

THE ROARING LION NO. 419

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 17, 1861
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“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,
knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”
1 Peter 5:8-9*

SATAN, who is called by various names in the Scriptures, all descriptive of his bad qualities, was once an angel of God, perhaps one of the chief among the fiery ones—

*“Foremost of the sons of light,
Midst the bright ones doubly bright.”*

Sin, all-destroying sin, which has made an Aceldama out of Eden, soon found inhabitants for hell in heaven itself, plucking one of the brightest stars of the morning from its sphere and quenching it in blackest night. From that moment, this evil spirit, despairing of all restoration to his former glories and happiness, has sworn perpetual hostility against the God of heaven.

He has had the audacity to openly attack the Creator in all His works. He stained creation. He pulled down man from the throne of glory and rolled him in the mire of depravity. With the trail of the serpent, he despoiled all Eden’s beauty, and left it a waste that brings forth thorns and briers, a land that must be tilled with the sweat of one’s face.

Not content with that, inasmuch as he had spoiled the first creation, he has incessantly attempted to despoil the second. Man, once made in the image of God, he soon ruined—now he uses all his devices, all his craft, all the power of his skill, and all the venom of his malice to destroy twice-made man, created in the image of Christ Jesus.

And with ceaseless toil and untiring patience, he is ever occupied in endeavoring to crush the seed of the woman. There is no believer in Christ, no follower of that which is true, and lovely, and of good repute, who will not find himself, at some season or other, attacked by this foul fiend and the legions enlisted in his service.

Now, behold your adversary. Yea, though you cannot see his face, or detect his form, believe that such a foe withstands you. It is not a myth, nor a dream, nor a superstitious imagination. He is as real a being as ourselves. Though a spirit, he has as much real power over hearts as we have over the hearts of others—nay, in many cases far more. This is, I repeat it, no vision of the night, no phantom of a disordered brain. That wicked one is as sternly real this day as when Christ met him in deadly conflict in the wilderness of temptation.

Believers now have to fight with Apollyon in the valley of humiliation. Woe to the professors of godliness who are defeated by this deadly antagonist. They will find it a terrible reality in the world to come. Against this prince of darkness, we utter afresh this morning the warning of the apostle, “Whom resist stedfast in the faith.”

I shall now speak to four points. First of all, *Satan’s incessant activity*—“He walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Secondly, *we will dwell awhile upon his terrible roarings,*

thirdly, *upon his ultimate aim*, seeking to devour God's people, and then, lastly, *let us take up the exhortation of Peter and show how Satan is to be overcome*.

I. First then, SATAN'S PERPETUAL ACTIVITY.

Only God can be omnipresent, hence, Satan can only be in one place at one time. Yet, if you will consider how much mischief he does, you will easily gather that he must have an awful degree of activity. He is here, and there, and everywhere, tempting us here, and at another time scattering his temptations in the countries which are antipodes to us—hurrying across the sea or speeding over the land. We have no means of ascertaining what are his means of flight, but we may easily infer from his being so constantly in all places, that he must travel with inconceivable velocity.

He has, besides, a host of fallen spirits who fell with him. This great dragon drew with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven—and these are ready to execute his will and obey his behests, if not with the same potency and force which belongs by hereditary right to their great leader, still with something of his spirit, his malice, and his cunning.

Think for a while, how active he must be! We know *that he is to be found in every place!* Enter the most hallowed sanctuary and you shall find him there. Go where men congregate upon the Exchange and you shall lack no signs of his being present there. Retire into the quietude of the family circle, and you will soon detect in bickerings and jealousies, that Satan has scattered handfuls of evil seed there. Nor less in the deep solitude of the hermit's cave, might you find the impress of his cloven foot.

You shall sail from England to America and find him there amidst the clashing of swords. You shall come back and journey across the mighty empire of Russia, and find him there in the tyrant's heart, and perhaps too, even in the enmity which is excited in the breasts of those who are oppressed. You shall go into the wilds where foot of Christian missionary never trod, but you shall find that Satan has penetrated into the far interior and tutored the untutored barbarian.

