

Whose Voice
Will You
Hear?



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Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	How to deal with temptation	4
Chapter 2	All believers will be tested	6
Chapter 3	Examples of those tested	7
Chapter 4	Jacob was tempted to deceive his father	10
Chapter 5	The temptations of Joseph	13
Chapter 6	David was tempted to kill King Saul	18
Chapter 7	The Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan	22
Chapter 8	Peter was tempted to fall asleep	26

Forward

Recently, I was working on a project that took most of my day, each day. I continued for a long period of time.

One morning when I awakened, I heard: “The Holy Spirit anointing for this project has been withdrawn”. I went for two days without working on the project.

The third day, I went back to the project and could plainly see that the Holy Spirit anointing was still there and had even increased. I was surprised and had thought the anointing had lifted. I clearly heard, “Why do you listen to that”? I knew then that I had listened to the wrong voice.

Throughout the Bible, there are many examples of the devil telling people things with the intention to tempt or destroy. Some listened and some refused to listen.

I hope throughout this study you will see how temptation works, and how to make the right decisions.

Harold Bollinger

Chapter 1

How to deal with Temptation

James 1:13-16

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.

The commands of God, and the dealings of his providence, try men's hearts, and show the dispositions which prevail in them. But nothing sinful in the heart or conduct can be ascribed to God. He is not the author of the dross, though his fiery trial exposes it.

Those who lay the blame of sin, either upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they cannot keep from sinning, wrong God as if he were the author of sin.

The origin of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. Stop the beginnings of sin, or all the evils that follow must be wholly charged upon us. God has no pleasure in the death of men, as he has no hand in their sin; but both sin and misery are owing to themselves.

As the sun is the same in nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, often coming between, make it seem to us to vary, so God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any changes or alterations in him.

What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; and infinitely more. As every good gift is from God, so particularly our being born again, and all its holy, happy consequences come from him.

A true Christian becomes as different a person from what he was before the renewing influences of Divine grace, as if he were formed over again. We should devote all our faculties to God's service, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

James 4:7

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submit your understanding to the truth of God; submit your wills to the will of his precept, the will of his providence. Submit yourselves to God, for he is ready to do you good. If we yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we put on the whole armour of God, and stand out against him, he will leave us. Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us, but God tests us to bring out the best in us.

An opportunity to honor God:

1 Peter 1:7

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Seek then to believe Christ's excellence in himself, and his love to us; this will kindle such a fire in the heart as will make it rise up in a sacrifice of love to him.

Chapter 2

All believers will be tested.

God allows all believers to be tested. Job said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10).

His views were all gloomy. God seemed to stand at a distance, and frown upon him. Yet Job expressed his assurance that he should be brought forth, tried, and approved, for he had obeyed the precepts of God.

God's tests are designed to strengthen your commitment to obey no matter what the cost.

Romans 15:3-4

For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Christ's whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life. And he is the most advanced Christian, who is the most conformed to Christ. Considering his spotless purity and holiness, nothing could be more contrary to him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him; the just for the unjust. He bore the guilt of sin, and the curse for it.

Those are most learned who are most mighty in the Scriptures. That comfort which springs from the word of God, is the surest and sweetest, and the greatest stay to hope. The Spirit as a Comforter, is the earnest of our inheritance.

Chapter 3

Examples of those who were tempted

The temptation of Eve

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Satan assaulted our first parents, to draw them to sin, and the temptation proved fatal to them. The tempter was the devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent. Satan's plan was to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and God.

The devil was from the beginning a murderer, and the great mischief maker. The person tempted was the woman: it was Satan's policy to enter into talk with her when she was alone.

There are many temptations to which being alone gives great advantage; but the communion of saints tends very much to their strength and safety.

Satan took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree. They that would not eat the forbidden fruit, must not come near the forbidden tree.

Satan tempted Eve that by her he might tempt Adam. It is his policy to send temptations by hands we do not suspect, and by those that have most influence upon us.

Satan questioned whether it were a sin or not, to eat of this tree. He did not disclose his design at first, but he put a question which seemed innocent.

Those who would be safe, need to be shy of talking with the tempter.

