diet that suits with it, so [is it with] all sins in the soul. Satan knows what baits we will catch at...

(3) *The sin of the devil tempting must be distinguished from our sin in consenting.* If the devil tempts, and we consent not, it is his sin. The envious man may throw weeds over the garden wall; but if we do not suffer them to root there, it is not the gardener’s fault but the fault of the envious man. Likewise, the devil may fling in temptations, fiery darts, atheistic or blasphemous thoughts; yet if we throw them out with indignation and give no harbor and entertainment to them there, it is our misery, but the devil’s sin. Therefore, if our hearts abhor them at the very first rising, though they be man’s cross, they will be put upon Satan’s account.

(4) *Satan, if he cannot prevail by the first temptation to draw us to sin, he will seek to prevail by a second or subsequent temptation to draw us to trouble and discomfort.* If he cannot weaken grace, he may molest and disturb our comfort by flinging in a blasphemous thought, which is abhorred by a Christian. If he cannot draw you to deny God, then he will seek to cloud things, so that you may suspect your own estate;<sup>11</sup> thus our way is made wearisome to us. Look, as a candle that sticks to a stone wall cannot burn the wall, yet it smudgeth and defileth it; so, the children of God, when the devil seeks to make their temptations stick, though he doth not burn their hearts with these fiery darts of blasphemy and

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<sup>7</sup> **ostentation** – excessive display; showing off.

<sup>8</sup> **vainglory** – excessively exalting oneself.

<sup>9</sup> **sullied** – soiled; polluted.

<sup>10</sup> **odious** – offensive.

<sup>11</sup> **estate** – spiritual condition.

atheism—they catch not there—yet they weaken our comfort. Then his second temptation is to bring us to doubt God’s love, to doubt our own faith, and to draw us to impatience and murmuring at God’s hand. Therefore, it should be our care not only to withstand the devil’s first temptation but also his second.

(5) *Certainly, they cannot stand long that seem to give up themselves to Satan’s snares.* How may this be done? Any carnal affection unmortified layeth us open to the devil: “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1Ti 6:9). If a man cherishes his worldliness and does not mortify it, he lieth ready to be seized upon as a ready prey for Satan. Judas had the bag and lay open to the devil; his worldliness increased upon him, so the devil entereth into him. Again, when we ride into the devil’s quarters and will parley<sup>12</sup> with temptation, when we freely open the windows of the senses unto alluring objects and can dally with the snare and play about the temptation, then we do but tempt God to leave us and tempt the devil to surprise us. Therefore, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). “Be sober”—what is sobriety? A holy moderation in the use of worldly things. Be sure not to leave any carnal affection unmortified. And then, be watchful: take heed not to play about the temptation, nor put yourselves upon occasions of sin, for then we lie open to the devil and give him an advantage against us. Thus, much for the second sort of temptations such as come from Satan.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, Vol. 1 (London: James Nisbet, 1870), 205-213, in the public domain.

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**Thomas Manton (1620-1677):** English Presbyterian Puritan preacher; born in Lawrence-Lydiat, Somerset, England, UK.



In no sense are good men compelled to sin. God always provides a way of escape. That way may be through a burning fiery furnace, through a lion’s den, through a shower of stones, through death itself; but it is still a way of escape. It is not wicked to die. In his design to prove Job a hypocrite, Satan was entirely baffled. In his attempt to bring to naught the work of redemption, he wholly failed. The Son of God was more than a match for him.—*William S. Plumer*

The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch.

When the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears.

—*William Gurnall*

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<sup>12</sup> **parley** – negotiate between enemies.

# GOD'S DESIGN IN TEMPTATION

John Newton (1725-1807)

**T**HE temptations of Satan (which, though not the most painful, are the most dangerous) do not directly belong to my present design. I mean those by which he is too successful in drawing many professors from the path of duty: filling them with spiritual pride or lulling them into carnal security. In these attempts, he is often most powerful and prevalent when he is least perceived: he seldom distresses those whom he can deceive. It is chiefly when these endeavors fail that he fights against the peace of the soul.

He hates the Lord's people, grudges them all their privileges and all their comforts, and will do what he can to disquiet them because he cannot prevail against them. And though the Lord sets such bounds to Satan's rage as he cannot pass and limits him both as to manner and time, the Lord is often pleased to suffer him to discover his malice to a considerable degree. [This is] not to gratify Satan, but to humble and prove *them*—to show them what is in their hearts, to make them truly sensible of their immediate and absolute dependence upon Himself, and to quicken them to watchfulness and prayer. Though temptations in their own nature are grievous and dreadful, yet when by the grace of God they are productive of these effects, they deserve to be numbered among the “all things [which] work together for good to them that love God” (Rom 8:28). The light carriage,<sup>1</sup> vain confidence, and woeful backslidings of many professors might perhaps (speaking after the manner of men) have been in some measure prevented had they been more acquainted with this spiritual warfare and had they drunk of the cup of temptation, which but few of those who walk humbly and uprightly are exempted from tasting, though not all in the same degree.

One gracious end, therefore, that the Lord has in permitting His people to be tempted is for the prevention of greater evils that they may not grow proud or careless or be ensnared by the corrupt customs of the world. In this view, I doubt not, however burdensome your trials may at some seasons prove, you are enabled by your composed judgment to rejoice in and be thankful for them. You know what you suffer now; but you know not what might have been the consequence if you had never [felt the sting] of the fiery darts of the wicked one...

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<sup>1</sup> **light carriage** – conduct characterized by lack of seriousness or reverence.

Another design is for the manifestation of His power, wisdom, and grace in supporting the soul under such pressures as are evidently beyond its own strength to sustain. A bush on fire and not consumed engaged the attention of Moses. This emblem is generally applicable to the state of a Christian in the present life, but never more so than when he is in the fire of temptation. And though his heaviest sufferings of this kind are usually hidden from the notice of his fellow-creatures, there are other eyes always upon him. "We are," says the apostle, "a spectacle unto the world," not only to men but also "to angels" (1Co 4:9).

Many things probably pass in the invisible state in which we have a nearer concernment than we are ordinarily aware of. The beginning of the book of Job throws some light upon this point and informs us (of which we would have been otherwise totally ignorant) of the true cause of his uncommon sufferings. Satan had challenged him, charged him as a hypocrite, and thought he was able to prove him one—if he could have permission to attack him. The Lord, for the vindication of Job's integrity and for the manifestation of His own faithfulness and power in favor of His servant, was pleased to give Satan leave to try what he could do. The experiment answered many good purposes: Job was humbled yet approved; his friends were instructed; Satan was confuted and disappointed; and the wisdom and mercy of the Lord, in His darkest dispensations towards His people, were gloriously illustrated. This contest and the event were recorded for the direction and encouragement of His church to the end of time. Satan's malice is not abated; and though he has met with millions of disappointments, he still, like Goliath of old, defies the armies of God's Israel: he challenges the stoutest, and desires to have them, "that he may sift [them] as wheat" (Luk 22:31). Indeed, he is far an overmatch<sup>2</sup> for them, considered as in themselves; but though they are weak, their Redeemer is mighty! They are forever secured by His love and intercession. The Lord knows them that are His, and no weapon formed against them can prosper (2Ti 2:19; Isa 54:17).

That this may appear with the fullest evidence, Satan is allowed to assault them. We handle vessels of glass or china with caution and endeavor to preserve them from falls and blows, because we know they are easily broken. But if a man had the art of making glass malleable and, like iron, capable of bearing the stroke of a hammer without breaking, it is probable that, instead of locking it carefully up, he would rather—for the commendation of his skill—permit many to attempt to

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<sup>2</sup> **overmatch** – one superior in power.

break it when he knew their attempts would be in vain. Believers are compared to earthen vessels, liable in themselves to be destroyed by a small blow; but they are so strengthened and tempered by the power and supply of divine grace that the fiercest efforts of their fiercest enemies against them may be compared to the dashing of waves against a rock. And that this may be known and noticed, they are exposed to many trials. But the united and repeated assaults of the men of the world and the powers of darkness afford but the more incontestable demonstration that the Lord is with them of a truth, and that His strength is made perfect in their weakness...