You shall go where the name of Jesus is as yet unknown, but you shall find Satan having dominion there. He is the prince of the power of the air. Wherever the breath of life is inhaled, the poisonous miasma of temptation is a thing familiar. They who dwell in the wilderness bow before him, the kings of Seba and of Sheba offer him gifts, yea, and the dwellers in the isles acknowledge him too often as their king.

Then, remember, that as he is found in all places, *so you have often found him in all your duties*. You have sought to serve God in your daily avocations, but strong temptations, furious suggestions of evil have followed you there. You have come home from your business almost broken-hearted with your slips. You have come into the family and sought to magnify your Master in the social circle. But perhaps in the best moment, when you seemed about to achieve the greatest work, you were tripped up by the heels—your easily-besetting sin overturned you and Satan exulted at your fall. You found him there.

You have said, "I will go to my bed," but in your tossings at midnight, you have found him there. You have risen and said, "I will go into my closet and shut-to the door," but who among us has not met the foul fiend even there in solitary conflict? When we wished to be wrestling with the angel of God, we have had to contend with the fiend of hell. Look upon any of your duties, Christian, and will you not see upon them marks of sin, and on some, not only marks of sin, but marks of Satan's presence too?

Satan is not in all sin, we sin of ourselves. We must not lay too much upon Satan's shoulders. Sin grows in our hearts without any sowing, just as thorns and thistles will grow in fallow furrows, but still there are times when Satan himself must have been present, and you have had to know it and feel it. On some of the old bricks of Egypt and of Babylon there has been found the mark of a dog's foot. When the brick was made, while it was left to dry, the creature passed over it and left the imprint of his foot upon it, and now, thousands of years afterwards, when we pull down the wall we find the dog-mark.

Thus, has it been often with us. While our duties were in such a state that they were yet impressible, before they were yet sun-burned, and dried, and ready to be builded up for real practical purpose, that dog of hell has passed over them and left the dog-foot on the best things that we ever did. As we look

back years afterwards, we perceive what we might not have seen at the time—that he really marred and stained the best performance of our most willing hands.

Ah! when I think how Satan follows us in all places and in all duties, I am sometimes almost ready to apply to him the language of David when he spoke of the omnipresent God—“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.”

But glory be to God, if I climb to heaven, you are not there. There I can escape you. Beyond the reach of your roarings, my spirit shall find her rest in God.

We must observe also *how ready Satan is to vent his spite against us in all frames of heart*. When we are depressed in spirit—perhaps some bodily illness has brought us low, our animal spirits have ebbed and we feel ready to sink, then that old coward Satan is sure to attack us. I have always noted as a matter of experience that he prefers rather to attack some of us when we are in a low and weak state than at any other time.

Oh! how temptation has staggered us when we have been sick! We have said—“Ah! if this had but come when I was well, then I could have caught it on the shield at once—in fact, I would have laughed at it and broken it in pieces.” But Satan avails himself of our sad and weak frames in order to make his fiery darts tell more effectively.

On the other hand, if we are joyous and triumphant, and are something in the frame of mind that David was when he danced before the ark, then Satan knows how to set his traps by tempting us to presumption—“My mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved,” or else to carnal security—“Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years,” or else to self-righteousness—“My own power and goodness have exalted me.”

Or else he will even attempt to poison our joys with the spleen of evil forebodings. “Ah!” says he, “this is too good to hold, you will soon be cast down, and all these fine plumes of yours shall yet be trodden like the mire of the streets.” He well knows how, in every frame of mind, to make our condition minister to his devouring purposes.

He will follow you, Christian, when your soul is all but despairing, and he will whisper in your ears—“God has forsaken you and given you over to the will of your enemies.” And he will track your upward course, riding as it were on cherub’s wings, when you tread the starry pathway of communion. He will dog your footsteps even upon Tabor’s summit and climb with you to Pisgah’s brow. On the temple’s pinnacle he will tempt you, saying, “Cast thyself down,” and on the mountain’s highest peak he will attack you with, “Bow down and worship me.”

And ah! remember how well he knows *how to turn all the events of Providence to our ill*. Here comes Esau, hungry with hunting. There is a mess of pottage ready, that he may be tempted to sell his birthright. Here is Noah, glad to escape from his long confinement in the ark. He is merry and there is the wine-cup ready for him, that he may drink.

