

Resisting Temptation

The people of God have allowed many things to come in between their souls and God, and their thoughts of God have been far below what it is their privilege to have. They are not on the high vantage ground where God would have them, and they should realize this keenly, that they may repent and turn to God with all the heart. It is sad to think that though they have professed the truth for these many years, many have failed to understand how to take God at his word, that they may be strengthened in the time of temptation.

Temptation will come upon all the children of God. James writes: *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* The word does not say that we are to count it all joy when we fall under temptation, but when we fall into temptation. It is not necessary to fall under temptation; for temptation comes upon us for the trying of our faith. And the trying of our faith worketh patience, not fretfulness and murmuring. If we put our trust in Jesus, he will keep us at all times, and will be our strength and shield. We are to learn valuable lessons from our trials. Paul says, *"We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."*

Many seem to think that it is impossible not to fall under temptation, that they have no power to overcome; and they sin against God with their lips, talking discouragement and doubt, instead of faith and courage. Christ was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. He said, *"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."* What does this mean?--It means that the prince of evil could find no vantage ground in Christ for his temptation; and so it may be with us. *"For we have not a 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. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

As a people, we are looking for the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven; and how carefully should we examine our hearts that we may know whether or not we are in the faith. There seems to be a mist before the eyes of many, for they fail to discern spiritual things, and do not recognize the workings of Satan to entrap their souls. Christians are not to be the slaves of passion; they are to be controlled by the Spirit of God. But many become the sport of the enemy, because when temptations comes, they do not rest in Jesus, but worry themselves out of his arms, and in perplexity lose all their faith and courage. They do not remember that Jesus has helped them out of difficulties in the past, that his grace is sufficient for the daily trials, and that he can help in the present trouble. We make failures in our little, daily difficulties, and allow them to irritate and vex us; we fall under them, and so make stumbling-blocks for ourselves and others. But blessings of the greatest importance are to result from the patient endurance of these daily vexations; for we are to gain strength to bear greater difficulties. Satan will press upon us the most severe temptations, and we must learn to come to God in any and every emergency, as a child would come to its parents.

We profess to be Bible Christians, and we are not left in the dark to take step after step in uncertainty. We are to know where we are going. We cannot be in darkness if we are following Christ as our leader; for he says, *"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* When the way seems beset with difficulty, and clouded with darkness, we must believe that there is light ahead, and not turn to the right or left, but press forward, notwithstanding all our trials and temptations.

Take courage, tempted soul; for the Lord knoweth them that are his. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* Keep talking faith, and the victory is yours; for *"this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."* Jesus has said we should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life, and we believe it. We are to keep talking of the light, to keep praying and believing, and the light will break upon us when our faith has been tried and patience has had its perfect work.

We are not to be like the man who said, "I have prayed and prayed, but I do not receive." A companion said to him, "Let us pray together then, and claim the promise of God." So they bowed in prayer; but when they rose from their knees, the man said, "I don't feel any different, and I didn't expect I should." This is the way that many present themselves before God; they would be surprised if God should answer their prayers. They do not expect the Lord to answer their prayers, or think that the Lord will hear them, and their petitions are in vain; for they go away as they came.

We must have faith in God. *"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* Our faith is to be tried by trials and temptations, that patience may have her perfect work, and we may be perfect, wanting nothing. We know nothing about the strength of our faith until it is tried. You may not understand the way in which God is leading you, you may not be filled with joy, but may be in heaviness because of temptation; but in all this it is your privilege to say, "I believe the Lord will give me the things I have asked for. I can and will trust God." When you have done this, be thankful, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Do not become restless, full of fault-finding, under the test and proving of God. Do not fret and talk discouragement and grieve the Holy Spirit of God from you. That which you sow, you will reap; and you will not find that a harvest of doubt is a pleasant thing to reap. You must be careful what kind of seed you sow; for it will bear a harvest after its kind. Talk light and faith and hope, and educate yourself to see light when God reveals it to you.

"But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." If you feel that you lack wisdom in this, plead the promise of God. He says, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."* Come to God with all your needs. Don't go to others with your trials and temptations; God alone can help you. If you fulfill the conditions of God's promises, the promises will be fulfilled to you. If your mind is stayed upon God, you will not go from a state of ecstasy to the valley of despondency when trial and temptation come upon you. You will not talk doubt and gloom to others. You will not say, "I do not know about this or that. I do not feel happy. I am not sure that we have the truth." You will not do this, for you will have an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast. When we talk discouragement and gloom, Satan listens with fiendish joy; for it pleases him to know that he has brought you into his bondage. Satan cannot read our thoughts, but he can see our actions, hear our words; and from his long knowledge of human family, he can shape his temptations to take advantage of our weak points of character. And how often do we let him into the secret of how he may obtain the victory over us. O that we might control our words and actions! How strong we would become if our words were of such an order that we would not be ashamed to meet the record of them in the day of judgment. How different will they appear in the day of God from what they seem when we utter them.

What harm is wrought in the family circle by the utterance of impatient words; for the impatient utterance of one leads another to retort in the same spirit and manner. Then come words of retaliation, words of self-justification, and it is by such words that a heavy, galling yoke is manufactured for your neck; for all these bitter words will come back in a baleful harvest to your soul. Those who indulge in such language will experience shame, loss of self-respect, loss of self-

confidence, and will have bitter remorse and regret that they allowed themselves to lose self-control and speak in this way. How much better would it be if words of this character were never spoken! How much better to have the oil of grace in the heart, to be able to pass by all provocation, and bear all things with Christlike meekness and forbearance.

Home religion is greatly needed, and our words in the home should be of a right character, or our testimonies in church will amount to nothing. Unless you manifest meekness, kindness, courtesy, in your home, your religion will be in vain. If there was more genuine home religion, there would be more power in the church. We may have a great deal more faith than we now have, by living up to the light God has given. Says the apostle, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" As you would believe in a friend, so you are to trust God. If your friend has never denied your requests, you will not doubt his promise to favor you in some new desire. You are to believe that Jesus knows just what you need, and will supply all your wants; so you can go on in faith, saying "I have laid my burden upon the Lord, and I will not lay it upon any human being. God will hear and answer my prayers." Satan may say, "You do not feel any better, you are just as miserable as ever." But tell him you believe that God will do just as he said, and rest your whole weight on his promise.

We must have a practical faith, a faith which works by love and purifies the soul. This genuine faith has a purifying, refining influence upon the Christian's character. Those who have this faith will not be careless and rough in word or deportment. They will realize that they are of value in the sight of God, his sons and daughters, and they will be circumspect in deportment, careful in habits and dress. They will realize that they are a spectacle unto men and angels, and will feel the necessity of having a pure mind, of speaking choice words, of acting in a refined manner. They will keep before them the fact that they are preparing for the society of the heavenly angels.

Brethren and sisters, do not let every one know your thoughts and emotions. Do not manifest impatience, keep yourself under control, master yourself. Satan will take advantage if you give him the least chance. You must fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. You may gain one victory, but this is not enough; you must gain victory after victory, going from strength to strength. We are to occupy some place in the Lord's spiritual temple, and the important question is not as to whether you are a large or a small stone, but whether you have submitted yourself to God that he may polish you, and make you emit light for his glory. If you are in the Lord's temple, we must emit light. Are we permitting the heavenly Builder to hew and square and polish us? Have we faith to rest in him?

We must have a faith that is not dwarfed and sickly, but one in keeping with the great truth committed to us. O, let us come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty! We have truth that will sanctify the soul, if we will only allow it to work in us and make us holy. Shall we be sanctified through the truth? May God help us to let his grace and light into our souls.

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