Farther: By enduring temptation, you, as a living member of the body of Christ, have the honor of being conformed to your Head. He suffered being tempted. And because He loves you, He calls you to a participation of His sufferings and to taste of His cup: not the cup of the wrath of God—this He drank alone, and He drank it all. But in affliction, He allows His people to have fellowship with Him...Marvel not that the world hates you, neither marvel that Satan rages against you. Should not the disciple be as his Lord? Can the servant expect or desire peace from the avowed enemies of his Master? We are to follow His steps: can we wish, if it were possible, to walk in a path strewed<sup>3</sup> with flowers when His was strewed with thorns? Let us be in nothing terrified by the power of our adversaries, “which is to them an evident token of perdition,<sup>4</sup> but to you of salvation, and that of God” (Phi 1:28). To us it is given, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake (Phi 1:29). If we would make peace with the world, the world would let us alone. If we could be content to walk in the ways of sin, Satan would give us no disturbance. But because grace has rescued us from his dominion, and the love of Jesus constrains us to live to Him alone, therefore the enemy, like a lion robbed of his prey, roars against us...If we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him (2Ti 2:12). In due time, He will bruise Satan under our feet (Rom 16:20), make us more than conquerors (Rom 8:37), and place us where we shall hear the voice of war no more forever.

Again: As by temptations we are conformed to the *life* of Christ, so likewise, by the sanctifying power of grace, they are made subservient to advance our conformity to His *image*—particularly as we thereby acquire a sympathy and fellow feeling with our suffering brethren. This is eminently a branch of the mind that was in Christ. He knows how to

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<sup>3</sup> **strewed** – spread by scattering.

<sup>4</sup> **perdition** – hell.

pity and help those who are tempted because He has been tempted Himself. He knows what temptations mean, not only with that knowledge whereby He knows all things, but also by experience. He well remembers what He endured in the wilderness and in the garden; and though it is for *His* glory and *our* comfort that He suffered temptation without sin, yet for that very reason, and because He was perfectly holy, the temptations of Satan were unspeakably more bitter to Him than they can be to us. The great duty and refuge of the tempted now is to apply to Him; and they have the highest encouragement to do so, in that they are assured He is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb 4:15). And for the like reason, they find some consolation in applying to those of their brethren who have suffered the same things. None but these can either understand or pity their complaints. If the Lord has any children who are not exercised with spiritual temptations, I am sure they are but poorly qualified to speak a word in season to them that are weary (Isa 50:4). In this school, you have acquired the tongue of the learned; and let it not seem a small thing to you if the Lord has given you wisdom and ability to comfort the afflicted ones. If your prayers, your conversation, and the knowledge they have of your trials, afford them some relief in a dark hour, this is an honor and a privilege which, I am persuaded, you will think you have not purchased too dear by all that you have endured.

Once more: Temptations, by giving us a painful sensibility of the weakness of our graces and the strength of our inward corruptions, tend to mortify the evil principles of self-dependence and self-righteousness, which are so deeply rooted in our fallen nature; to make Christ, in all His relations, offices, and characters, more precious to us; and to convince us that without Him we can do nothing...He has wise and gracious ends in permitting them for a season to be tossed with tempest and not comforted. Before long, these designs will be more fully unfolded to us, and we shall be satisfied that He has done all things well. Meanwhile, it is our duty—and will be much for our comfort—to believe it upon the authority of His Word.

From *The Works of John Newton*, Vol. 1 (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1824), 226-232; in the public domain.

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**John Newton (1725-1807):** Anglican minister, evangelical preacher, and hymn writer; born in Wapping, London, England, UK.



Every sin naturally carries hell in it!—*Jonathan Edwards*



# DETERMINING WHAT LEADS TO SIN

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

**H**OW shall we know what things do lead and expose to sin? Let a man do what he will, he cannot avoid sinning if he has such a corrupt heart within him. And there is nothing a man can do, but he may find some temptation in it. Though it be true that a man ought to avoid those things that lead and expose to sin—and that the things that have a special tendency to expose men to sin are what we ought to shun, as much as in us lies—yet how shall we judge and determine what things have a natural tendency to sin or do especially lead to it? I would answer in some particulars that are plain and easy; [they] cannot be denied without the greatest absurdity.

1. **That which borders on those sins to which the lusts of men's hearts strongly incline them is of this sort.** Men come into the world with many strong and violent lusts in their hearts and are exceeding prone of themselves to transgress, even in the safest circumstances in which they can be placed. Surely, so much the nearer they are to that sin to which they are naturally strongly inclined, so much the more are they exposed. If any of us who are parents should see our children near the brink of some deep pit or close by the edge of the precipice of a high mountain; and not only so, but the ground upon which the child stood [was] slippery and steeply descending directly toward the precipice; should we not reckon a child exposed in such a case? Should we not be in haste to remove the child from its very dangerous situation?

It was the manner among the Israelites to build their houses with flat roofs, so that persons might walk on the tops of their houses. Therefore, God took care to make it a law among them that every man should have battlements<sup>1</sup> upon the edges of their roofs lest any person should fall off and be killed. "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence" (Deu 22:8). Certainly, we ought to take the like care that we do not fall into sin, which carries in it eternal death. We should, as it were, fix a battlement, a guard, to keep us from the edge of the precipice. Much more ought we to take care that we do not go upon a roof that is not only without battlements, but also when it is steep, and we shall naturally incline to fall. Men's lusts are like

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<sup>1</sup> **battlements** – low walls or barriers around the edge of a flat roof for safety.

strong enemies, endeavoring to draw them into sin. If a man stood upon a dangerous precipice and had enemies about him, pulling, drawing, and endeavoring to throw him down, would he in such a case choose or dare to stand near the edge? Would he not endeavor for his own safety to keep at a distance?

**2. Those things that tend to feed lusts in the imagination are of this kind.** They lead and expose men to sin. Those things that have a natural tendency to excite in the mind the imagination of that which is the object of the lust, certainly tend to feed and promote that lust. What can be more evident than that a presenting of the object tends to stir up the appetite? Reason and experience teach this. Therefore, all things, whether words or actions, which have a tendency [to] and expose to sin, tend also to raise in the mind imaginations of what the lust tends to. It is certainly wrong to feed a lust, even in the imagination. It is quite contrary to the holy rules of God's words. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Pro 24:9). "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery" (Mat 5:28). A man, by gratifying his lusts in his imagination and thoughts, may make his soul in the sight of God to be a hold of foul spirits and like a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. And sinful imaginations tend to sinful actions and outward behavior in the end. Lust is always first conceived in the imagination, and then brought forth in the outward practice. You may see the progress of it in James 1:15: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Such things are abominable in the sight of a pure and holy God. We are commanded to keep at a great distance from spiritual pollution and to hate even the very "garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 1:23).

**3. Those things that the experience and observation of mankind show to be ordinarily attended or followed with sin are of this sort.** Experience is a good rule by which to determine things of this nature. How do we know the natural tendency of anything but by observation and experience? Men observe and find that some things are commonly attended and followed with other things; hence, mankind pronounce that they have a natural tendency to them. We have no other way to know the tendency of anything. Thus, men by observation and experience know that the warmth of the sun and showers of rain are attended with the growth of plants; hence, they learn that they have a tendency to it. So, they find by experience that the bite of some kinds of serpents is commonly followed with illness and often with death; hence, they learn that the bite of such serpents has a natural tendency to bring disorder upon the body and exposes to death. So, if experience and common observation show that any particular practice or custom is

commonly attended with that which is very sinful, we may safely conclude that such a practice tends to sin—that it leads and exposes to it.

Thus, we may determine that tavern-haunting and gaming are things that tend to sin because common experience and observation show that those practices are attended with a great deal of sin and wickedness. The observation of all ages and all nations, with one voice, declares it. It shows [that] where taverns are much frequented for drinking and the like, they are especially places of sin, profaneness, and other wickedness; and it shows that those towns where there is much of this are places where no good generally prevails. It also shows that those persons that are given much to frequenting taverns are most commonly vicious<sup>2</sup> persons. And so [with] gaming and playing at cards, experience shows that those persons that practice this do generally fall into much sin. Hence, these practices are become infamous among all sober, virtuous persons.

