"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"
NO. 509

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

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

CERTAIN Psalms are entitled "Songs of Degrees." Certainly the prayer before us might be called a Prayer of Degrees. It begins where all true prayer must commence, with the spirit of adoption, "Our Father." There is no acceptable prayer until we can say with the prodigal—"I will arise and go unto my Father." This child-like spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father "in heaven," and ascends to devout adoration, "Hallowed be Your name." The child who lisps, "Abba Father," grows into the cherub, crying, "Holy, holy, holy." Then, there is but a step from rapturous worship to the glowing missionary spirit, which is a sure outgrowth of filial love and reverent adoration—"Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We do not commence our spiritual career with this mission spirit; we begin with "Our Father," we go on to feel His glory, and then, the next natural desire is that others may behold His greatness, too, till we are ready to cry with the Psalmist, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." In the process of education, which this prayer so well describes, we find the man very early conscious of his dependence upon God, for as a dependent creature he cries, "Give us this day our daily bread." Being further illuminated by the Spirit, he discovers that he is not only dependent, but sinful, therefore, he entreats for mercy—"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and being pardoned, having the righteousness of Christ imputed, and knowing his acceptance with God, he humbly supplicates for holy perseverance, "Lead us not into temptation." The man who is really forgiven is anxious not to offend again; the possession of justification leads to an anxious desire for sanctification. "Forgive us our debts," that is justification; "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," that is sanctification in its negative and positive forms. Now, it would not be the course of nature to begin a life of prayer with the supplication of this morning. This is a petition for men already pardoned, for those who know their adoption, for those who love the Lord, and desire to see His kingdom come. Taught of the Spirit to know their pardon, adoption, and union to Jesus, they can cry, and they, alone—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

I shall this morning, first of all, *anticipate an objection*. Then, I shall *venture upon an exposition;* and conclude with *an exhortation*.

I. First, let us ANTICIPATE AN OBJECTION.

A great many persons have been troubled by that passage in James, where it is expressly said, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man." It has been found very difficult to reconcile that express declaration of the apostle with this prayer of our Savior; and some good, but very ignorant men, have gone the length of altering our Lord's words! I have heard of one who's custom was to always say, "*Leave* us not in temptation"—a most unwarrantable and unjustifiable alteration of Holy Scripture. Because sometimes a learned minister ventures, in all honesty and discretion, to give a more correct translation of the original—can this justify a foolish unlettered man in altering the original, itself, and perverting the sense of a passage? There is an end to Scripture altogether, if license is given to alter its teachings according to *our* will! To teach perfect wisdom how to speak is too great a task to be ventured upon by any but the presumptuous and foolish. When our version is incorrect, *then* it is a duty to present the proper rendering, if one is able to find it out; but to give translations out of our whimsical heads, without having been taught in the original tongue is impertinence, indeed! There can be no better translation of the Greek than that which we have before us. The Greek does not say, "*Leave* us not in temptation," nor anything like it; it says, as nearly as English language can convey the meaning of the original, "Lead us not *into* temptation," and no sort

of pinching, twisting, or wresting can make this prayer convey any other sense than that which our version conveys in so many words! Let us always be afraid of attempting improvements on God's perfect Word, and when our theories will not stand with divinely revealed truth, let us alter our theories, but let us never attempt for one single moment to put one word of God out of its place!

Neither can we get out of the difficulty by supposing that the word "temptation" does not mean "temptation," but must be restricted to the sense of "trial." Now, we grant at once that the use of the word "temptation" in our translation of Scripture is somewhat liable to mislead. The word temptation has two meanings—to try, and to entice. When we read that God tempted Abraham, we are by no means to understand that He enticed Abraham to anything that was evil; the meaning of the word in that place, doubtless, is simply and only that God *tried* him; but permit me to say that this interpretation will not stand with this particular text now before us. The word here used for "temptation," is not the word constantly written when *trial* is meant. It is the very word which one would employ if *temptation to sin* were intended, and I cannot believe that any other translation can meet the case. Doddridge's paraphrase is a happy one—"Do not bring us into circumstances of pressing temptation lest our virtue should be vanquished, and our souls endangered by them; but if we must be thus tried, do You graciously rescue us from the power of the evil one." I grant you that the word includes trial, as all temptation does, for all temptation, even if it is temptation from Satan, is in fact a trial from God. Still, there is more than trial in the text, and you must look at it just as it stands. As Alford, says, "The leading into temptation must be understood in its plain literal sense." Take the text just as you find it. It means literally and truly, without any variance, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"Well," asks one, "if God does not tempt men, how can it be proper to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation'"? Dear brothers and sisters do but notice the text does not say, "Tempt us not." If it did, then *there* would be a difficulty! It does not say, "Lord, tempt us not," but it says, "Lead us not into temptation." I think I shall very rapidly be able to show you that there is a vast difference between leading into temptation, and actually tempting! God tempts no man. For God to tempt, in the sense of enticing to sin, would be inconsistent with His nature, and altogether contrary to His known character! But for God to lead us into those conflicts with evil which we call temptations is not only possible, but usual. Full often the Great Captain of Salvation leads us by His providence to battlefields where we must face the full array of evil—and conquer through the blood of the Lamb; and this leading into temptation is, by divine grace, overruled for our good, since, by being tempted, we grow strong in grace and patience. Our God and Father may—for wise ends, which shall ultimately serve His own glory, and our profit—lead us into positions where Satan, the world, and the flesh may tempt us, and so the prayer is to be understood in that sense of a humble self-distrust which shrinks from the conflict. There is courage here, for the suppliant calmly looks the temptation in the face, and dreads only the evil which it may work in him, but there is also a holy fear, a sacred self-suspicion, a dread of contact with sin in any degree. The sentiment is not inconsistent with, "all joy," when the many different temptations do come, it is akin to the Savior's, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," which did not for a moment prevent His drinking the cup, even to its dregs.

Let me observe that God, in no sense, so leads men into temptation as to have any share in the blame of their sin if they fall into it! God cannot possibly, by any act of His, become partner with man in his crime. As good old Trapp well observes, "God tempts men for PROBATION, but never for PERDITION." The devil tempts men that he may ruin them—God tries men, and puts them where Satan may try them—but He leads them into temptation for probation, that the chaff may be sifted from the wheat, that the dross may be separated from the fine gold. By these trials, hypocrites fall, being discovered in the hour of temptation, just as the rough March wind sweeps through the forest, and finding out the rotten branches, snaps them from the tree—the fault being not in the *wind*—but in the decayed branch! James alludes to the actual solicitation to evil in which the most holy God can have no part, but our text deals with the providential bringing about of the temptation which, I think you can clearly see, may be the Lord's work without His holiness in any degree being stained. When the Lord leads us into temptation, it is always with a design for our good. He leads us to battle, not that we may be wounded and defeated, but that we may win glorious victories which shall crown the head of our gracious Leader with many crowns, and prepare us for future deeds of valor! temptations overcome are inestimable blessings,

because they make us lie the more humbly at His feet, bind us more firmly to our Lord, and train us to help others. Tempted men can lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees; they have been tempted in the same manner, and can, therefore, succor their brothers and sisters. Yet, while the benefit which God brings out of our being led into temptation is very great, still, temptation in itself is a thing so dangerous, trials and distress, in themselves, are so perilous, that it is right for the Christian to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Though, as Martin Luther says, "temptation is the best school into which the Christian can enter; yet, in itself, apart from the grace of God, it is so doubly hazardous, that this prayer should be offered every day, 'Lead us not into temptation,' or if we must enter into it, 'Lord, deliver us from evil.'"

I do not know whether I have met the objection. Perhaps, in the exposition that is to follow I may be able to make it a little more clear. I wish to say that, although God does not tempt men—that is affirmed in Scripture and reason—and by God's own character—though all prove it to be fact, yet, He may, and certainly does, lead us into positions in His providence where it is absolutely certain that we shall be tempted! And therefore, our consciousness of weakness should compel us to plead for escape from the terrible contest—and deliverance out of it—if come, it must.

II. LET US NOW EXPOUND THE TEXT.

Possibly we may get at the meaning of the text better by supposing that we have just risen from our beds this morning. We are about to engage in prayer. Before we do so, we endeavor to prepare our hearts for that hallowed exercise. We look back upon yesterday. We remember all our follies, our mistakes and sins. We feel deeply grieved. We are conscious that we are, this morning, just as weak as we were yesterday! We feel that if temptation assails us we shall as surely fall into sin as we did on the past day. We have gathered some experience, but we find we are still as weak as water; that while the will to be holy is present with us, how to perform that which is good, we find not. At the same time, we have an intense abhorrence of sin—we feel in our own hearts that we would sooner die than offend our God—we can contemplate sorrow with pleasure, but sin only with horror. We feel afraid to venture downstairs. We fear that temptations may await us in the family, and in business; we feel, therefore, compelled to pray. We know that there is the temptation of the theater and the music hall, but divine grace has made us resolute not to go there, for we feel we could not honestly ask God to preserve us from that temptation if we ran into it ourselves! There are our besetting sins, but being aware of them, we cry to God for help against them. But the black thought comes across our mind—"You do not know what is to happen today. You cannot tell what loss you may have to suffer; you do not know what trouble you may meet with, what rough word may be spoken to you; your ship is on the sea, but you know not what rough waves will beat against it; there are sunken rocks and hidden quicksand—what if you should be wrecked on these?" You feel that you are about to follow the course of divine providence, that whatever happens to you will be according to your Father's will, and you put up this prayer, "Lord, You are to lead me this day; I would follow close to Your footsteps as a sheep follows its shepherd; but since I know not what is to happen to me, allow me to ask one thing of You; I do not pray that You lead me away from sorrow or trouble—do as You will about that, O my Lord—but do not, I beseech You, lead me in Your providence where I shall be tempted, for I am so feeble that, perhaps, the temptation may be too strong for me, therefore, this day make a straight path for my feet, and do not allow me to be assailed by the tempter. Or if it must be, if it is better for me to be tempted, and if You intend this day that I should fight with old Apollyon himself, then deliver me from evil. Oh, save me from the mischief of the temptation; let me have the temptation, if so it must be, but oh, let it do me no harm; let me not stain my garments; let me not slip nor slide, but may I stand fast at the end of the day! May this temptation, though it is not joyous but grievous, have so worked out in me the comfortable fruits of righteousness, that it may be a part of that grand method by which You shall ultimately deliver me from all evil, and make me perfectly like Yourself in glory everlasting." That, I believe, is the meaning of the prayer.

Possibly we should bring it out more clearly by taking several cases in which the Lord providentially leads men into temptation. There is *poverty*. No one will deny that poverty is, in many cases, an infliction directly from God. There are some, who by their indolence and debauchery, bring themselves low, but who pities them? But there are others who by the loss of parents are left orphans; others who can never rise from the helpless penury of their first estate. God alone knows the mass of poverty in this city.

We talk about the distress in Lancashire, and to some degree, I fear, Christian generosity has been diverted from London, but to my knowledge there is much distress in many of the streets of this huge city. Some of you ride through our fine wide streets, which are a sort of ornamental fringe upon the skirts of poverty, and you know nothing about those narrow back streets—those blind alleys and those courts inside of courts—where poverty is huddled together and where too often sin, lust, and disease become its natural consequences! When a gracious man is brought very low in circumstances, it is God's act; an act of God which leads that man into temptation; for poverty necessarily has its temptations which you cannot possibly dissociate from it. Look at you poor needle girl—Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!—till the fingers are worn to the bone, till her eyes are red, and her heart weary; all that she can earn is hardly enough to keep body and soul together, while her clothes hang in rags about her. Do you know how stern is that temptation when a fallen sister whispers to her that there is money to be had so easily, and paints the gainful sin in flashing colors? What arguments can the tempter find in that bare room, and empty cupboard, and thin slice of dry bread—and, perhaps, in a starving mother dying on a few rags in the corner! If throughout life we have been preserved from the contamination of vice, and feel at all inclined to exalt ourselves in our virtue, let us remember what we might have been had we been exposed to the same fierce solicitations; and let us pray for ourselves, and for all our brothers and sisters, "Lead us not into *that* temptation." Circumstances alter cases. Oh, my dear young friends, I pray that no terrible circumstances may ever be able to alter you, but may the Lord who tries you, deliver you from evil! Sometimes the temptations of poverty appear in another form. A man finds that his trade does not pay him; he works hard, but he gets poorer and poorer. What few goods he had in the shop are decreasing; the stock gets lower; the children are crying for bread—his wife, perhaps, is an ungodly woman, and she tells him there is trade to be had on the Sunday, and if he will but open his shop, he will prosper. She says everybody else in the street does it, and all the neighbors call him a fool for putting the shutters up. Oh, I admire that noble-heartedness which I have seen in some of you! It has made me look upon you with greater pride than ever prince did on his jewels, when you have said—"I can starve, but I cannot sin against my God." But when, to my grief, some professors yield to the suggestion, I cannot, and do not marvel—I can only pray for the steadfast, and pray for myself—"Lord, lead me not into this temptation," for if a starving wife, wailing children, and a sickly infant are crying in our ears, who knows how soon we might take ourselves to any means so as to satisfy their needs? Happy are they who have come through this temptation, and have been delivered from the evil of it! But happier far are they who have never been led into it. "Give me neither poverty nor riches," was the good prayer of Agur; and you who have never known poverty, and have never understood what shortness of bread means, pray this prayer this morning for yourselves and for all your brothers and sisters in this church, "Lead us not into temptation."

The Lord frequently leads His people into *temptation from wicked men in the form of persecution*. It often happens that in the course of providence, for the wisest possible ends, a good man is put to work where he finds no godly associates, but where his name is the theme of laughter. God is sometimes pleased to convert the woman while her husband remains unconverted, and perhaps he is opposed to her religion, and will insist upon it that his wife shall not carry out her convictions. Now, in cases like this, God has manifestly put His people in a position where they are constantly tempted with the fear of men. This temptation is inevitably connected with persecution—a temptation to be ashamed of Christ, to hide one's face, to hold one's tongue when one should speak, to run down one's colors when they ought to be waved to the breeze—and like Peter, to deny our Lord! When some young man has been, to use a common expression, chaffed day after day, day after day, these cruel ridiculings are a great deal harder to bear than a lash upon the back. Oh, it is a grand thing if a man can go through this, can endure the slow roasting alive year after year, and yet is delivered from evil! But, dear brothers and sisters, I think you and I may well pray, "Lead us not into temptation," for I fear there are some of you who are like the nautilus which, when the Mediterranean is all calm and quiet, floats in a gallant fleet upon the surface, but as soon as ever the rough waves come, and the Euroclydon begins to blow, every nautilus draws in its tiny sail, and drops to quiet obscurity in the bottom of the sea! There are many such professors, who, while everything goes smooth, float gloriously with us—but if rough times should come, they would be all unknown and unheard of. Many there are, I fear, who walk with religion in her silver slippers, who might desert her if she had to go barefoot and ragged through the street, having no place to rest—her on-

ly destiny being the prison and the flames. We may pray, as we read the stories of martyrdom, or as we look upon some brothers and sisters in church fellowship with us who have to be laughed at day by day, "Lord, lead us not into temptation, or if You do, be pleased to deliver us from evil."

I have merely commenced the catalog. Have patience with me while I mention *the daily adversities to which we are heirs*. Some of us fret and think that the Lord deals harshly with us. Let us mend our tune. What a world of mercy God gives to us compared with what others receive! I hear sometimes of a believer who has lost a ship, or a horse, or has sustained a very serious loss with a dishonored bill, or a bad debt—or another of you is out of work for a week, or else your little ones are ill. Well, I pity you all for these trials, but after all, what little trials these are compared with what some endure! Take the case of Job—house and children, land and servants, and cattle—all swept away at a stroke—and his own body covered with boils! Did not the Lord lead him into temptation, and was it not a marvel, indeed, that Job did not go even further than cursing the day of his birth? Was it not a wonder that he did not yield to his wife's suggestion, and curse God and die? Surely, brothers and sisters, when we see the way in which some saints have met bereavement after bereavement—the holy courage with which others have sustained loss after loss—when we have marked the heroic resignation with which some have borne all the "ills which flesh is heir to," and suffered in head and hand, and passed through painful surgical operations, which have well near brought them to the jaws of the grave, we may well wonder how it is that they have been delivered from the evil of so much adversity, and we may with holy trembling, exclaim, "Lead us not into temptation!" How impatient you and I might have been if we had been sorely sick, or bedridden for years. What hard things we might have thought of our God if He had swept all our estate away. How bitterly we might have spoken of His goodness if our husband were sick with consumption, or if our wife were in the tomb. Our little ones are round about us, and we hear their happy and cheerful voices, but oh, what a temptation to distrust God it would have been, if He had taken them away! Lord, do not so try us! Send not such adversities upon us as to lead us into temptation; but if You do this, be pleased to hold us up in the rough road, lest we fall into evil!

To change the line of thought a moment. There are not only the temptations arising from poverty, from shame, and from trouble, but you know, beloved, that, by far, more dangerous temptations come from *prosperity*. You sometimes envy the very rich; you think of them as having more money than they can count, and broad acres, and parks, and lands so extensive that they hardly know their own boundaries! If you understood the temptations which beset their life; if you knew how hard it is to serve God and be rich—how difficult, especially, to be a courtier, and at the same time a servant of the living God—you would not aspire to so lofty a station, but you would say, "Lead us not into temptation." temptation must be incessant to the man who only has to wish and can enjoy what he wills. Many men are kept from sin by being poor; their poverty is a clog to them. But when a man has strong appetites, and has no person to rebuke him—and has, moreover, all the means in his own hand of running into sin—we may well cry, "Lord, do not try me in that way!" Perhaps you are very anxious to attain a prominent position in the church. You may think, for instance, that to be a preacher, well-known and listened to by hundreds, is a very enviable position. It is about as enviable as the position of Blondin upon his high rope a 150 feet from the ground! If you knew the temptations which beset a man who lives in popularity, and has constantly to preach the word to thronging multitudes, you would say, "Lead me not into temptation, and if it is Your will that I must rise to that position, then deliver me from evil." Let me assure you, that high places and high grace do seldom meet together; and that even in the church any position of eminence is counterbalanced in the pleasure which it brings by the extreme danger to which it exposes its occupant. Long not to be too prosperous! Thank God for bad winds; bless God for a little blight and mildew—yes, and be content to bless Him even if the fig tree should not blossom, and the flocks should be cut off from the field, and the herds from the stall, for any trial in the world is better than unbroken prosperity, concerning which you may well pray, "Lead us not into that temptation."

Now you may see that the list is endless, for if prosperity, honor, and esteem may breed in us worldliness, self-conceit, forgetfulness of God, reliance upon our own strength, and a departure from simple confidence in Him who made us what we are, then there must be trials everywhere! But I think I ought to add that, frequently, God leads men into temptation in *the service which He requires of them*. "Stop," you say, "how can that be? When God prescribes a duty, how can that lead man into temptation?" I re-

ply that to know duty is often in itself to be tempted *not to do it;* and that when that duty is high and stern, and demands of us severe self-denial and earnest perseverance, we may be tempted to shun the engagement! Take the instance of Jonah; he is sent to Nineveh; his prophetic soul forewarns him that the mission will not be to *his* honor. He refuses to go, and attempts to flee to Tarshish to escape the mission of his God. Now, such a temptation is not as rare as some suppose. You think—"I can never face that multitude again." You have to deal, perhaps, with cruel tongues in a church meeting, and you think, "I can never fight that battle through." You have been preaching in the street, and the whisper comes—"Never do that again; never expose yourself to the insults of the passerby." You have been teaching in a Sunday school, and you may be led into this temptation—"Give it up; it is of no use; the children will never be blessed." You may have been a tract distributor, You may have attempted to go from house to house to speak for God, and the temptation may have been hot upon you—"Cease from it; there's no need for you to do it." Your very duty has led you into temptation! Brethren, pray to God against it. Ask Him that the duty required of you may always be such as your strength shall enable you to perform—that you may go to His throne daily, and get such help that your arms may be sufficient for you; if not, even in the highest form of spiritual service, you may be led into temptation!

What if I add to this that God *may demand sacrifices of us* which lead us into temptation? Look at Abraham. "Take you your son, your only son Isaac, and offer him up upon the place that I will show you." I overheard a mother say, "I love my son so much, and he is such a comfort to me that I could not give him up." One observed to her that she should not talk so, for the Christian ought to stand to the surrender every hour, and be willing to give up child, or husband or friend at Christ's bidding. But her answer was, and it was a true one, "I could not do it! It is of no use my pretending that I could; I could not do it, and I am persuaded that if God should command me to give him up—He might take him away, and I would submit to it—but if I had to give him up voluntarily, I could not do it. It is no use in my saying I could." Then, I suggested that, therefore, she ought always to pray that God would not try her that way, but that He would be pleased to spare her the sacrifice which she could not make—that, in fact, He would not lead her into temptation, or if He did, would give her so much divine grace that she would not be tempted to rebel, but might give up her son, though he were to her as her own soul.

Oh, dear friends, there are many trials we talk about, and think we could bear, but if they were once to assail us, we might find it very difficult to do so! It is easy to be a sailor on shore, and to laugh at the winds when you are snug in your beds. It is all very well to sing of the waves and shout for—

"The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze,"

but the battle and the breeze are very different things from what the song would make them out to be, and we had better, I think, while we are free from the trial, unanimously pray this prayer—"Lead us not into temptation."

I want you to notice that word *"us,"* for selfishness will dictate you to pray this prayer for yourselves, but we are more than 2,000 strong, a great army for God united in church fellowship, and you know there are many young added to the church, though a large proportion of the aged also come—more, perhaps, than in any other congregation. Remember our young members, our young men and women, who are very greatly exposed. I charge you, elders of the Church; I charge you, seniors in the faith; I charge you, mothers in Israel, that you offer this prayer today and every day—"Lord, lead *us* not into temptation, but deliver *us* from evil; Lord, temper the wind to the shorn lamb; put not the little boat upon the rough billows; send not Your little ones to stern battles; and, Lord, since we are all weak, old as well as young—since the gray locks cover no more wisdom than the child's curls, except as You give wisdom—so keep all the church, and lead neither pastor, nor officers, nor members into temptation, but if we must be led there, we take up the latter sentence, and pray it still more passionately, 'Deliver us from evil.'" I have heard of a poor miner, who after being converted to God, had a great dread of falling into sin, and one morning after having endured much scorn, mockery, blasphemy, swearing, and ill-treatment from his fellow miners, before he went down into the pit, knelt down and prayed that God would sooner let him die than fall into sin. He cried, "Lord, let me die sooner than fall into sin," and he did die then and there—happy thus to be taken up where he should no more know the annoyance of trial from without, or temptation from within!

III. We close our discourse with A BRIEF EXHORTATION. I exhort you to pray this prayer very earnestly, dear friends, and I bid you do it for several reasons.

First, *remember your own heart*. A man, who carries gunpowder about with him, may well ask that he may not be led where the sparks are flying. If I have a heart like a bombshell, ready to explode at any moment, I may well pray God that I may be kept from the fire, lest my heart destroys me. Perhaps you have angry tempers, constitutionally so; some men still remain hot and quick—some of our Welsh friends, always so; such should pray every day that they may not be tempted by any jeering words, that they may be kept calm and quiet, and not be led into irritation. We have each besetting sins of some sort or another, and I do not know that the temptation to be hot and quick in temper is anything as bad as that to be dull and lumpy and stupid. Generally speaking, a man, who has not some temper in him, is not worth much; and those who, as we sometimes say, are as easy as an old shoe, are not often worth more than that worn out article! We may have temptations, however, of another kind, and just there we should put up our prayer with great earnestness and intense passion, exclaiming, "Lord, lead me not into that temptation." There is a weak point in each of us; and remember, the strength of a rope is to be measured, not according to its strength in its strongest, but its weakest part. Every engineer will tell you that the strength of a ship should always be estimated, not according to her strongest, but her weakest part—for if the strain shall come on her weakest part, and that is broken, no matter how strong the rest may be, the whole ship goes down! Now, I say, there is a weak point in every man; indeed, where is there a point where we are not weak? Show me where our strength lies. It lies, surely, nowhere *here*, but only *there in Him* who makes us strong to do exploits in His name! Therefore, because of weakness and inclination to sin, let each man and woman pray, and pray constantly, "Lead us not into temptation."

To use another argument, *how many have fallen who were led into temptation!* Think of them, not to congratulate yourselves, nor yet to blame *them*, but to take warning. When cases of discipline come before the Church, I have thought how gently we ought to deal, for, had we been put where these brothers and sisters have been, our fall might have been even more desperate than theirs. I have often grieved when a brother has lost his temper, and then I have thought, "Well, I cannot accuse, but I must not judge uncharitably, for if I had been teased one half as much as he has been, I might have been worse than he." When I see another man shipwrecked, I should mind that I carefully navigate my own boat. When I see another who has caught a contagious disease, I should be careful not to go into those quarters where that disease is the most virulent, lest I catch it, too, and if I know that there is a great disinfectant, a heavenly remedy by which contagion may be stopped; how ought I to use it. That remedy is PRAYER, and the precise prayer is in the text—"Lead *me* not into temptation, but deliver *me* from evil, lest I fall as others have done and become weak and vile as they."

Remember to pray this prayer, because *should we fall under temptation, how great will be our misery*. A certain high Antinomian said, one day, that if a Christian fell into sin, he lost nothing by it except—what do you think he said? Except his comfort, and his communion with God! I suppose he thought the Christian's comfort and his communion with God would be a drop in a bucket, but he who has once lost his comfort and his communion with God will tell you quite another tale! Oh, to lose your comfort, to have to groan out with David, "Make the bones which You have broken to rejoice; hide Your face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquities!" Pray that Penitential Psalm over, and you will soon discover that sin is the father of sorrow, and that a saint cannot slip without much damage to himself. I have marked, and marked carefully, those brothers and sisters who have backslidden and fallen into sin, and have afterwards been restored, and though I have rejoiced in their restoration, yet I never can help noticing how different they are from what they used to be. So quiet now—so sad in appearance, too, and though, perhaps, better than they ever were, yet the joy of God is gone; the spring has gone out of their souls! They cannot dance with David before the ark now! You never find David dancing after his sin with Bathsheba. Not he. There was no dance in him after that! He limped to the day of his death. Take care—if you would not make for yourself a garment of sorrows, if you would not stuff the pillow of your bed with thorns, and be perpetually wearing chains—take care that you pray to God to lead you not into temptation!

Worse remains! *Recollect what mischief a Christian's fall will do*. A thousand believers live in holiness, and nobody says anything about them, but if one of them shall fall into sin, the whole world rings

with it! I know not why it should be, but if they can but find one bad fish in our net, they hawk it all round the town in 24 hours. "See here," they say, "here is one of the people who go to hear Spurgeon! Here is one of your professors! Here is one of your Baptists! Here is one of your Methodists!" or something of that kind. Why do they not look at the 999 who stood fast? Why do they not talk of those who serve their Lord well, and are found faithful even to the end? But that, indeed, would not answer their purpose! Brothers and sisters, would you fill the mouths of the daughters of Philistia? Would you make the children of Gath and Askelon rejoice? Would you see the banner of hell floating proudly in the breeze, and the shield of our glorious Christ trailing in the mire? Would you grieve the Spirit? Would you open the wounds of Christ afresh? Would you put Him and His fair spouse, the Church, to an open shame? If you would, then be slack in your prayers; but if you would not, if you would adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things; if you would win jewels for Christ's crown; if you would make men wonder at Him, and at you, because you have been with Him, then pray this prayer—"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

I cannot tell why it is that this text should come on this particular Sunday, but it is very likely that your life this week will let you into the secret of it. Thus says the Lord unto some of you, "This week I will sift you and try you." Pray that you enter not into temptation. Christ pleads for you, for Satan has desired to have some of you, that he may sift you as wheat. Join your prayers with Christ's supplications that your faith fails not. I cannot tell, I am no prophet, but I feel a call to warn you to watchfulness. There may happen something that may make us bless God for this warning note. We are forearmed because we are forewarned. We are able to put our helmet on in time, to gird on our breastplate and our shoes of brass, and to put our hand upon our sword, for the battle is coming, and the Lord has sounded the trumpet and bids us cry—"Lead us not into temptation."

This prayer will not suit some of you. You need not be led into temptation, for you live in it already. A man might pray to be kept out of the water, but a fish cannot, for it lives in it; even so, you whose native element is sin, cannot pray, "Lead us not into temptation." There is another prayer for you to pray before you get to this, and that is, "Forgive us our trespasses." Pray *that* today, and then you shall pray *this* tomorrow. Your sins are accusing you before God today. Your trespasses are clamoring at the mercy seat. I hear their cry. They are crying, "Justice! Justice! Justice! Lord, smite that man! Lord, smite that woman!" With hoarse voices they cry aloud, "Let him be lost! Let him be cast away!" While your sin clamors against you, will you not pray for mercy? Mercy is ready to hear you; the throne of grace is easily accessed. Come before God and say, "O Lord, I know that Jesus died and took upon Himself the sins of all those who trust Him; I trust Him; for His sake, Lord, forgive my trespasses, and let my debt be blotted out by His blood." He will hear you, sinner, and before you go out of yonder doors, your sins may be forgiven, and you may be white in Christ's righteousness, and spotless as the newly fallen snow! After that, then, use my text and pray to Him who is able to keep you from falling, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

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