He quoted the command wrong. He spoke in a taunting way. The devil, as he is a liar, so he is a scoffer from the beginning; and scoffers are his children.

It is the craft of Satan to speak of the Divine law as uncertain or unreasonable, and so to draw people to sin; it is our wisdom to keep up a firm belief of God's command, and a high respect for it.

2 Cor. 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Isaac was tempted to lie about his wife.

Genesis 26:6-10

And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife.

And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, because I said, lest I die for her.

And Abimelech said, what is this thou hast done unto us? One of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us.

There is nothing in Isaac's denial of his wife to be imitated, nor even excused. The temptation of Isaac is the same as that which overcame his father, and that in two instances. This rendered his conduct the greater sin. The falls of those who are gone before us are so many rocks on which others have split; and the recording of them is like placing buoys to save future mariners. This Abimelech was not the same that lived in Abraham's days, but both acted rightly.

Chapter 4

Jacob was tempted to deceive his father

Genesis 27:1-20

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, my son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: [3] Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death.

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:

My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

And his mother said unto him, upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, my father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou bid me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac said unto his son, how is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, because the Lord thy God brought it to me.

The promises of the Messiah, and of the land of Canaan, had come down to Isaac. Isaac being now about 135 years of age, and his sons about 75, and not duly considering the Divine word concerning his two sons, that the elder should serve the younger, resolved to put all the honour and power that were in the promise, upon Esau his eldest son.

We are very apt to take measures rather from our own reason than from Divine revelation, and thereby often miss our way.

Rebekah knew that the blessing was intended for Jacob, and expected he would have it. But she wronged Isaac by putting a cheat on him; she wronged Jacob by tempting him to wickedness.

She put a stumbling-block in Esau's way, and gave him a pretext for hatred to Jacob and to religion.

All were to be blamed. It was one of those crooked measures often adopted to further the Divine promises; as if the end would justify, or excuse wrong means.

Thus many have acted wrong, under the idea of being useful in promoting the cause of Christ. The answer to all such things is that which God addressed to Abraham, I am God Almighty; walk before me and be thou perfect.

It was a very rash speech of Rebekah, "Upon me be thy curse, my son." Christ has borne the curse of the law for all who take upon them the yoke of the command, the command of the gospel. But it is too daring for any creature to say, upon me be thy curse.

Chapter 5

The temptation of Joseph

Genesis 39:7-15

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand;

There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

And it came to pass, as she spoke to Joseph day by day that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

And she caught him by his garment, saying, and lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth,

That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in a Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice:

And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

Our enemies may strip us of outward distinctions and ornaments; but wisdom and grace cannot be taken from us.

They may separate us from friends, relatives, and country; but they cannot take from us the presence of the Lord. They may shut us from outward blessings, rob us of liberty, and confine us in dungeons; but they cannot shut us out from communion with God, from the throne of grace, or take from us the blessings of salvation.

Joseph was blessed, wonderfully blessed, even in the house where he was a slave.

God's presence with us, makes all we do prosperous. Good men are the blessings of the place where they live; good servants may be so, though mean and lightly esteemed.

The prosperity of the wicked is, one way or other, for the sake of the godly. Here was a wicked family blessed for the sake of one good servant in it.

Joseph Resists Temptation

Beauty either in men or women, often proves a snare both to themselves and others. This forbids pride in it, and requires constant watchfulness against the temptation that attends it.

We have great need to make a covenant with our eyes, lest the eyes infect the heart. When lust has got power, decency, and reputation, and conscience, are all sacrificed. Potiphar's wife showed that her heart was fully set to do evil.

Satan, when he found he could not overcome Joseph with the troubles and the frowns of the world, for in them he still held fast his principle, assaulted him with pleasures, which have ruined more than the former.

But Joseph, by the grace of God, was enabled to resist and overcome this temptation; and his escape was as great an instance of the Divine power, as the deliverance of the three children out of the fiery furnace.

This sin was one which might most easily beset him. The tempter was his mistress, one whose favour would help him forward; and it was at his utmost peril if he slighted her, and made her his enemy.