**4. Another way by which persons may determine that some things lead and expose to sin is by their own experience or what they have found in themselves.** This surely is enough to convince them that such things actually lead and expose to sin; for what will convince men if their own experience will not? Thus, if men have found by undeniable experience that any practice or custom stirs up lust in them and has betrayed them into foolish and sinful behavior or sinful thoughts, they may determine that they lead to sin. If they, upon examining themselves, must own that a custom or practice has disposed them to the omission of known duty, such as secret or family prayer, and has indisposed them to reading and religious meditation—or if they find, since they have complied with such a custom, they are less watchful of their hearts, less disposed to anything that is serious; that the frame of their mind is more light and their hearts less disposed on the things of another world and more after vanity—these are sinful effects. Therefore, if experience shows a custom or practice to be attended with these things, then experience shows that they lead and expose to sin.

**5. We may determine whether a thing be of an evil tendency or not by the effect that an outpouring of the Spirit of God and a general flourishing of religion has with respect to it.** If this puts a stop to any practice or custom and roots it out, surely it argues that that practice or custom is of no good tendency. For if there be no hurt in it, and it tends to no hurt, why should the Spirit of God destroy it? The Spirit of God has no tendency to destroy anything that is neither sinful nor has

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<sup>2</sup> **vicious** – addicted to immorality or vice; wicked.

any tendency to sin. Why should it? Why should we suppose that He is an enemy to that which has no hurt in it nor has any tendency to that which is hurtful? The flourishing of religion has no tendency to abolish or expel anything that is no way against religion. That which is not against religion, religion will not appear against. It is a rule that holds in all contraries and opposites; the opposition is equal on both sides. So contrary as light is to darkness, so contrary is darkness to light. So contrary as the flourishing of religion is to any custom, just so contrary is that custom to the flourishing of religion. That custom that religion tends to destroy, that custom, if it prevails, tends also to destroy religion. Therefore, if the flourishing of religion and the outpouring of the Spirit of God tends to overthrow any custom that takes place or prevails, we may surely determine that that custom is either in itself sinful or tends and exposes to evil.

**6. We may determine by the effect that a general decay of religion has with respect to them, whether they be things of a sinful tendency or not.** If they be things that come with a decay of religion, that creep in as that decays, we may determine they are things of no good tendency. The withdrawing of good does not let in good but evil. Evil, not good, comes in as good gradually ceases. What is it but darkness that comes in as light withdraws?...

**7. We may in many things determine whether any custom be of a good tendency by considering what the effect would be if it was openly and universally owned and practiced.** There are many things that persons practice somewhat secretly, which they plead to be not hurtful; but which if they had suitable consideration to discern the consequence of everybody openly practicing the same, would soon show a most woe-ful state of things. If therefore there be any custom that will not bear universal, open practice and profession, we may determine that that custom is of an ill tendency. For if it is neither sinful nor tends to anything sinful, then it is no matter how open it is: for we need not be afraid of that custom being too prevalent and universal that has no ill tendency in it.

From "Temptation and Deliverance; or Joseph's Great Temptation and Gracious Deliverance," in the *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, in the public domain.

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.



# WATCHFULNESS IN TEMPTATION

William Gurnall (1616-1679)

*Stand therefore.—Ephesians 6:14*

**T**O stand, here, is opposed to sleep and sloth. Standing is a waking, watching posture. When the captain sees his soldiers lying secure upon the ground asleep, he bids, “Stand to your arms,” that is, stand and watch. In some cases, it is death for a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is appointed to stand sentinel or the like. Now, to sleep deserves death because he is to keep awake that the whole army may sleep; and his sleep may cost them their lives. Therefore, a great captain thought he gave that soldier but his due, whom he ran through with his sword because he found him asleep when he should have stood sentinel, excusing his severity with this, that he left him but as he found him: “I found him dead in sleep, and left him but asleep in death.”

Watchfulness is more needful for the Christian soldier than any other because other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian’s grand enemy, Satan, is ever awake and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprise. And if Satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep; that is, secure and careless. The Christian is seldom worsted by this his enemy, [except when] there is either treachery or negligence in the business. Either the unregenerate part betrays him, or grace is not wakeful to make a timely discovery of him to prepare for the encounter. The enemy is upon him before he is thoroughly awake to draw his sword. The saint’s sleeping time is Satan’s tempting time. Every fly dares to creep on a sleeping lion.

No temptation is so weak but is strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in security. Samson asleep, and Delilah cuts his locks. Saul asleep, and his spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser. Noah asleep, and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father’s nakedness. Eutychus asleep, nods, and falls from the third loft and is taken up for dead. Thus, the Christian asleep in security may soon be surprised, so as to lose much of his spiritual strength—“the joy of the LORD,” which is his “strength” (Neh 8:10); be robbed of his spear, his armor—graces, I mean—at least in the present use of them, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men to the shame of

his profession. When bloody Joab could take notice of David's vain-glory in numbering the people, was not David's grace asleep? Yea, the Christian may fall from a high loft of profession, so low into such scandalous practices that others may question whether there be any life of grace indeed in him. And, therefore, it behoves<sup>1</sup> the Christian to stand wakefully. Sleep steals as insensibly on the soul as it doth on the body. The wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish, though not so soundly. Take heed thou dost not indulge thyself in thy lazy distemper,<sup>2</sup> but stir up thyself to action as we bid one that is drowsy to stand up or walk. Yield to it by idleness and sloth, and it will grow upon thee. Bestir thyself in this duty, and that, and it will [be] over. David first awakes his tongue to sing, his hand to play on his harp, and then David's heart wakes also (Psa 62:8). The lion, it is said, when he first wakes, lashes himself with his tail, thereby to stir and rouse up his courage, and then away he goes after his prey. We have enough to excite and provoke us to use all the care and diligence possible...

**Question:** But how must the Christian stand upon his watch?

**Answer first:** *Watch constantly.* The lamp of God in the tabernacle was to "burn always" (Exo 27:20; 30:8); that is, always in the night, which sense is favored by several other places. And I pray, what is our life in this world but a dark night of temptation? Take heed, Christian, that thy watch-candle go not out in any part of this dark time, lest thy enemy come upon thee in that hour. He can find thee, but thou canst not resist him in the dark. If once thine eye be shut in a spiritual slumber, thou art a fair mark for his wrath; and know thou canst not be long off thy watch but the devil will hear about it. The devil knew the apostles' sleeping time, and then he desired leave to winnow them (Luk 22). He saw they were in some disorder; the eye of their soul began to be heavy. The thief riseth when honest men go to bed. The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch. When the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears. When the soul puts her danger farthest off and lies most secure, then it is nearest. Therefore, labor to be constant in thy holy care; the want of this spoils all.

Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk, and what company they come in. But as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch is broken up, and they are as careless as ever. [They are] like one that is very careful

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<sup>1</sup> **behoves** – is appropriate for.

<sup>2</sup> **distemper** – disordered condition.

to shut up his shop strongly and maybe sits up late to watch it also for two or three nights after it hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. Others in an affliction or newly come out of the furnace—oh, how nice and scrupulous<sup>3</sup> are they while the smell of fire is about them and memory of their distress fresh! They are as tender of sinning as one that comes out of a hot closed room is of the air. They shrink at every breath of temptation stirring. But alas, how soon are they hardened to commit those sins without remorse, the bare motion of which, but a little before, did so trouble and afflict them? Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, tells us that the sons of Noah, for some years after the Flood, dwelt on the tops of high mountains, not daring to take up their habitation in the lower ground for fear of being drowned by another flood. Yet in process of time, seeing no flood came, they ventured down into the plain of Shinar, where their former fear, we see, ended in one of the boldest, proudest attempts against God that the sun was ever witness to—the building, I mean, of a tower whose top should reach heaven (Gen 11:2-4). They, who at first were so maidenly<sup>4</sup> and fearful as not to venture down their hills for fear of drowning, now have a design to secure themselves against all future attempts from the God of heaven Himself. Thus, oft we see God’s judgments leave such an impression on men’s spirits that for a while they stand aloof from their sins—as these on their hills—afraid to come down to them. But when they see fair weather continue and no clouds gather towards another storm, then they can descend to their old, wicked practices and grow bolder and more heaven-daring than ever. But if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, keep on thy watch still, remit not in thy care. Thou hast well run hitherto. Oh, lie not down like some lazy traveler by the wayside to sleep; but reserve thy resting time until thou gettest home out of all danger. Thy God rested not until the last day’s work in the creation was finished; neither do thou cease to wake or work until thou canst say thy salvation work is finished.