Here is Peter, his faith is low, but his presumption is high. There is a maiden ready to say—“Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.” There is Judas and there are thirty pieces of silver in the priestly hands to tempt him. Ay, and there is the rope afterwards for him to hang himself withal. No lack of means!

If there be a Jonah, wishing to go to Tarshish rather than to Nineveh, there is a ship ready to take him. Satan has his providences as if to counterfeit the providence of God. At least, he knows how to use God’s providence to serve his own ends.

One of the greatest mercies God bestows upon us is His not permitting our inclinations and opportunities to meet. Have you not sometimes noticed that when you had had the inclination to a sin there has been no opportunity—and when the opportunity has presented itself you have had no inclination towards it.

Satan's principal aim with believers is to bring their appetites and his temptations together, to get their souls into a dry, seared state and then to strike the match and make them burn. He is so crafty and wily with all the experience of these many centuries, that man, who is but of yesterday, can scarcely be thought of as a match for him.

Did he not drag down the wise man, even Solomon, whose wisdom was more excellent than any of the sons of men? Did he not lay the Royal Preacher like a helpless victim at his feet? Did he not cast down the strong man, Samson—who could slay a thousand Philistines, but who could not resist the dallings of Delilah? Did he not bring down even the man after God's own heart by a most sorrowful fault? Let us sorrowfully remember that we have hardly met with a perfect and an upright man against whom Satan has not vented his spleen and over whom Satan has not in some degree triumphed.

Well, I have thus spoken of Satan's terrible activity, of his following us into all places, and attending us wherever we may go. I am sure that no Christian heart here thinks this to be a mere trifle. Of course there are skeptics.

There are some who will not believe in the existence of this evil spirit. Too, generally, I have noticed that when a man has no devil he has no God. Usually when a man does not believe there is a devil, it is because he never experiences his attacks, and probably never will, for the devil does not take the trouble to go and look after those he is sure of. "Oh! no," he says, "let them take their ease, I do not need to tempt them."

But I say this, if a man has ever met Satan, as John Bunyan describes Christian meeting Apollyon in the valley of humiliation, he will have no doubt of the existence of a devil. When I have stood foot to foot with that arch-tempter in some dire hour of conflict, I could no more doubt his being there struggling and wrestling with my soul, than a soldier who has been cut, and scarred, and wounded, while bleeding and faint, doubt that there must have been an antagonist to inflict those wounds.

Experience will be to man, after all, the best proof of this and we cannot expect that those who have never known the joys of the Holy Spirit, will know much about the attacks of the Evil Spirit, nor that those who doubt that there is a God, can ever be much tormented with the devil.

"Oh!" says Satan, "let them alone, they will fall into the ditch of themselves. There is no need that I should go abroad after them." I think I remember telling you of Mr. Beecher's illustration.

When the Negro went out with his master to catch wild ducks, one of the ducks being a little wounded, the master made the most desperate efforts to get it, but he observed that when it was dead and had fallen down, his master did not bother much about it, because he could pick it up at any time.

And so it is with dead souls. The devil can pick them up at any time. It is those that are wounded, but have some little life left, that he is afraid of losing. Such as these, he is sure to pursue, he will be ever striving to get them safe in his grasp.

II. And now, we turn, secondly, to SATAN'S ROARINGS.

The destroyer has many ways of mischief. Here in the text he is compared to a *roaring* lion. In some passages of Scripture you will remember he is compared to a fowler. Now, a fowler makes no noise. It would altogether defeat his end if he were to frighten the birds, but as quietly as possible he sets his lure, and with sweet notes he seeks to enchant his victim till it is taken in the trap. That is quite a different thing from the roaring lion of the text.

In another passage, it is said that he knows how to transform himself into an angel of light, and then, plausibly and smoothly, he teaches false doctrine and error, and all the while appears to have a holy zeal for truth, and the most earnest love for that which is delicate and lovely, and of good repute. We have plenty of specimens in these days of the devil teaching morality.

You sometimes take up a newspaper of the skeptic or scorpion school, whose writers hate all true religion as much as the devil hates virtue, and you find a most unctuous article upon the indelicacies of some honest preacher or a very pious lamentation over the presumed follies of an earnest minister.