The time and place favoured the temptation. To all this was added frequent, constant urging. The almighty grace of God enabled Joseph to overcome this assault of the enemy. He urges what he owed both to God and his master.

We are bound in honour, as well as justice and gratitude, not in any thing to wrong those who place trust in us, how secretly so ever it may be done. He would not offend his God.

Three arguments Joseph urges upon himself.

1. He considers who he was that was tempted. One in covenant with God, who professed religion and relation to him.
2. What the sin was to which he was tempted. Others might look upon it as a small matter; but Joseph did not so think of it. Call sin by its own name, and never lessen it. Let sins of this nature always be looked upon as great wickedness, as exceedingly sinful.
3. Against whom he was tempted to sin, against God. Sin is against God, against his nature and his dominion, against his love and his design. Those that love God, for this reason hate sin.

The grace of God enabled Joseph to overcome the temptation, by avoiding the tempter. He would not stay to parley with the temptation, but fled from it, as escaping for his life.

Joseph Is Falsely Accused by His Mistress

Joseph's mistress, having tried in vain to make him a guilty man, endeavoured to be avenged on him.

Those that have broken the bonds of modesty, will never be held by the bonds of truth. It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst of crimes, by those who themselves are the worst of criminals. It is well there is a day of discovery coming, in which all shall appear in their true characters.

He Is Cast Into Prison, God Is with Him There.

Joseph's master believed the accusation. Potiphar, it is likely, chose that prison, because it was the worst; but God designed to open the way to Joseph's honour. Joseph was owned and righted by his God.

Joseph was tempted to repay his brothers for the evil they had done to him.

Genesis 50:15-21

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, so shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.

And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? [20] But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Now therefore fear you not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

Various motives might cause the sons of Jacob to continue in Egypt, notwithstanding the prophetic vision Abraham had of their bondage there.

Judging of Joseph from the general temper of human nature, they thought he would now avenge himself on those who hated and injured him without cause. Not being able to resist, or to flee away, they attempted to soften him by humbling themselves.

They pleaded with him as the servants of Jacob's God. Joseph was much affected at seeing this complete fulfilment of his dreams. He directs them not to fear him, but to fear God; to humble themselves before the Lord, and to seek the Divine forgiveness.

He assures them of his own kindness to them. See what an excellent spirit Joseph was of, and learn of him to render good for evil. He comforted them, and, to banish all their fears, he spake kindly to them.

Broken spirits must be bound up and encouraged. Those we love and forgive, we must not only do well for, but also speak kindly.

Chapter 6

David was tempted to kill King Saul

1 Samuel 24:1-12

And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines that it was told him, saying, Behold, and David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.

So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. [8] David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, my lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed.

Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. [12] The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

God delivered Saul into David's hand. It was an opportunity given to David to exercise faith and patience. He had a promise of the kingdom, but no command to slay the king.

He reasons strongly, both with himself and with his men, against doing Saul any hurt. Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and to resist temptations thereto. He not only would not do this bad thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it.

Thus he rendered good for evil, to him from whom he received evil for good; and was herein an example to all who are called Christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

David Shows His Innocence

David was falsely charged with seeking Saul's hurt; he shows Saul that God's providence had given him opportunity to do it. And it was upon a good principle that he refused to do it. He declares his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. If men wrong us, God will right us, at farthest, in the judgment of the great day

David was tempted by the sight of a beautiful woman.

2 Samuel 11:1-5

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

Observe the occasions of David's sin; what led to it.

1. Neglect of his business. He tarried at Jerusalem. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptation.
2. Love of ease: idleness gives great advantage to the tempter.
3. A wandering eye. He had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it. And observe the steps of the sin.

See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop. Observe the aggravations of the sin. How could David rebuke or punish that in others, of which he was conscious that he himself was guilty?

Chapter 7

The Lord Jesus was tempted by Satan

Matthew 4:1-10

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward a hungred.

And when the tempter came to him, he said, if thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

But he answered and said, it is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Jesus said unto him, it is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; [9] And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

Then saith Jesus unto him, get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Concerning Christ's temptation, observe, that directly after he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, he was tempted; great privileges, and special tokens of Divine favour, will not secure any from being tempted. But if the Holy Spirit witness to our being adopted as children of God that will answer all the suggestions of the evil spirit.