**Answer second:** *Watch universally.*

1. *Watch thy whole man.* The honest watchman walks the rounds and compasseth the whole town. He doth not limit his care to this house or that. So do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in the body is a door wide enough to let in a disease if God command, and any one faculty of thy soul or member of thy body [is wide enough] to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare. Alas, how few set the watch

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<sup>3</sup> nice and scrupulous – precise and cautious.

<sup>4</sup> maidenly – timid.

round! Some faculty is not guarded or member of the body not regarded. He that is scrupulous in one, you shall find him secure in another. Maybe thou settest a watch at the door of thy lips [so] that no impure communication offends the ears of men; but how is the Lord's watch kept at the temple door of thy heart (2Ch 23:6)? Is not that defiled with lust? Thou, maybe, keepest thy hand out of thy neighbor's purse, and thy foot from going on a thievish errand to thy neighbor's house; but does not thy envious heart grudge him what God allows him? When thou prayest, thou art very careful thy outward posture be reverent; but what eye hast thou on thy soul that it performs its part in the duty?

**2. Watch in everything.** If the apostle bids, "In everything give thanks" (1Th 5:18), then it behoves us in everything to watch, that God may not lose His praise, which He doth in most for want of watching. No action so little, almost, but we may in it do God or the devil some service, and therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on. He was a holy man indeed of whom it was said that "he ate and drank eternal life." The meaning is [that] he kept such a holy watch over himself in these things that he was in heaven while doing them. There is no creature so little among all God's works but His providence watcheth over it, even to a sparrow and a hair. Let there be no word or work of thine over which thou art not watchful. Thou shalt be judged by them even to thy idle words and thoughts, and wilt thou not have care of them?

**Answer third: Watch wisely.** This thou shalt do if thou knowest where thou shouldst keep strictest watch, and that must be first in the weightiest duty of the command. Tithing of cummin and anise must not be neglected; but take heed thou dost not neglect the weightiest things of the law, "judgment, mercy, and faith," making your preciseness in the less a blind<sup>5</sup> for your horrible wickedness in the greater (Mat 23:23).

**1. Begin at the right end of your work, Christian, by placing your chief care about these main duties to God and man**—in His law and gospel, in His worship, and in thy daily course, which when thou hast done, neglect not the circumstantial<sup>6</sup>. . . There hath been a great zeal of late among us about some circumstantial<sup>6</sup> of worship; but who looks to the little child—the main duties of Christianity, I mean? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of holiness in any of its several walks than in this sad age of ours? Alas, these. . . are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and

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<sup>5</sup> **blind** – cover; concealing.

<sup>6</sup> **circumstantial** – details.



division, which a perverse zeal in less things hath kindled among us.

**2. Be sure thou art watchful more than ordinary over thyself in those things where thou findest thyself weakest and hast been oftenest foiled.**

The weakest part of the city needs the strongest guard, and in our bodies the tenderest part is most observed and kept warmest. And I should think it were strange if thy fabric of grace stands so strong and even that thou shouldst not soon perceive which side needs the shore<sup>7</sup> most, by some inclination of it one way more than another. Thy body is not so firm but thou findest this humor overabounds,<sup>8</sup> and that part crazes faster than another; and so mayest thou in thy soul.

Well, take counsel in the thing, and what thou findest weakest, watch more carefully. Is it thy head is weak?—thy judgment, I mean. Watch thyself and come not among those that drink no wine but that which thy weak parts cannot bear—seraphic notions and high-flown opinions—and do not think thyself much wronged to be forbidden their cup. Such strong wine is more heady than hearty, and they that trade most with it are not found of the healthiest tempers of their souls, no more than they that live most of strong water are for their bodies. Is thy impotency in thy passions? Indeed, we are weak as they are strong and violent. Now, watch over them as one that dwells in a thatched house would do of every spark that flies out of his chimney, lest it should light on it and set all on fire. Oh, take heed what speeches come from thy mouth or from any thou conversest with. This is the little instrument [that] sets the whole course of nature on flame. When our neighbor's house is on fire, we cast water on our roof or cover it with a wet sheet. When the flame breaks out at another's mouth, now look thou throwest water on thy own hot spirit. Some cooling, wrath-quenching Scriptures and arguments ever carry with thee for that purpose. And so, in any other particular as thou findest thy weakness.

From *The Christian in Complete Armour* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845), 203-204, 205-207; in the public domain.

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**William Gurnall (1616-1679):** English pastor and author; born at King's Lynn, Norfolk, England, UK.



The best men meet with the worst temptations. Those that are most eminently godly are most foully assaulted. David, Job, Peter, Paul, and Christ Himself were.—*William Bridge*

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<sup>7</sup> **needs the shore** – needs to be supported or propped up.

<sup>8</sup> **humor overabounds** – temperament or disposition is too abundant.

# HELPS AGAINST TEMPTATION

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

**G**OD will shortly tread down Satan under the saints' feet (Rom 16:20). Christ, our champion, hath already won the field and will shortly set our feet upon the necks of our spiritual enemies. Satan is a foiled adversary. Christ hath led him captive and triumphed over him upon the cross. Christ hath already overcome him and put weapons into your hands that you may overcome him also and set your feet upon his neck. Though Satan be "a roaring lion" (1Pe 5:8), yet Christ, Who is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" (Rev 5:5), will make Satan flee and fall before you. Let Satan do his worst, yet you shall have the honor and the happiness to triumph over him. Cheer up, you precious sons of Sion, for the certainty and sweetness of victory will abundantly recompense you for all the pains you have taken in making resistance against Satan's temptations! The broken horns of Satan shall be trumpets of our triumph and the cornets of our joy...

Oh! Hath Satan so many devices to ensnare and undo the souls of men? How should this awaken dull, drowsy souls and make them stand upon their watch! A saint should be like a seraphim: beset<sup>1</sup> all over with eyes and lights that he may avoid Satan's snares and stand fast in the hour of temptation.

The Lord hath in the Scripture discovered the several snares, plots, and devices that the devil hath to undo the souls of men, so that, being forewarned, they may be forearmed—that they may be always upon their watchtower and hold their weapons in their hands as the Jews did in Nehemiah's time (Neh 4:17).

Satan, out of malice to the souls of men, hideth his goods, his wares, as I may say, *in* the souls of men, and then goeth and accuseth them before the Lord. And a thousand, thousand other ways do Satan's malice, envy, and enmity put him upon, eternally to undo the precious souls of men.

Satan is full of envy and enmity, and that makes him very studious to suit his snares and plots to the tempers, constitutions, fancies, and callings of men, so that he may make them as miserable as himself... He is a spirit of mighty abilities, and his abilities to lay snares before us

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<sup>1</sup> beset – covered.

are mightily increased by that long standing of his...He hath had time enough to study all those ways and methods that tend most to ensnare and undo the souls of men. And as he hath time enough, so he hath made it his whole study, his only study, his constant study, to find out snares, depths, and stratagems<sup>2</sup> to entangle and overthrow the souls of men. When he was but a young serpent, he did easily deceive and outwit our first parents (Gen 3:1-15); but now he is grown that “old serpent,” as John speaks (Rev 12:9), he is as old as the world and is grown very cunning by experience...If Satan hath such a world of devices and stratagems to ensnare and undo the souls of men, then, instead of wondering that so few are saved, sit down and wonder that *any* are saved, that *any* escape the snares of this cunning fowler,<sup>3</sup> who spreads his nets and casts forth his baits in all places, in all cases and companies.

**The first help: If you would not be taken by any of Satan’s devices, then walk by rule [of the Word].** He that walks by rule, walks most safely; he that walks by rule, walks most honorably; he that walks by rule, walks most sweetly. When men throw off the Word, then God throws *them* off; then, Satan takes them by the hand and leads them into snares at his pleasure. He that thinks himself too good to be ruled by the Word will be found too bad to be owned by God. And if God does not or will not own him, Satan will by his stratagems overthrow him. Them that keep to the rule shall be kept in the hour of temptation. “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” (Rev 3:10).