Never let the devil accuse Christians of cant and hypocrisy again, let him find his answer in his own dear allies who can plead for the sanctity of places which they abhor and for a solemnity which they

despise. Of all devils, the most devilish is the saintly hypocrite loving sin and yet pleading against it in order to promote it.

In this text, however, he is not an angel of light, but a roaring lion. I think it was Rutherford who said that he liked the devil best in this shape. I remember in one of his letters he thanks God that He had given him a *roaring* devil to deal with. Now what is the peculiar temptation which is intended under the metaphor of a roaring lion—again, we repeat it—not the slouching gait of a prowling lion who is seeking after its prey and will only roar when it is ready to lunge, but a lion that roars till he makes the very forest startle and shakes the hills, which gird the prairie.

These roars of Satan are threefold. Perhaps Peter here alluded *to the roaring of persecution*. How Satan roared with persecutions in Peter's days! He roared, and roared, and roared again, till none but stout hearts dared to show themselves valiant for Christ. There were the underground prisons filled with frogs, and serpents, and toads, where breath or fresh air never chased away the noxious smell and pestilential vapor.

There were racks and gibbets, there was the sword for beheading and the stake for burning. There was dragging at the heels of the wild horses. There was smearing over with pitch and then setting on fire the body still alive to burn in Nero's garden. There were torments which must not be described, the very pictures of which are enough to make one's eyes weep blood as you look upon them.

There was nothing for the Christian then but banishment and imprisonment—these were the lowest penalties. "They were stoned; they were sawn in sunder; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; destitute, afflicted, tormented." These were the roaring of the lion in good Peter's day.

Since then, from his old den at Rome, what roarings has he given forth, like thunders indeed to all except the men who knew the difference between the mimic thunders of hell and the real thunders of the God of heaven! Let Smithfield testify to the roarings of this lion! Let our cemeteries and graveyards which still bear the memorial of our myriad martyrs, testify how the lion has roared at us!

And let our denomination especially, persecuted alike by Protestant and Romanist, hunted both by good and bad upon the face of the earth—let the thousands who have been drowned in the rivers of Holland and Germany—let the multitudes who have there been put to the most exquisite torture merely because they would hold God's holy ordinance and would not prostitute it at the will of the Pope or prelate—let all these speak and tell how Satan has roared in days of old!

He has not half the roar in him now that he had then! Why, he can do nothing at all against us! His roars now-a-days are like the hissings of some angry cat. All he can do is but to use cruel mockings, now and then a wicked slander, or a jeer, or a caricature, or a witty sentence. What are these? Oh! if we cannot bear these, what should we have done when the lion used to roar in real lion-like style?

Well, well, he may growl again yet before some of us have gone off the face of the earth, for we know not what may happen. But let him roar, we know, blessed be God, that He who is for us is more than all they that be against us.

But there is another kind of furious attack, *the roaring of strong and vehement temptation*. This some of us have felt. Do you know what it is, Christian—I hope you do not—do you know what it is sometimes to be caught hold of by the clutch of some frightful temptation which you hate, loathe, detest, and abominate? And yet the clutch of the hand is seconded by an arm so terrific in its strength that it drags you right on against your will.

You look at the sin, look it in the very face. You feel you cannot do this great wickedness and sin against God, and yet the impulse, strong and stern, mysterious and irresistible, drags you on till you come to the edge of the precipice and look down upon the yawning gulf, which threatens to swallow you up quick. And in the last moment, as by the very skin of your teeth, you are delivered and your foot does not slip, neither do you fall into the hand of the destroyer. Yet you have had reason to say—"My steps had almost gone; my feet had well-nigh slipped."

Have you known what it is to have this temptation come again, and again, and again, till you were in agony? You felt that you had rather die than thus be perpetually assaulted, for you feared that in an evil

hour you might leave your God and turn unto perdition. You have been like good Mr. Standfast in Bunyan's *Pilgrim*, when tempted by Madam Bubble, he fell at last down upon his knees, and with sighs and cries to God, he begged Him to deliver him and He that comes to the help of the feeble at last delivered His servant.