Christ was directed to the combat. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves. Others are tempted, when drawn aside of their own lust, and enticed, but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, therefore he was tempted only by the devil.

In the temptation of Christ it appears that our enemy is subtle, spiteful, and very daring; but he can be resisted. It is a comfort to us that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that our temptations, if not yielded to, are not sins, they are afflictions only.

Satan aimed in all his temptations, to bring Christ to sin against God. 1. He tempted him to despair of his Father's goodness, and to distrust his Father's care concerning him.

It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition; and those who are brought into straits have need to double their guard. Christ answered all the temptations of Satan with "It is written;" to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the Scriptures.

This method we must take, when at any time we are tempted to sin.

Let us learn not to take any wrong courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing: in some way or other the Lord will provide.

Satan tempted Christ to presume upon his Father's power and protection, in a point of safety. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of our souls.

Satan has no objection to holy places as the scene of his assaults. Let us not, in any place, be off our watch. The holy city is the place, where he does, with the greatest advantage, tempt men to pride and presumption.

All high places are slippery places; advancements in the world makes a man a mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at.

Is Satan so well versed in Scripture as to be able to quote it readily? He is so. It is possible for a man to have his head full of Scripture notions, and his mouth full of Scripture expressions, while his heart is full of bitter enmity to God and to all goodness.

Satan misquoted the words. If we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God's protection.

This passage, Deuteronomy 8:3, made against the tempter, therefore he left out part. This promise is firm and stands good. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Satan tempted Christ to idolatry with the offer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

The glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unthinking and unwary; by that men are most easily imposed upon.

Christ was tempted to worship Satan. He rejected the proposal with abhorrence. "Get thee hence, Satan!" Some temptations are openly wicked; and they are not merely to be opposed, but rejected at once. It is good to be quick and firm in resisting temptation.

If we resist the devil he will flee from us. But the soul that deliberates is almost overcome.

We find but few who can decidedly reject such baits as Satan offers; yet what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Christ was succoured after the temptation, for his encouragement to go on in his undertaking, and for our encouragement to trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what it was to suffer, being tempted, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being tempted; therefore we may expect, not only that he will feel for his tempted people, but that he will come to them with seasonable relief.

Chapter 8

Peter was tempted to fall asleep

Matthew 26:36-45

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

He who made atonement for the sins of mankind, submitted himself in a garden of suffering, to the will of God, from which man had revolted in a garden of pleasure.

Christ took with him into that part of the garden where he suffered his agony, only those who had witnessed his glory in his transfiguration.

Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, who have by faith beheld his glory. The words used denote the most entire dejection, amazement, anguish, and horror of mind; the state of one surrounded with sorrows, overwhelmed with miseries, and almost swallowed up with terror and dismay.

He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, it is finished. He prayed that, if possible, the cup might pass from him. But he also showed his perfect readiness to bear the load of his sufferings; he was willing to submit to all for our redemption and salvation.

According to this example of Christ, we must drink of the bitterest cup which God puts into our hands; though nature struggle, it must submit. It should be more our care to get troubles sanctified, and our hearts satisfied under them, than to get them taken away.

It is well for us that our salvation is in the hand of one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. All are tempted, but we should be much afraid of entering into temptation.

To be secured from this, we should watch and pray, and continually look unto the Lord to hold us up that we may be safe.

Doubtless our Lord had a clear and full view of the sufferings he was to endure, yet he spoke with the greatest calmness till this time. Christ was a Surety, who undertook to be answerable for our sins.

Accordingly he was made sin for us, and suffered for our sins, the Just for the unjust; and Scripture ascribes his heaviest sufferings to the hand of God.

He had full knowledge of the infinite evil of sin, and of the immense extent of that guilt for which he was to atone; with awful views of the Divine justice and holiness, and the punishment deserved by the sins of men, such as no tongue can express, or mind conceive.