**The second help: As you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, take heed of vexing and grieving the Holy Spirit of God.** It is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ that is best able to discover Satan’s snares against us. Only He can point out all his plots, discover all his methods, and enable men to escape those pits that he hath digged for their precious souls. Ah! If you set that sweet and blessed Spirit mourning, Who alone can secure you from Satan’s depths, by whom will you be secured? Man is a weak creature and no way able to discover Satan’s snares nor to avoid them, unless the Spirit of the Lord gives skill and power. Therefore, whoever be grieved, be sure the Spirit be not grieved by your enormities, nor by your refusing the cordials<sup>4</sup> and comforts that He sets before you, nor by slighting and despising His gracious actings in others, nor by calling sincerity hypocrisy...etc., nor by

<sup>2</sup> **stratagems** – plans or tricks intended to deceive or gain advantage over someone.

<sup>3</sup> **fowler** – person who hunts birds

<sup>4</sup> **enormities...refusing the cordials** – monstrous evils, nor by refusing the remedies.

fathering<sup>5</sup> those things upon the Spirit that are the brats and fruits of your own hearts. The Spirit of the Lord is your counsellor, your comforter, your upholder, your strengthener. It is only the Spirit that makes a man too great for Satan to conquer: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1Jo 4:4).

**The *third* help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then labor for more heavenly wisdom.** Ah, souls! You are much in the dark—you have but a little wisdom to what others have and to what you might have had, had you not been lacking in yourselves. There are many *knowing* souls, but there are only a few *wise* souls. There is oftentimes a great deal of *knowledge*, where there is but a little *wisdom* to improve that knowledge...It is not the most knowing Christian, but the most wise Christian that sees, avoids, and escapes Satan’s snares. “The way of life is above to the wise,” saith Solomon, “that he may depart from hell beneath” (Pro 15:24). Heavenly wisdom makes a man delight to fly high; and the higher any man flies, the more he is out of the reach of Satan’s snares. Ah, souls! You had need of a great deal of heavenly wisdom to see where and how Satan lays his baits and snares. [You need] wisdom to find out proper remedies against his devices and wisdom to apply those remedies seasonably, inwardly, and effectually to your own hearts, so that you may avoid the snares, which that evil one hath laid for your precious souls.

**The *fourth* help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then make present resistance against Satan’s first motions.** It is safe to resist; it is dangerous to dispute. Eve disputes and falls in Paradise (Gen 3:1-7). Job resists and conquers upon the dunghill. He that will play with Satan’s bait will quickly be taken with Satan’s hook. The promise of conquest is made over to resisting, not to disputing: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam 4:7). Ah, souls! Were you better at resisting than at disputing...your temptations would be fewer, and your strength to stand would be greater than it is now.

**The *fifth* help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan’s devices, then labor to be filled with the Spirit.** The Spirit of the Lord is a Spirit of light and power; and what can a soul do without light and power “against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12)? It is not enough that you have the Spirit, but you must be filled with the Spirit; or else Satan, that evil spirit, will be too hard for you, and his plots will prosper against you. That is a sweet word of the apostle, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18), *i.e.*, labor for abundance of the Spirit. He that

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<sup>5</sup> **fathering** – blaming.

thinks he hath enough of the Holy Spirit will quickly find himself vanquished by the evil spirit. Satan hath his snares to take you in prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in strength and weakness, when you are alone and when you are in company, when you come on to spiritual duties and when you come off from spiritual duties. And if you are not filled with the Spirit, Satan will be too hard and too crafty for you, will easily and frequently take you in his snares and make a prey of you despite your souls. Therefore, labor more to have your hearts filled with the Spirit than to have your heads filled with notions, your shops with wares, your chests with silver, or your bags with gold. In that way, you shall escape the snares of this fowler and triumph over all his plots.

**The *sixth* help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then *keep humble*.** A humble heart will rather lie in the dust than rise by wickedness and sooner part with all than the peace of a good conscience. Humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting and snares of his spreading...The devil hath least power to fasten a temptation on him that is most humble. He that hath a gracious measure of humility is neither affected with Satan's offers nor terrified with his threatenings...God hath said that He will teach the humble, and that He will dwell with the humble, and that He will fill and satisfy the humble. And if the teachings of God, the indwellings of God, if the pourings in of God will not keep the soul from falling into Satan's snares, I do not know what will. Therefore, as you would be happy in resisting Satan and blessed in triumphing over Satan and all his snares, keep humble. I say again, "*Keep humble!*"

**The *seventh* help: If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then *keep a strong, close, and constant watch* (1Th 5:6).** A secure soul is already an ensnared soul. That soul that will not watch against temptations will certainly fall before the power of temptations. Satan works most strongly on the imagination when the soul is drowsy. The soul's security is Satan's opportunity to fall upon the soul and to spoil it, as Joshua did the men of Ai. The best way to be safe and secure from all Satan's assaults is, with Nehemiah and the Jews, to watch and pray and to pray and watch. By this means, they became too hard for their enemies, and the work of the Lord did prosper sweetly in their hands. Remember how Christ rebuked His sluggish disciples: "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (Mat 26:40). What, cannot you watch with me? How will you then die with me? If you cannot endure words, how will you endure wounds? Satan always keeps a crafty and malicious watch, "seeking whom he may devour," or whom he may drink

or sip up, as the apostle speaks in 1 Peter 5:8. Satan is very envious of our condition: that we should enjoy that Paradise out of which he is cast, and out of which he shall be forever kept.

Shall Satan keep a crafty watch, and shall not Christians keep a holy spiritual watch? Our whole life is beset with temptations. Satan watches all opportunities to break our peace, to wound our consciences, to lessen our comforts, to impair our graces, to slur our evidences, and to damp our assurances, etc. Oh! What need, then, have we to be always upon our watchtower, lest we be surprised by this subtle serpent! Watchfulness includes a waking, a rousing up of the soul. It is a continual, careful observing of our hearts and ways in all the turnings of our lives, so that we keep close to God and His Word.

Watchfulness is nothing else but the soul running up and down, to and fro, busy everywhere. It is the heart busied and employed with diligent observation of what comes from within us and of what comes from without us and into us. Ah, souls! You are no longer safe and secure than when you are upon your watch...

**The eighth help: If you would not be taken with any of Satan's snares and devices, then *keep up your communion with God.*** Your strength to stand and withstand Satan's fiery darts is from your communion with God. A soul high in communion with God may be tempted but will not easily be conquered. Such a soul will fight it out to the death. Communion with God furnisheth the soul with the greatest and the choicest arguments to withstand Satan's temptations. Communion is the result of union. Communion is a reciprocal<sup>6</sup> exchange between Christ and a gracious soul. Communion is Jacob's ladder, where you have Christ sweetly coming down into the soul, and the soul, by divine influences, sweetly ascending to Christ. Communion with Christ is very inflaming, raising, and strengthening. While Samson kept up his communion with God, no enemy could stand before him, but he goes on conquering and to conquer; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, he quickly falls before the plots of his enemies. It will be so with your souls. So long as your communion with God is kept up, you will be too hard for "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12); but if you fall from your communion with God, you will, as others do, fall before the face of every temptation. David stands and triumphs over all his enemies so long as he kept up his communion with God; but when he was fallen in his communion with God, then he falls before the enemies that were in his own bosom and flies before those that pursued after

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<sup>6</sup> reciprocal – giving and receiving.

his life. It will be so with your souls if you do not keep up your communion with God. Job keeps up his communion with God and conquers Satan upon the dunghill. Adam loses his communion with God and is conquered by Satan in Paradise. Communion with God is a shield upon land, as well as an anchor at sea. It is a sword to defend you, as well as a staff to support you; therefore, keep up your communion.

**The *ninth* help:** **If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then engage not against Satan in your own strength, but be every day drawing new virtue and strength from the Lord Jesus.** Certainly, that soul that engages against any old or new temptation without new strength, new influences from on high, will fall before the power of the temptation. You may see this in Peter: he rested upon some old received strength—"Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Mat 26:35)—therefore, he falls sadly before a new temptation. He curses, swears, and denies Him thrice that had thrice appeared gloriously to him. Ah, souls! When the snare is spread, look up to Jesus Christ, Who is lifted up in the gospel as the brazen serpent was in the wilderness (Num 21:9), and say to Him, "Dear Lord! Here is a new snare laid to catch my soul; and grace formerly received, without fresh supplies from Thy blessed bosom, will not deliver me from this snare. Oh! Give me new strength, new power, new influences, new measures of grace, so that I may escape the snares." Ah, souls! Remember this, that your strength to stand and overcome must not be expected from graces received, but from the fresh and renewed influences of heaven. You must lean more upon Christ than upon your duties. You must lean more upon Christ than upon spiritual tastes and discoveries. You must lean more upon Christ than upon your graces, or else Satan will lead you into captivity.