Have you ever known this? This is one of Satan's roarings at you, thrusting his temptation against you like the torments to which they put some of the early martyrs, when they laid them down and poured filthy water down their throats in such immense quantities that they were at last killed. And though they loathed the filthy liquid, yet their enemies continued to pour on and on. So has Satan done with us, pouring down his filth, cramming us with his mire, constraining us as much as possible to yield to temptation.

My peculiar temptation has been constant unbelief. I know that God's promise is true and that He that said it will do it. He that has performed of old changes not, and will be firm and faithful even to the end. Yet does this temptation incessantly assail me—"Doubt Him. Distrust Him. He will leave you yet." I can assure you when that temptation is aided by a nervous state of mind, it is very hard to stand day by day and say, "No, I cannot doubt my God. He that has been with me in days gone by is with me still. He will not forsake His servant, nor put him away."

That perpetual assaulting, that perpetual stabbing, and cutting, and hacking at one's faith is not so easy to endure. O God, deliver us, we pray You, and make us more than conquerors by Your Spirit's power!

Once more, Satan has another way of roaring. I do not suppose that one in ten of God's people knows anything about this—and they need not wish to—Satan can *roar also in the Christian's ears with blasphemies*. I do not allude now to those evil thoughts which spring up in the minds of men who, in their childhood and their early youth, went far into sin.

I know that you will sometimes, when in prayer, be troubled with the snatch of an old song which you once were used to sing, and perhaps, when you would be most free from every unhallowed thought, some coarse expression which you heard in your former haunts will return again, and again, and again. Why the verse of a hymn may suggest to you some unholy thing, or a text of Scripture bring up some of those old recollections which you have longed to forget.

But I allude now more especially to those yet more ferocious attacks of Satan, when he will inject blasphemous thoughts into the minds of believers who never thought such things before. You know how Bunyan describes it. "Good Christian had to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. About the midst of this valley, he perceived the mouth of hell to be—and just when he was come over against the mouth of the pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind.

"This put Christian more to it than anything he had met with before, even to think that now he should blaspheme Him who he so much loved before. Yet if he could have helped it, he would not have done it. But he had not the discretion either to stop his ears, or to know from whence those blasphemies came."

Seldom does the ministry allude to these matters, but inasmuch as they trouble some of the people of God, I believe it to be the duty of a faithful shepherd of the flock, to minister to those who are called to pass through this dark and dismal state. Oh! the horrors and terrors which Satan has sometimes caused God's people, by the thoughts that were not theirs, but proceeded from himself or from some of his fiends!

First, he suggested the thought so vividly, that they cried with David—"Horror hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that keep not thy law." And then, when the thought had flashed for a moment upon the soul, he gave a second horror by saying, "Ah! you are not a child of God or you would not have so vile a nature." Whereas, you never thought it at all.

It was his suggestion, not yours, and then, having laid his sin at your door, he has turned accuser of the brethren and has sought to cast down your faith from its excellency, by making you imagine that you had committed the unpardonable sin.

Now, if he roars against you, either with persecution, or with temptation, or with diabolical insinuations, take the language of our apostle here—“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

III. I now turn to my third point which is SATAN’S ULTIMATE AIM—“Seeking whom he may devour.”

Nothing short of the total destruction of a believer will ever satisfy our adversary. Nothing less than the perfection and complete salvation of a Christian is the heart’s desire of our Savior. He will never see the full fruition of the travail of His soul till all His people are completely saved.

The reverse is true of Satan. He can never be content till he sees the believer utterly devoured. He would rend him in pieces, and break his bones, and utterly destroy him if he could. Do not, therefore, indulge the thought that the main purpose of Satan is to make you miserable. He is pleased with that, but that is not his ultimate end.

Sometimes he may even make you happy, for he has dainty poisons sweet to the taste which he administers to God’s people. If he feels that our destruction can be more readily achieved by sweets than by bitters, he certainly would prefer that which would best effect his end.

*“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests rolling overhead,”*

said Toplady. And much in the same spirit said a Puritan divine of old—“There is no temptation so hard to bear, as not being tempted at all.”

Indeed, it is a stern temptation to be left at ease. When we think we have no occasion for our sword, we begin to unbuckle it from our side. We strip off our armor piece by piece and then it is that we become most exposed to the attack of our enemies.

Satan will be glad enough, no doubt, to see your faith weakened, but his aim is to destroy that faith so that you may not believe in God to the saving of your soul. He will be pleased enough if he can throw mire into the eyes of your hope, so that you can no more look to the goodly land that is beyond Jordan. But he will never be satisfied till he puts those eyes out altogether and sends you, like Samson, to grind at the mill.

Let us take this for our comfort—if it be Satan’s desire that we may be utterly destroyed, in that at least he is certain to be defeated. When it comes to a question which shall have the victory, Christ, the Eternal Son of God, or Satan, the prince of the power of the air, we need have no doubt as to which shall succeed. The devil is but a creature, finite in his nature and limits are laid upon his prowess. If the battle were between Satan and man, then, indeed, woe worth the day to us! We might quit ourselves like men and be strong, but before this giant all the host of Israel must flee.

But the battle is not ours. It is the mighty God’s. He that once broke this serpent’s head still wages war with him. Yea, and Christ Himself must be defeated, the glory of His cross must be dimmed, His arm must be broken, the crown of sovereignty must be snatched from His head and His throne must reel beneath Him, ere one of those for whom He died and on whom He set his love, should ever be cast away or be given up to the power of His adversary.

In this, then, tried believer, count it your joy that Satan may worry, but he cannot rend. He may wound, but he cannot kill. He may get his foot upon you to make a full end of you, but you shall yet start up with fresh strength and say, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.”

IV. With the fourth point, we now draw to a close—WHAT WE SHOULD DO IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THIS ADVERSARY?

“*Whom resist stedfast in the faith.*” This is our first means of defense. When Satan attacks us as an angel of light, we need not so much resist by open antagonism as by flight. There are some temptations which are only to be overcome by running away from them, but when Satan roars, we must raise the shout and the war cry. To run *then* would be cowardice and would entail certain destruction.

Suppose now that Satan roars with *persecution*, (and it is a poor roar that he can raise in that way now!) or suppose you are slandered, vilified, abused—will you give way? Then are you undone. Will you say, “No, never, by Him that called me to this work, I will see this battle out, and in the name of Him who has been my helper hitherto, I set up the banner and I cry—JEHOVAH-Nissi, the Lord of hosts is our banner, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” You have done well, you have resisted, and you will win the day.

Has he assailed you with some temptation obnoxious to your spirit? Yield an inch and you are undone, but become more watchful and more vigilant over yourself in that particular sin, and resistance must certainly bring victory. Or has he injected blasphemy? Resist. Be more prayerful every time he is more active. He will soon give it up if he finds that his attacks drive you to Christ.

Often has Satan been nothing but a big black dog to drive Christ’s sheep nearer to the Master. Often has he been like a tremendous crested billow which has just lifted the poor shipwrecked mariner on to the rock and from very fear has made him cling the more tightly there. If he thrusts you thus, match him by turning even his temptations to good account, and he will soon give up that mode of warfare and exchange it for another.

Resist him. But how resist him? “Stedfast in the faith.” Seek to obtain a clear knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel and then get a good grip of them. Be ready to die, sooner than give up a particle of God’s revealed truth. This will make you strong.

Then take hold of the promises of God, which are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Know that to every doctrine, there is some opposite promise. Have ready for every attack some strong word commencing with, “Is it written?” Answer Satan with, “Thus says the Lord”—“Stedfast in the faith.”

Remember all the water outside of a ship cannot sink it. It is the water inside that perils its safety. So, if your faith can keep its hold and you can still say, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him,” Satan may batter your shield, but he has not wounded your flesh.

*“Amidst temptations sharp and long,
My soul to this dear refuge flies;
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,
While tempests blow, and billows rise.*

*“The Gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”*

The conflict may be long, but the victory is absolutely sure. Oh poor soul! do but keep near to the cross and you are safe. Throw your arms around the dying Savior. Let the droppings of His blood fall on your sins, and even if you cannot see Him, still believe Him. Still say, “I know that He came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, and I will cling to the sinner’s Savior as my only hope and trust.” Then, let Satan roar, he cannot hurt. Let him rage, his fury is in vain. He may but show his teeth, for he certainly cannot bite. “Whom resist, stedfast in the faith.”

But there is another word added for our comfort—“Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” This is well sketched by John Bunyan in that picture I have already alluded to, of the valley of the shadow of death.

“As Christian was going along the exceedingly narrow pathway, with a deep ditch on one side and a dangerous quagmire upon the other, he came to a stand and he had half a thought to go back. And then

again he thought he might be half-way through the valley, so he resolved to go on. And while he pondered and mused, he heard the voice of a man as going before him, saying, ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.’ Then he was glad and that for these reasons. He gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself, that God was with them, though they perceived Him not, that he hoped to have company by and by. So he went on and called to him that was before, but he knew not what to answer for that he also thought himself to be alone.”

Here honest John has our experience to the life. It is likely enough that as I am speaking this morning, some of you will say, “I did not think that anybody ever felt as I feel.” And though I tell you these things and know that many of you have heard Satan roar, I am compelled to confess that I have frequently said in my own heart, “I do not believe that any other man ever had this temptation before me.” Well, this text stands to refute our supposition, “The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”

Martin Luther was wont to say, that next to Holy Scripture, the best teacher for a minister was temptation. He put affliction next, but temptation he kept first in his view. When we have been tempted and tried ourselves, we know how to succor others. I grant you it is hard to have the conviction on one’s mind that you are standing in a perilous place where never man stood before and tempted as never man was tempted before you. Come, believer, we will talk this matter over for two or three seconds.

Certainly your Lord has been there before, for He was tempted in all points like as you are. Scripture says that all your brethren have had some participation in your trials. Now mark, as they suffered as you suffer, no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man. As they came through the temptation safe and unharmed, so shall you. As they testified that their light afflictions worked out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, so that shall be your testimony. As they have overcome and now circle the throne of God clothed in pure white garments, so will you.

And inasmuch as their temptations have left no scars upon their brow, no stains upon their robes, no rent in their royal mantles, so neither shall Satan be able to disfigure or to mutilate you, but you shall come out of every trial and of every struggle, losing nothing therein save that which it is well to lose—your dross and your tin, your chaff and your bran. You shall come forth from the deep waters washed, cleansed, and purified. God grant that so it may be with you, but it can only be so by your resisting Satan, stedfast in the faith.

And now, I am addressing some this morning whom the precept does not reach, for they have no faith in which to stand fast. If you knew what a blessed thing it is to be a Christian, you would weep your eyes out that you are not Christians yourselves. “Oh!” say you, “but you have described to us the temptations of Satan!” Just so, but it is a blessed thing to be a Christian in his very worst state.

As I look sometimes upon those pictures which are drawn by the artist to illustrate the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, even when I have seen poor John up to his neck in the mire, I have thought I would sooner be Christian in the Slough of Despond, than Pliable on the dry land on the other side—sooner be Christian when the dragon hurled all his darts at him, though he smiled not all the day long—sooner be Christian then, than be Hypocrisy or Formality climbing over the wall to go by some other way. It is a good thing to be a Christian even in his very worst state and what must it be in his best?

Young men and young women, as one of your own age, I bear my testimony that to follow Christ is the most blessed and pleasant thing, even in this present evil world.

*“I would not change my bless’d estate
For all the world calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”*

But who am I, that I should say this? Why nothing but a poor miserable sinner, who looks for all in Christ. With nothing in my hand, I simply cling to His cross. Nor am I an inch forwarder than I was twelve years ago in this respect. My cry then was, “None but Jesus, none but Jesus,” and it is my cry now and shall be my cry even to the end.

And what are you today but a lost, guilty sinner? But do not despair. Trust Jesus! Trust Jesus!—and the joys and privileges of the Christian are yours. Now, this moment, cast yourself on Him. Look to His agony and bloody sweat, His cross, His passion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, and you shall find a balm for every fear, a cordial for every distress. All that you want and all that your heart can ever desire is most surely to be found in Christ Jesus your Lord.

May God grant us to be partakers of that grace which is in His most blessed name, that we may not be destroyed by the destroyer!

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