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Sermon preached by Mr Raven at Shaw's Corner,
Redhill, on Sunday evening, July 27th 1951

"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." I Corinthians 10 v.13

The Apostle shows what a very stern business the life of a Christian is. It is a life of labour, a life of conflict, more or less, a life of temptation; and it is a life of humble dependence upon the Lord for all grace, all strength and all supplies. Now the Apostle, after having sounded a note of solemn warning, bringing before us the example of those who fell in the wilderness after having been greatly privileged, says "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If we think we stand secure, so secure as not to be dependent upon the keeping power of God, we are in a dangerous state. When Jacob was a worm, it has been said, he threshed the mountains, but when he became a mountain the worms threshed him. "Fear not thou worm Jacob, ... thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small and shalt make the hills as chaff; thou shalt fan them and the wind shall carry them away." It is when the people of God are weak and feeling their utter dependence upon the Lord that they are strong. As Paul said: "When I am weak, then am I strong." When they are strong in their own sight, what a perilous state they are in! "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall," So that, when you think that you stand so strong - that you are not likely to fall into this or that sin, you are in very great danger of falling. When you think that you are so strong that there is no danger of you falling into error, or being entangled by false doctrine, you are in great danger. The hymn-writer puts it very wisely when he says of faith

"That makes the soul secured enough
But makes it not secure,

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" The people of God never lack an experience of temptation, because their adversary, the devil, "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." And those whom he cannot devour he worries. Look at Noah, how he was mauled by the devil! Look at David! Look at Peter! How the devil was suffered to maul him! These examples in the Scriptures show how even the best and brightest are only safe as kept by the mighty power of God, and the safest way of living is a life of dependence upon God continually keeping our souls. "Lord we have no might against this great

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company, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto Thee." That is safe ground to stand upon, to be preserved from self-confidence, but enabled to trust in the Lord Himself. In the many temptations by which Satan assaults God's people, he suits his temptations to each one. He is said to have been a student of human nature ever since there was a human nature to study and he makes a special study of each child of God and knows where they are weak. He knew Peter's weakness and he assaulted him on the very point where he was weak. He knows all the sins to which we constitutionally are prone. He knows all about us and he suits his bait, as the skilful angler suits his bait to the fish he aims at catching. So the devil suits his bait.

So there are various forms of temptation, and the people of God often think it strange. They think a strange thing has happened to them. They cannot think of any child of God being subject to such besetments. During his three years of temptation, Bunyan could not conceive that any child of God was tempted and afflicted as he was. Yet the Word of God says: "No temptation hath taken you but such as is common to man." "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Whatever temptation a child of God may have, he has a companion somewhere among the people of God. Somewhere in the Scriptures he will find a similar experience. "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." See how Job was tempted and left in Satan's sieve! It was for a length of time and if it had not been for the grace of God the man would have been completely carried away, would have been completely overcome. But the grace of God abode and stood every test and he was brought as gold through a furnace. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

There are temptations of various sorts. Sometimes a temptation comes to a man in his business, or perhaps in his home life, in his family. A wife may be a means of temptation to her husband as Satan sought to attack Job through his wife. A husband may be a temptation to his wife. And so the devil seeks to make other people a temptation to us, even by means of those we love, those with whom we come in close contact. There is something in us that likes to be thought well of by the world, and the devil works on that; and how often we are brought into a position of great peril by reason of our great love of this world; and the devil works upon that. Temptations sometimes come by reason of afflictions laid upon us. Job was tempted to curse God. He was not left to do it; but he was tempted to do it. He was tempted to think wrongly of God, and in that temptation he fell, in some measure and degree; for in many of his thoughts and speeches he walked with evil men. Then a person may be tempted by the

devil more immediately by infusing infidel thoughts and blasphemies. Sometimes poor people are so tempted that they are afraid to open the Bible because of the atheistical thoughts, and they wonder if it is a mark against them, that they are fully reprobate. "The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." No temptation can assail a child of God without God's permission. As we know ourselves, we realise our own weakness and it is often profitable to realise our own weakness and proneness to fall. The Lord uses that to draw us to Himself. "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe." God is faithful. This is a mercy in the midst of all our temptations, sins and snares. Not our faithfulness. No! The Apostle knew his safety and that of all God's people lies in the faithfulness of God. O, what a sheet-anchor this is to a poor tempted soul! "God is faithful." Where would Peter have been but for the faithfulness of his Lord? "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." What a keeper the Lord is! "The keeper of His saints." "Able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." He is able to succour those that are tempted. He is "able to deliver the godly out of temptation." God is faithful. "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." The devil is, after all, a chained devil, and he can do no more than shall be over-ruled to the profit of God's people and to His own glory in it.

"A faithful God restrains his hands
And binds them down with iron bands."

"God is faithful," and He puts a restraint upon a tempting devil. He said in the book of Job that the devil might go thus far and no further. Then, when further permission is given to touch his body, He says "Not his life." The devil could not go beyond God's permission. The devil can go no further than God gives permission. All these things are measured out to God's people. These things are designed that they may learn lessons of wisdom. And what profitable lessons the saints of God have learned, so that they have had to bless God for them. The Apostle tells us of his thorn in the flesh "And lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me." It was given him, it came from the hand of God. It all ultimately came from the hand of God. And for what purpose? "Lest I should be exalted above measure." What a sweet experience the Apostle got out of it! In the book of Judges Samson's experience was "Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness." O what a vast amount of sweetness did the Apostle Paul get out of his experience of the thorn in the flesh! Thrice he asked that it

might depart from him. He agonised with God to remove that thorn. But it was not removed. He got something deeper. "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Yes, the Apostle knew by experience what his own words meant, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." The Apostle never dreamed of such a blessing as he got out of that experience. It was something that never entered into his thoughts. And so God's people have sometimes to thank Him for some of the furnace temptations experienced. I have often thought some of the Psalms were written under sorrow and turned into matter for praise. God is faithful, although we behave very badly and often have very hard thoughts of Him. We do not show very well under our temptations, but "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

The Lord in mercy to His people sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, not only for the sins of His people, but also to suffer in various ways, and among these ways to suffer temptation. "For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted." There is something very precious in the thought of Christ being thus tempted, and having suffered the terrible assaults of Satan.

"Our Captain stood the fiery test
And we shall stand through Him."

O how pure, how impeccable, the Lord Jesus stood under all those assaults, so that His poor tempted people have in Him a sympathising friend, who can sympathise with them because He has been tempted.

"He feels each tempted member's pains
For their affliction's His."

You may feel you are often tried to an extreme point so that you say with the Psalmist My foot had well-nigh slipped. "When I said My foot slip-peth, Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up." And so these people of God, when tried to the quick in their temptations, obtain help from God. Sometimes God enables His people to think upon the temptations of Christ, and what strength that puts into the soul, to remember how He was tempted, and to remember that He was a brother born for adversity, and that He knows the feelings of the heart of every tempted soul. "Will with the temptation also make a way to escape." He knoweth how to deliver. I read in Samuel Rutherford's Letters about one of his correspondents, a titled lady, and he mentioned it in this way, that she was a woman much tried, but that she had "many and rare outgates." Outgates is a Scottish term meaning deliverances. The Lord took occasion by the many afflictions she came into to use His delivering power and supporting grace. It is not

that the Lord always takes away temptation, but He enables the soul to stand. He breaks the force of the temptations. "He will make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it."

These temptations are of use to His people to teach them many a salutary lesson. They learn their own weakness, they learn their own inability to stand by themselves. They learn their dependence upon the God of their strength, the rock of their salvation. By temptations they are driven closer into Christ. What drives us to Christ is a mercy. We may often pray that the Lord would send us such experiences as shall be a means of driving us closer into Himself, that we may be closer to Him. How much do people know who are strangers to trials and difficulties? What do they know of Christ? Christ makes Himself known to His people at such times as these. He knows, and sometimes makes Himself so sweet a visitor. Then they sing His praises. Look how Hezekiah was able to sing praises. "But Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." "By these things men live and in all these things is the life of my spirit." He would not have known that, had he not been brought into the sufferings of affliction, and you will not know the sweetness of having a great High Priest who can feel for a tempted soul if you are not assaulted by a tempting devil. When you are assaulted by a tempting devil the Lord Jesus Christ comes and graciously strengthens you under the temptation and delivers you out of it; then you know Him in an escape that is very gracious. "Able to bear it." Some poor people have to be a length of time in the furnace, but the Lord has said "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." All that the furnace can do is to burn that which God's people can do better without. All that the three Hebrew children lost, when in the furnace, was there bonds. Neither their persons nor their clothing had even the smell of fire upon them. And so it is with God's people now. The furnace of temptation only consumes that which they are better without. "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." It is said in the book of Revelation concerning the multitude around the throne "These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This is how they got their victory, by the blood of their testimony and by the blood of the Lamb. O how kind He is to His tempted

saints! Samuel Rutherford said he would gladly have "The leavings of the bye-board of the sufferers' table."

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." May we be helped to remember this when we think our cases singular. Do we seldom find a case like ours among the children of God? The word here assures us that it is common to man. "God is faithful." In this God is faithful and able. He is able to deliver. God is faithful. He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able. He supplies all the ability to stand. It is He who imparts strength. "He will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Peter tells us "being in heaviness through manifold temptations" and at the same time "rejoicing". He speaks of rejoicing in what the Lord is and in the prospect He puts before His people. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." The world does not know it. The mere professor does not know what it is, for this sorrow and this joy to live together in the same heart, rejoicing in the prospect of victory and their final inheritance. May the Lord add His blessing. Amen

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