**The *tenth* help:** **If you would not be taken in any of Satan's snares, then be much in prayer.** Prayer is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil. David's heart was oft more out of tune than his harp. He prays, and then, despite the devil, cries, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." Prayer is the gate of heaven—a key to let us into Paradise. There is nothing like prayer that renders plots fruitless; therefore, saith Christ, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Mat 26:41). You must watch and pray, and pray and watch, if you would not enter temptation. When Sennacherib and Haman had laid plots and snares to have destroyed the Jews, they prayed, and their souls were delivered, and Sennacherib and Haman destroyed. David had many snares laid for him, and this puts him upon prayer. "Keep me," saith he, "from the snares which they have laid for me, and the

gins<sup>7</sup> of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I escape” (Psa 141:9-10). “The proud,” saith he, “have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah. I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD” (Psa 140:5-6). Saul and many others had laid snares for David, and this put him upon prayer: [by this way,] the snares were broken, and he was delivered. Ah, souls! Take words to yourselves and tell God that Satan hath spread his snares in all places and in all companies. Tell God that he digs deep, and that he hath plot upon plot, and device upon device, and all to undo you. Tell God that you have neither skill nor power to escape his snares. Tell God that it is a work too high and too hard for any created creature to work your deliverance unless He put under His own everlasting arms. Tell God how His honor is engaged to stand by you and to bring you off that you be not ruined by his plots. Tell God how the wicked would triumph if you should fall into Satan’s snares. Tell God of the love of Christ, of the blood of Christ, and of the intercession of Christ for you that a way may be found for your escape. Tell God if He will make it His honor to save you from falling into Satan’s snares, you will make it your glory to speak of His goodness and to live out His kindness. Christians must [escape] by a way of heaven, that is, the way of prayer, which is the only way left to escape Satan’s snares.

From *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, ed. A. B. Grosart, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh; London; Dublin: James Nichol; James Nisbet & Co.; G. Herbert, 1866), 157; in the public domain.

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**Thomas Brooks (1608-1680):** English Nonconformist Puritan preacher and advocate of Congregationalism; buried in Bunhill Fields, London, England, UK.



[Christ’s temptation] must be regarded as one of the most marvelous pages in the Savior’s history, and, to a large portion of the church of God, not less precious and soothing. That the Son of God should be exposed to so personal, so searching, so trying, and so protracted an onslaught of the devil—that He Who was sinless and could not sin, Who was almighty and could not fall, Who with one word could have commanded back the foe to the regions from where he came, or with a breath could have annihilated his being, should yet for forty days and forty nights have subjected Himself to this fiery, burning furnace—which, had He not been God, would have utterly consumed Him—is the marvel of earth and will be the wonder, the study, and the song of heaven through eternity.—*Octavius Winslow*

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<sup>7</sup> gins – snares; traps.



# CHRIST IS ABLE TO HELP

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.—Hebrews 2:18*

**Y**E that are tempted—and I suppose the major part of this present [readership] are included in the list—ye that are tempted—and indeed if you know yourselves, you are all in your measure thus exercised—ye that are tempted, listen to me this morning whilst I endeavor to speak of your temptations, and in parallel lines of the temptations of Him Who, having known your trials, is able to help you at all times... They that are tempted have great need of help, and Christ is able, having Himself been tempted, to help them that are tempted.

Of course, this is true of Christ as God. Apart from any temptation He has ever endured, He would be able to help the tempted; but we are now speaking in our text of Christ as a High Priest, in which we are to regard Him in His complex character as God-man. For Christ is not only God but man and not only man but God. The *Christos*, the anointed one, the High Priest of our profession, is in His complex character able to help them that are tempted. How?

**Why, first, the very fact that He was tempted has some help in it to us.** If we had to walk through the darkness alone, we should know the very extremity of misery; but having a companion, we have comfort. Having such a companion, we have joy. It is all black about me, the path is miry, and I sink in it and can find no standing. But I plunge onwards, desperately set on reaching my journey's end. It frets<sup>1</sup> me that I am alone, but I hear a voice—I can see nothing—but I hear a voice that says, "Yea, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." I cry out, "Who goes there?" and an answer comes back to me, "I, the faithful and true witness, the Alpha and the Omega, the Sufferer Who was despised and rejected of men. I lead the way." At once, I feel that it is light about me, and there is a rock beneath my feet. For if Christ my Lord hath been here, then the way must be safe and must conduct to the desired end. The very fact that He has suffered, then, consoles His people.

**But further, the fact that He has suffered without being destroyed is**

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<sup>1</sup> frets – distresses.

*inestimably comforting to us.* If you could see a block of ore just ready to be put into the furnace, if that block of ore could look into the flames and could mark the blast as it blows the coals to a vehement heat, if it could speak it would say, “Ah! Woe is me that ever I should be put into such a blazing furnace as that! I shall be burnt up; I shall be melted with the slag; I shall be utterly consumed!” But suppose another lump all bright and glistening could lie by its side and say, “No, no, you are just like I was. But I went through the fire, and I lost nothing thereby. See how bright I am—how I have survived all the flames.” Why then that piece of ore would rather anticipate than dread the season when it too should be exposed to the purifying heat and come out all bright and lustrous like its companion. “I see Thee, I see Thee, Thou Son of Mary, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh! Thou hast felt the flames, but Thou art not destroyed. The smell of fire has not passed upon Thee! Thine heel has been bruised, but Thou hast broken the serpent’s head. There is no scar, nor spot, nor injury in Thee. Thou hast survived the conflict; and I—bearing Thy name, purchased with Thy blood, and dear to God as Thou art dear to Him—I shall survive it too. Therefore will I tread the coals with confidence and bear the heat with patience. Christ’s conquest gives me comfort, for I shall conquer too.”

And you will please remember, too, that Christ, in going through the suffering of temptation, was not simply no loser, *but He was a great gainer*, for it is written that it pleased God “to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10). It was through His suffering that He obtained the mediatorial<sup>2</sup> glory that now crowns His head. Had He never carried the cross, He had never worn that crown, that transcendently bright and glorious crown that now He wears as King in Zion and as leader of His people whom He hath redeemed by blood. God over all blessed forever He would have been, but as God-man-mediator He could never have been praised unless He had been obedient even unto death, so that He was a gainer by His suffering. And glory be to His name, we get comfort from this too; for we also shall be gainers by our temptations. We shall come up out of Egypt enriched; as it is written, “He brought them forth also with silver and gold” (Psa 105:37); so shall we come forth out of trial with better than these treasures! “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall obtain a crown of life” (Jam 1:12). The deeper their sorrows, the louder their song; the more terrible their toil, the sweeter their rest; the more bitter the wormwood, the more delightful the wine of

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<sup>2</sup> **mediatorial** – relating to Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

consolation. They shall have glory for their share; they shall have honor for their contempt; they shall have songs for their sufferings and thrones for their tribulations.

**But more, in that Christ hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to help us who are tempted by sending His grace to help us.** He was always able to send grace, but now as God and man He is able to send just the right grace at the right time and in the right place...Now it pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell (Col 1:19), but where should the Son of Man earn His diploma and gain the skill with which to use the fulness aright? Beloved, He won it by experience. He knows what sore temptations mean, for He has felt the same. You know, if we had comforting grace given us at one time of our temptation, it would tempt us more than before; even as certain medicines given to the patient at one period of the disease would aggravate the malady, though the same medicine would cure him if administered a little later. Now, Christ knows how to send His comfort at the very nick of time, to afford His help exactly when it will not be a superfluity;<sup>3</sup> to send His joy when we shall not spend it upon our own lusts. How does He know this? Why, He recollects His own experience! He has passed through it all! There appeared an angel unto Him strengthening Him; that angel came just when he was wanted. Jesus knows just when to send His angelic messenger to strengthen you, when to lay on the rod more heavily, and when to stay His hand and say, "I have forgiven thee; go thou in peace."

Once more, dear friends, lest I keep you too long. **Having suffered Himself being tempted, Christ knows how to help us by His prayers for us.** There are some people whose prayers are of no use to us because they do not know what to ask for us. Christ is the intercessor for His people: He has prevalence<sup>4</sup> in His intercession, but how shall He learn what to ask for? How can He know this better than by His own trials? He hath suffered being tempted. You hear some brethren pray with such power, such unction, such fervor. Why? Part of the reason is that they are experimental<sup>5</sup> prayers: they pray out their own life. They just tell out the great deep waters over which they themselves sail. Now, the prayer of our great High Priest in heaven is wonderfully comprehensive: it is drawn from His own life, and it takes in every sorrow and every pang that ever rent a human heart because He Himself hath suffered being tempted. I know you feel safe in trusting your case in the hand of such an intercessor, for He knows the precise mercy to ask for;

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<sup>3</sup> **superfluity** – excess.

<sup>4</sup> **prevalence** – efficacy.

<sup>5</sup> **experimental** – experiential; from personal experience.

and when He asks for it, He knows how to put the words and frame the petition so that the mercy shall surely come to you at the right time.

Ah, dear friends, it is not in my power to bring out the depth that lieth under my text, but I am certain of this: when through the deep waters He shall cause you to go, or you are made to pass through furnace after furnace, you cannot want a better rod and staff, nor a better table prepared for you in the wilderness than this my text: "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Hang this text up in your house; read it every day; take it before God in prayer every time you bend the knee, and you shall find it to be like the widow's cruse,<sup>6</sup> which failed not, and like her handful of meal, which wasted not...

Will not my text suit the awakened sinner as well as the saint? There are timid souls here. They cannot say they are saved; yet here is a loophole of comfort for you, you poor troubled ones that are not yet able to get a hold of Jesus. "He is able to succour them that are tempted." Go and tell Him you are tempted: tempted, perhaps, to despair; tempted to self-destruction; tempted to go back to your old sins; tempted to think that Christ cannot save you. Go and tell Him that He Himself has suffered being tempted and that He is able to help you. Believe that He will, and He will; for you can never believe anything too much of the love and goodness of my Lord. He will be better than your faith to you. If you can trust Him with all your heart to save you, He will do it! If you believe He is able to put away your sin, He will do it! If you can but honor Him by giving Him a good character for grace, you cannot give Him too good a name.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you forever. Amen.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, January 4, 1863,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



In his nature, [the devil] is both a spiritual and an intellectual essence. In each of those respects, his advantage is very great over man, who in the most refined and supreme part of his being falls as far short of an angel as a small glittering spark does a fair and well-polished diamond.

—*William Spurstowe*

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<sup>6</sup> **cruse** – small earthenware pot or jar.

# LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S TEMPTATIONS

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

**F**ROM this subject of our Lord's temptations, we may glean some lessons of holy instruction and derive some streams of real comfort. We learn that,

**Our great adversary and accuser is a defeated foe.** From this onslaught upon Christ, he retired foiled, vanquished, and abashed.<sup>1</sup> The Seed of the woman had bruised the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). It is true, Satan left Him for a season (Luk 4:13) to renew the battle on another and a more conspicuous field, and at a future and a more eventful time, but only to be more signally discomfited,<sup>2</sup> more fatally wounded, and more completely overthrown. Tempted believer in Jesus! Learn thus the paralyzed power of your tempter, so that you do not become disheartened and dismayed. Remember that the Son of God has foiled him, that the Captain of your salvation has pierced him, signally and fatally; and that every fiery dart winged<sup>3</sup> at your soul is plucked from a quiver, all whose weapons pointed at the believer are tipped with the conquering blood of Christ and are hurled by the stricken arm of an archer humbled and cowed<sup>4</sup> by the consciousness of a signal and irrecoverable defeat!

**Learn to meet Satan's suggestions, to answer his arguments, and to repel his temptations by the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).** He too can quote and apply Scripture, only to misquote and misapply it. You may, therefore, safely infer that if he seeks to give Scripture point and force to a vile insinuation<sup>5</sup>—quotes a promise or cites an example from the Word of God in support of some infernal suggestion, some dark design, some horrid temptation—he has by fraud and subtlety stolen from the arsenal of truth weapons with which, by perversion and wicked ingenuity,<sup>6</sup> to accomplish his dark, nefarious design. Lend not your ear for a moment to a temptation that comes

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<sup>1</sup> **abashed** – self-consciously ashamed.

<sup>2</sup> **signally discomfited** – conspicuously or strikingly defeated.

<sup>3</sup> **winged** – moving rapidly as by flight.

<sup>4</sup> **cowed** – conquered.

<sup>5</sup> **insinuation** – suggestion.

<sup>6</sup> **ingenuity** – high intellectual capacity.

clad in Scripture authority. Suspect *the cloven foot* of Satan.

The Word of God is very pure (Psa 119:140). It is on the side of holiness, of uprightness, of goodness, of love. It inculcates<sup>7</sup> the fear of God, confidence in God, and love to God. It teaches the protection, the sufficiency, and the sympathy of Jesus. It unfolds many exceeding great and precious promises; announces many gracious and free invitations; and it is designed to support the tempted, to comfort the mourner, to soothe the sorrowful, to hold out the promise of pardon to the guilty, salvation to the lost, and to reveal the hope of glory to all those who humbly and simply believe in Christ. The moment, then, beloved, that a text of God's Word is suggested to your thoughts in favor of sin, of distrust of God, of disbelief of Christ, of self-injury, repel it with the holy indignation of a believer in Christ from the threshold of your mind, as [it is] from the Evil One, prompting you to evil and seeking to slay you with the very weapons God graciously provided for your defense! O yes! God's Word will fortify, strengthen, and support you in temptation. It is the Book of the tempted. Like its Author, it is divine, invincible, and holy.

It is the history of saints tempted like you, but from whose temptation God rescued them. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation" (2Pe 2:9). The most gracious souls, the most eminent saints, have been tempted saints. Abraham was tempted, David was tempted, Job was tempted, Peter was tempted, Paul was tempted, Luther<sup>8</sup> was tempted, and, above all, and greater than all, Christ was tempted—and all from the selfsame foe, Satan, "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev 12:10). All passed through this heated crucible, all were taught in this painful school, all bore to heaven the scars of the wounds in this battle with the devil—but out of all God delivered them. Do not think, then, that some strange thing has happened unto you—that you tread a peculiar, solitary path, a path untrodden by the saints of God. Oh, no! You are one of the "great cloud of witnesses" of whom it is recorded, "they were tempted" (Heb 12:1), and with them you shall testify to the power of faith in giving you the victory over all the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Fly, tempted one, to the precious Scriptures! They are your grand arsenal, richly stored with every species of weapon with which to foil and vanquish your powerful, sleepless, subtle foe. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa 119:11). Above

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<sup>7</sup> **inculcates** – teaches and impresses by frequent repetition.

<sup>8</sup> **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) – German leader of the Protestant Reformation.

all, fly to the Christ of the Scriptures and nestle your tempted spirit beneath His sheltering wing.

**And do not forget what a girding of the soul in the temptations of Satan prayer is.** Take your temptation, drag the tempter to the throne of grace, and you are safe! The shadow of that spot is too divine, too pure and holy, for a temptation to live a single moment. There the Wicked One will cease to trouble you, there your weary soul will sweetly rest. Communion with God, the opening of your heart to Christ, flying into the very bosom of the Comforter will put to flight all the hosts of hell. Oh, betake yourself, tempted child of God, to prayer! God invites you, the blood of Jesus gives you access, and the mercy-seat will cover you with its divine and sacred shadow, beneath which God will keep you in perfect peace. “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues” (Psa 31:19-20). Resort, then, to prayer: “If he haunts thee with fears of thy spiritual estate, ply thee<sup>9</sup> to the throne of grace and beg a new copy of thy old evidence, which thou hast lost. The original is in the pardon office in heaven, whereof Christ is master; if thou art a saint, thy name is upon record in that court; make thy moan to God, hear what news from heaven, rather than listen to the tales which are brought by thine enemy from hell. Did such reason less with Satan and pray over their fears more to God, they might sooner be resolved. Can you expect truth from a liar and comfort from an enemy? Did he ever prophesy well of believers? Was not Job the devil’s hypocrite, whom God vouched for a nonsuch<sup>10</sup> in holiness and proved him so at last? If he knew that thou wert a saint, would he tell thee so? If a hypocrite, he would be as loth thou shouldst know it; turn thy back therefore on him and go to thy God: fear not, but sooner or later He will give His hand again to thy certificate.<sup>11</sup> But look thou dost not pass rashly a censure<sup>12</sup> on thyself, because a satisfactory answer is not presently sent at thy desire; the messenger may stay long and bring good news at last.”<sup>13</sup>

**Designed as this volume is to set forth the sympathy of Christ with**

<sup>9</sup> **ply thee** – apply yourself diligently; devote your energy.

<sup>10</sup> **nonsuch** – unparalleled or unrivaled person; most eminent person.

<sup>11</sup> **give His hand...certificate** – He will once again assure you that you are His.

<sup>12</sup> **censure** – expression of disapproval; harsh criticism.

<sup>13</sup> William Gurnall and John Campbell, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845), 67.

**man, no illustration of this precious truth is more touching than Christ's sympathy with the tempted.** The inspired allusions to it are few, but, oh, how pointed and precious! "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18). "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). How schooled and trained to this work of sympathy with Satan-tempted souls, then, is our great High Priest! What? Is He not "touched"? Will He not "support"? And when Satan stands at your right hand to accuse, do you think that He, your Advocate with the Father (1Jo 2:1), will not put in a plea on your behalf that shall quash<sup>14</sup> the indictment, silence the accusation, and condemn the accuser? Oh, enfold yourself, tempted believer, within the robe of your Savior's sympathy! Hide within its rich, its ample folds, until the temptation be past. Christ will not fail you. He may permit, for wise and holy ends, the messenger of Satan to buffet you; but He will restrain the enemy, permitting him to go so far and no farther, and will make good His promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Co 12:9). This very temptation of your soul may make you better acquainted with Christ than ever. For this end, doubtless, He permits it. You have learned what Christ is in times of guilt, in times of sorrow, in times of need, in times of perplexity; now you are to learn what He is in times of temptation. New views of God will be opened to you, new treasures of truth unlocked, new promises applied, new discoveries and manifestations made to you of the love, the grace, the tenderness, the sympathy of Christ. You will have found some new niche<sup>15</sup> in His heart of love and sympathy, unknown, undiscovered before, into which your weary, panting spirit will insinuate itself and nestle in assured safety and repose until the tempter flees. Every [flood] has its dove, every dove its ark, every ark its Noah, every cloud its bow. And when the enemy shall come into your soul like a flood, the Spirit, the Comforter, will gently lead you to Jesus and cloister<sup>16</sup> you within the secret place of His loving, sheltering bosom. Hidden and resting there, the swelling waves may lift their voice, but the Lord Jesus on high "is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psa 93:4), and you need not fear. Satan is more restless, earnest, malignant now than ever; yes, often assuming the form of an angel of light, seeing that his time is short. But

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<sup>14</sup> **quash** – stop completely.

<sup>15</sup> **niche** – resting place.

<sup>16</sup> **cloister** – shelter.



the Lord is at hand! In a little while, He will come and complete the victory begun in Paradise,<sup>17</sup> continued in the wilderness, renewed on the cross, carried on through the long history of His church, and consummated in the day of His personal, glorious, and triumphant appearing. Tempted child of God! Take heart! Look up! You shall, through your conquering Head, “bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20)!

**But slight allusion has been made in this chapter to the awful condition of the unconverted.** [They are] still under the dominion and power of Satan, led captive by him at his will (2Ti 2:26). We would not close it without a solemn word addressed especially to such. My dear reader, [whatever] your standard of morality, your religious creed, your education, your rank in society may be, nothing modifies, softens, or alters, in the slightest degree, the appalling fact that an unrenewed, unregenerate soul is a soul yet subject to Satan—the captive and slave of his power and service.

What is the unerring testimony of God’s Word? Addressing those who, through grace, were rescued from the power of Satan, the apostle thus speaks: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:1-2). What an appalling description of the unrenewed! Reader, it is a faithful portrait of you, if you are yet not born again of the Spirit. What need have we of further testimony? Surely this one passage, were there no other proof, is sufficient to fill with awe and alarm every unconverted reader of this page. The strong man armed, who is the devil, has still the full possession of your soul and will remain in undisturbed, undisputed, and willing occupation until a stronger than he enters, spoils him of his goods, and casts him out. Satan, “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2Co 4:4). It is his aim and policy to keep your soul in carnal security, in false peace, in the stillness and insensibility of spiritual death. Mistake not your real condition! Mistake not cold ritualism for vital religion; dead formalism for spiritual life; carnal insensibility for divine peace; rash confidence for humble faith; human excitement for holy love; groundless expectation for assured hope! Satan is a great counterfeiter! He not only can quote Scripture, but he can imitate grace. Every

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<sup>17</sup> Paradise – the Garden of Eden.

species of false religion and every form of spurious<sup>18</sup> Christianity are his inventions. He will strive to retain possession of your soul, nor relinquish his hold without a long and a desperate struggle. Be assured of this: everything that is evil and false is of Satan. Every atheistic idea of God, every infidel thought of the Bible, every suggestion of sin, every prompting to evil, every new attraction of the world, every impediment in the way of your salvation, every argument and persuasive pleading for a postponement to a more convenient season—it may be to a sick and dying bed—of the great, the needful work of repentance and of faith, the solemn, the momentous preparation of the soul for eternity—all, all is of Satan. In all this, you are “taken captive by him at his will” (2Ti 2:26). Oh, solemn, appalling thought: “My soul the palace of Satan! My intellect, my will, my heart all under his influence and at his command! My present and my future life not God’s, not Christ’s, not heaven’s, but Satan’s!” Oh, throw yourself at the feet of the Savior, Whose mission it is to “destroy the works of the devil” (1Jo 3:8) and the devil himself, and beseech Him to rend the chain, to eject the usurper, and to claim and possess the throne and the kingdom of your soul as His own forever! Hell shall not then be your everlasting abode, nor Satan your eternal tormentor. But He Who came into this world “to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Isa 61:1) will claim you as His lawful prize; and when you die, heaven will be your home and God your Father. You shall live and reign with Christ forever and ever! “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith” (1Pe 5:8-9). And then comes the final defeat and eternal doom of him who so long and so fearfully reigned and ruled, the god and despot of mankind. “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

From *The Sympathy of Christ with Man: Its Teaching and its Consolation*  
(New York: Robert Carter, 1863), 327-338; in the public domain.

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**Octavius Winslow (1808-1878):** Baptist pastor and prolific author; later an Anglican priest; born in Pentonville, England, UK.



Whenever Satan stands at our elbow to tempt us, Christ stands at  
His Father’s to intercede for us.—*Thomas Brooks*

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<sup>18</sup> **spurious** – counterfeit.

# FORGIVENESS FOR THE TEMPTED SINNER

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.—Matthew 6:13*

**T**HIS prayer will not suit some of you. You need not be led into temptation, for you live in it already. A man might pray to be kept out of the water, but a fish cannot, for it lives in it. Even so, you whose native element is sin cannot pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” There is another prayer for you to pray before you get to this, and that is, “Forgive us our trespasses.” Pray that today, and then you shall pray this tomorrow. Your sins are accusing you before God today. Your trespasses are clamoring at the Mercy Seat. I hear their cry. They are crying “Justice! Justice! Justice! Lord, smite that man! Lord, smite that man!” With hoarse voices, they cry aloud, “Let him be lost! Let him be cast away!”

While your sin clamors against you, will you not pray for mercy? Mercy is ready to hear you. The Throne of Grace is easily accessed (Heb 4:16). Come before God and say, “O Lord! I know that Jesus died and took upon Himself the sins of all those that trust Him. I trust Him. For His sake, Lord, forgive my trespasses, and let my debt be blotted out by His blood.” He will hear you, sinner, and before you go out of yonder doors your sins may be forgiven, and you may be white in Christ’s righteousness and spotless as the newly fallen snow. After that, then, use my text and pray to Him Who is able to keep you from falling, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, May 17, 1863,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



Christ is a person of highest honor. He is the greatest favorite in the court of heaven. He always stands between us and danger. If there be any evil plotted or designed against us by Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, He foresees it and by His intercession prevents it...When Satan puts in his pleas and commences suit upon suit against us, Christ still undertakes our cause. He answers all his pleas and non-suits Satan at every turn; and in despite of hell, He keeps us up in divine favor...Christ’s intercession should be the soul’s anchor-hold in time of temptation.

—Thomas Brooks