At the same time, Christ suffered being tempted; probably horrible thoughts were suggested by Satan that tended to gloom and every dreadful conclusion: these would be the harder to bear from his perfect holiness.

Peter was tempted three times to deny the Lord.

Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also was with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, this fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.

And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayed thee.

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Peter's sin is truly related, for the Scriptures deal faithfully. Bad company leads to sin: those who needlessly thrust themselves into it, may expect to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter.

They scarcely can come out of such company without guilt or grief, or both. It is a great fault to be shy of Christ; and to dissemble our knowledge of him, when we are called to own him, is, in effect, to deny him.

Peter's sin was aggravated; but he fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design. But conscience should be to us as the crowing of the cock, to put us in mind of the sins we had forgotten. Peter was thus left to fall, to abate his self-confidence, and render him more modest, humble, compassionate, and useful to others.

The event has taught believers many things ever since, and if infidels, Pharisees, and hypocrites stumble at it or abuse it, it is at their peril. Little do we know how we should act in very difficult situations, if we were left to ourselves.

Let him, therefore, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall; let us all distrust our own hearts, and rely wholly on the Lord. Peter wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep.

Peter, who wept so bitterly for denying Christ, never denied him again, but confessed him often in the face of danger.

True repentance for any sin will be shown by the contrary grace and duty; that is a sign of our sorrowing not only bitterly, but sincerely.

Chapter 9

Peter and John were tempted to stop preaching

Acts 4:13-31

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

Saying, what shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. [18] And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

And the followers of Christ should act so that all who converse with them, may take knowledge that they have been with Jesus. That makes them holy, heavenly, spiritual, and cheerful, and raises them above this world.

Peter and John Refuse to Be Silenced

All the care of the rulers is, that the doctrine of Christ spread not among the people, yet they cannot say it is false or dangerous, or of any ill tendency; and they are ashamed to own the true reason; that it testifies against their hypocrisy, wickedness, and tyranny.

Those who know how to put a just value upon Christ's promises, know how to put just contempt upon the world's threatenings. The apostles look with concern on perishing souls, and know they cannot escape eternal ruin but by Jesus Christ, therefore they are faithful in warning, and showing the right way.

None will enjoy peace of mind, nor act uprightly, till they have learned to guide their conduct by the fixed standard of truth, and not by the shifting opinions and fancies of men. Especially beware of a vain attempt to serve two masters, God and the world; the end will be, you can serve neither fully.

The Believers Unite in Prayer and Praise

Christ's followers do best in company, provided it is their own company. It encourages God's servants, both in doing work, and suffering work, that they serve the God who made all things, and therefore has the disposal of all events; and the Scriptures must be fulfilled.

Jesus was anointed to be a Saviour, therefore it was determined he should be a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin. But sin is not the less evil for God's bringing good out of it.

In threatening times, our care should not be so much that troubles may be prevented, as that we may go on with cheerfulness and courage in our work and duty.

They do not pray, Lord let us go away from our work, now that it is become dangerous, but, Lord, give us thy grace to go on stedfastly in our work, and not to fear the face of man. Those who desire Divine aid and encouragement, may depend upon having them, and they ought to go forth, and go on, in the strength of the Lord God.

God gave a sign of acceptance of their prayers. The place was shaken, that their faith might be established and unshaken. God gave them greater degrees of his Spirit; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, more than ever; by which they were not only encouraged, but enabled to speak the word of God with boldness. When they find the Lord God help them by his Spirit, they know they shall not be confounded, Isa 1:7.

Paul and Silas were tempted to get discouraged.

Acts 16:22-25

And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

Satan, though the father of lies, will declare the most important truths, when he can thereby serve his purposes. But much mischief is done to the real servants of Christ, by unholy and false preachers of the gospel, who are confounded with them by careless observers.

Those who do good by drawing men from sin, may expect to be reviled as troublers of the city. While they teach men to fear God, to believe in Christ, to forsake sin, and to live godly lives, they will be accused of teaching bad customs.

Until Jesus returns, and Satan is bound, there will be times of testing and temptations. Those who overcome through Jesus Christ shall inherit eternal life.

To be saved, please pray this prayer.

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary

