

CHAP. V.

Of the peculiar Temptations and Assaults of Satan against the regenerate and believing child of God, whose frames and feelings are described and stated agreeably to what is recorded of them in the written Word.

THE regenerate and believing child of God is brought into that state, which is truly great and blessed. Looking at what the Lord hath done for him, and other regenerate ones, he may well break forth with rapture and say, “ Who is like unto the Lord our God, “ who dwelleth on high? who humbleth “ himself to behold the things that are “ in Heaven, and in the earth! He “ raiseth up the poor out of the dust, “ and lifteth the needy out of the dung- “ hill; that he may set him with princes, “ even the princes of his people^a ” In the state of grace, to which he is admitted, all the persons in the Godhead are pleased to hold communion with him. The sacred Three entertain him with their loves, give him sweet enjoyment thereof, cause their goodness and glory to pass before him, and, in divine fellowship with the Father in his ever-

^a Psalm cxiii. 5, 6, 7.

lasting love, with the Son in his salvation, and with the Holy Ghost in his gracious gifts and consolations, he receives and enjoys some of the sweetest expressions of everlasting love, which can be communicated on this side Heaven, and which can never be exceeded till time is swallowed up in eternity, and earth exchanged for Heaven. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, is the believer's God and Father also; and he blesses him, so that his title is, "The blessed "of the Lord, which made Heaven and "earth^b." God, as his own God, lifts up the light of his reconciled countenance on him, causes his face to shine on him in his beloved Son, and reflects it so powerfully and divinely on his mind as to make him truly happy. His heart is filled with a sweet enjoyment of the Father's everlasting love, his mind with a divine persuasion of his mercy, and he hath an enjoyment of his peace which surpasseth all understanding, so that he finds himself in the suburbs of Heaven, favoured with a foretaste of eternal glory. The same sun of everlasting righteousness, whose shine makes Heaven what it is, and whose continual shine is the heaven of heavens to saints in glory, shines also on and within him.

^b Psaim cxv. 15.

The person of Jesus is the glory of Heaven. He is the holy of holies. The vision of him is the perfection of endless bliss. The believer has a view of him by faith. The salvation of Christ he glories in. The victories and triumphs of Jesus afford him unutterable joy. The same Eternal Spirit dwells in him which dwells in saints in glory. The difference between him and his brethren is this. He is in a state of grace *in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*: they are in a state of glory. The believer in the state of grace hath communion with Christ and the Father in him through the spirit, suitably to his case, wants, miseries, corruptions, temptations, trials, and experiences. In the state of glory communion with the Eternal Three is carried on agreeably to the state the child of God is in, and there it consists more immediately in the vision of Christ's person, and in giving him unceasing praise and glory for his finished salvation. Here on earth, as no state or frame of mind fits the believer for communion with Christ more than a total and perfect renunciation of self, accompanied with deep loathing and abhorrence of all that he is in himself, abstracted from Christ; so nothing fits the soul more for glory and a blessed immortality than a will, wrought in the

soul by the Spirit of God, to give the entire glory of salvation-work to JEHOVAH JESUS; rejoicing in his wearing the crown and receiving the whole praise of saving from sin, satan, the world, death, and hell, for ever and ever. Our Jesus, who by his expiatory oblation, bloody sweat, soul-sorrows, bloodshedding, and obedience unto death, hath blotted out the sins of his people, saith to the believer, " I am " the Lord that healeth thee." Yea, blessings on him! Virtue goes forth continually from him to heal every wound in his believing children, that sin hath made or can possibly make. This the believer hath some sweet experience of. He believes the blood of Christ is his everlasting purity,—that the righteousness of Christ is his everlasting perfection before God, and that, as in Christ and as one with him, he could not be more blessed by him, or safe in him, if he was in eternal glory: believing this causes him to rejoice in the Lord and to be exceeding joyful in Jesus, the rock of his salvation. The spirit of adoption is given unto him, he calls God his Father, and is led to praise him for his pardoning mercy, which even in his own particular case is above the earth and Heavens. Such is Jehovah's love in pardoning sin, that it ex-

ceeds the power of all the elect to eternity to thank him equally to the greatness of the benefit received. Whilst the child of God is sweetly encompassed in the arms of everlasting mercy, and his mind entertained and richly feasted with spiritual apprehensions of Christ's love and sacrifice, looking to the glorifier of Jesus to be led and guided by him into all truth, satan looks on with envy, rage, and malice. It is the Lord's revealed will, that his beloved and called ones should honour him chiefly in a way of believing his testimony, receiving his record concerning his Son, and setting their seal to his immutable and infallible truth. Therefore he permits them, in the course of their walking with him, as their reconciled God and Father, to be opposed, assaulted, and resisted by satan, to the intent they may have full experience, and learn practically, that salvation is wholly out of themselves, that it resides wholly in the person, that it is contained in the finished work of Christ, that it is treasured up with all its blessings in the fulness of him who *fillet*h all in all, and that they are to receive the whole of it, and be happy in the enjoyment of it, entirely in believing on Jesus to the saving of the soul. When this love hath been manifested to a poor sinner, it draws out the impla-

cable malice and hatred of the devil. It is a sufficient motive with him to hate with a peculiar hatred those whom the Lord loves. When a sinner is turned from darkness to light and from the power of satan unto God, all hell is alarmed. Satan immediately begins to rage; and though for a season he may be restrained from making a formal attack, and entering into a personal and formal combat with the new-born person, yet he only forbears, because under restraint, or, that he may work the more craftily and successfully against him. It pleases the Lord for a season to screen his child, newly brought into his family, from satan's temptations and assaults, to the end he may be the better prepared for them, when he shall be exercised with them. At the believer's first entrance into the state of grace, and on the enjoyments of those blessings which belong to the called of God in Christ Jesus, he knows but little of that body of sin and death, which he is the subject of. It is with him when newly converted and turned to the Lord, as though all sin were entirely dead in him. He feels no stirrings of corruptions. God is his exceeding joy. He draws near to him,—approaches the throne of grace with great frequency and delight,—prays with great freedom and affection,—en-

joys much sensible comfort,—reads the word, and finds his heart sweetly melted, and his affections sensibly stirred within him, especially when Christ and his sufferings are the subjects contained in those portions of it before him. The promises make a divine impression on his mind. The ordinances are greatly prized by him; and he enjoys much sweetness in them. His affections are lively. His heart is warm. His frames are very comfortable. His conversation is in Heaven. His language is “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul^c.”

And thus, like as when the Lord brought his people out of Egypt, he led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near, that they might not be discouraged. So it pleases him, in his spiritual dealings with a new convert, to be very gracious to him in keeping out of sight those trials and sorrows, which will more or less befall him in his walk heavenward. He sees no danger. He fears no evil. The Lord goes before him as his guide. The God of Israel is his rereward. And like as the Israelites, when they had passed safely through the Red Sea, looked and saw their enemies dead on the shore, be-

^c Psalm lxvi. 16.

lieved the Lord and sang his praise; so does the believer in Christ. He says, "I will sing unto the Lord; for he hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation. He is my God and I will exalt him." This confounds satan and provokes him to withstand him; for the appropriating language, "My God," he hates with the most implacable hatred. For a season he is forced to forbear, but he only waits for what he considers a suitable occasion to make an assault on the converted person. And in like manner as when God bore his testimony to the divine sonship of Christ, and the Holy Ghost sealed that testimony by his inward witness to the Messiah's mind concerning it, he was soon questioned by satan, who put an *IF* upon it, "*If* thou be the Son of God;" so, the same evil-one, on the testimony of the Spirit's being received into the heart, "Thou art a Son of God and an heir of glory," the devil aims to call this in question. It is one of his peculiar and almost universal temptations, with which he more or less assaults the holy brethren: and there are seasons in the believer's experience, which suit satan to make such a temptation very successful. The believer after a while is permitted by the Lord to feel

what he is in himself. He sees and feels that in his fallen nature dwelleth nothing that is good. This gives great occasion of grief, damps the believer's holy joy in the Lord, lessens those lively affections, which the child of God had experienced, and thus a way is opened for satan's renewed temptations; which peculiarly consist in fighting against the believer's faith and joy in God. At first, the believer being in a new world, experiencing such a powerful change in his soul, and finding nothing but light and joy in the Lord, is very greatly affected. When those sensible affections to divine and heavenly enjoyments abate, (some of which are not so much supernatural as natural) he begins to feel a strange alteration in his mind; at which satan begins to suit his temptations accordingly. He puts on the appearance of an angel of light, compliments him upon what he has enjoyed, and suggests that it looks as though he had been more than highly favoured of the Lord, seeing his affections have been highly raised after heavenly things, his zeal very great, his devotion very singular, his joys superabundant, his sins mightily subdued, and his mind quite deadened to the world. But, at the same time, he darts this thought into the mind, that, allowing all this to be strictly true, yet

the case is very greatly altered, that old corruptions are still inherent, that it is a matter of question, if they were truly mortified, that, if God loved, surely his love, being unchangeable, the enjoyment of it would be so also, and in short that things are not what they were. Then, together with this, he insinuates, it is a possible case that the soul may have been deceived, that its apprehensive sense of pardoning mercy may have been notional, its views of Christ altogether delusion, and its joys all fanciful. Which so secretly operate on the mind, and influence the heart and affections as to add great force to the energy of his temptations. For, in all this, satan's hand is not seen. The converted person reasons on it, concludes it is his case, looks into himself, and searches to find some good thing there towards the Lord God of Israel; but, in his old nature he finds no change. Now satan breathes with his hellish breath on the inward corruption of the mind; by which means it is excited, quickened, and drawn forth. He draws the eye of the mind to look on it. Then he pretends to preach the exceeding sinfulness of it. This alarms the believer, who looks so much at it as to be overcome by it, which makes way for the devil to accuse. He knows that the conscience

being defiled with guilt will breed ten thousand jealousies in the heart. Now he throws off his appearance of an angel of light, and proceeds boldly to charge home actual sin on the converted person, asks, what he thinks of himself and state now,—if this is the fruit of his pretended conversion,—if he can now be bold to call God his Father,—which, being accompanied with much hellish influence, puzzle and perplex the believer, and cause him to doubt his adoption into the family of Heaven. Thus the devil, having made a breach in the Spirit, goes on working from time to time secretly and imperceptibly upon the body of sin in every faculty, sense, and affection of it, with a design to draw the believer into the actual commission of evil. He is very attentive to the believer, marks him well, studies him accurately, makes conclusions concerning him, tries experiments on him, discharges his whole artillery against him, and is in no part of his skill and practice more successful, than by his sly, legal insinuations. From the moment he can perceive any souls to be truly translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, he attends very particularly to what their views of gospel-grace are, with their professions, experiences, and enjoyments of the same.

He feels the pulse of their minds to find out particularly what their besetting sins and weaknesses are. And having discovered this, which is of vast importance to him, because he hereby knows the better how to suit his temptations, he never fails to improve it: successful or not successful, it is all one with him, as it respects his improvement on it. That variety of experience, which the Lord's people have of the wiles and malice of this their sworn and constant adversary, may be ascribed and attributed to this personal application of his for finding out the peculiar constitution, inclination, and besetting sin of every individual believer, together with his various modes of temptations and assaults upon them. To sum up the peculiar temptations and assaults of the regenerate and believing child of God: satan tempts him to doubt concerning his regeneration, telling him plainly by his secret workings on the mind, that it is very difficult for him to prove that *he is born of God*; as it is expressly said, "He that is born of God cannot commit sin;" whereas he has sinned since he professed to be born again. He adds also, that *all* allow, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" which, with all his profession, he cannot find himself to be, seeing he has the same

old heart and spirit, the same lusts and corruptions within him as ever. As it respects his profession of being a justified and pardoned person, satan suggests this is very doubtful, because the believer himself hath at times his inward doubts concerning it. This, says satan, thou knowest, that after the sweet seasons of refreshment, as thou callest them, thou hast lost the relish and sense of the same: yea, to my knowledge and thy shame, thou hast fallen by thy besetting sin. Satan assaults the soul in the very use of God's ordinances. If the soul enjoy liberty in prayer, freedom in spirit, and exercise the mind without bondage and distress, then he will try to prevail on it to be well pleased with its own performances. If much comfort and joy be bestowed, he will try to get the child of God to live *on* them, and rest *in* them. If there be no freedom in prayer, then he will make use of this circumstance by way of distress. When God is pleased, on some peculiar seasons of grace, to shine upon the regenerate, and enlighten the mind with some high, supernatural, and exalted views of his love, the person of Christ, his glories, work, salvation, grace, fulness, and perfection, so that the believer enjoys more than ordinary communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; im-

mediately satan will make an attack upon the child of God. He will either aim to puff him up thereby, and fill him with spiritual pride; or, he will by his secret wiles stir up corruption within him, and cast in some of his fiery darts to inflame and scorch the mind, and then ask the believer, what he thinks of himself now,—what *he is* more than others,—what sort of communion with God he can have, when his corruptions are as easily stirred and drawn forth as ever. Satan has an art, and most frequently exercises it towards the person born of God; and it is this, *viz.* to turn the very scriptures themselves against the believer, by putting his own glosses and comments on them, and by his subtle and false applications of them to the mind; and hereby he prevails most with the regenerate. Because it is not so easy to detect him, when he works like an angel of light, as when he falls upon his hellish projects and assaults, like a roaring lion. When we review his titles, and what is related of his power, rage, and wrath, in the written word; and how he is indefatigable night and day to distress to the uttermost the child of God, it leads us to consider that we are in continual danger from him. He is called "*The old serpent,*" "*The God of this*

“ world,” “ Satan,” “ The devil,” and “ the deceiver, which deceiveth the whole world,” yea, the whole world, i. e. the world of persons out of Christ, who are said to be in the arms of the wicked one^a. He is filled with great rage against the saints: all the persecutions which have been raised against them are a proof of it. The immutable enmity between his seed and the seed of the woman is a continual evidence of it. He is “ the prince of the power of the air,” and has whole legions of fallen spirits at his command, and under his controul. He is “ *that spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience.*” There is not a sin they commit, but his hand is in it. Peter, though an apostle of Jesus Christ, was so fiercely assaulted by this common adversary, who wanted to swallow him up, that he gives us a solemn warning to be on the watch and guard against him, saying, “ 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^b.” Satan’s temptations are *to saints* afflictions. Yet we are never tempted, but sin is quickened, even

^a 1 John v. 19.^b 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

though we may be preserved from falling by it. Sometimes satan engages the soul in a particular combat. He attacks it on a particular season. In a short time he departs, and seems to leave the soul without any further assault on it, when, after a long cessation, and the believer hath been kept going on with a high hand towards the city of habitation, all on a sudden he returns, renews his assaults, interrupts the believer's communion with God, and then preaches to him in this legal manner, saying, You cannot be the Lord's,—do not be presumptuous,—hast thou never heard that despair hath slain its thousands, and presumption its ten thousands? Knowest thou not that it is written, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?” Sure, says this arch deceiver, you cannot look into your heart and say, you are Holy. In such insinuations as these consist the very depths of satan's wiles and stratagems, as it respects his assaults on a child of God; which suggestions operate on the believer's mind to his very great distress. He forgets the one everlasting foundation, neglects the exercise of his faith on the perpetual virtue and efficacy of Christ's most precious bloodshedding, is led off from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, has his eye off Christ, looks into himself for that which

can only be found in Jesus, legalizes the word of the gospel, makes use of it against himself, and thus satan gains his end by keeping him at a distance from Christ. Hereby the believer's mind is affected, shut up, and contracted, in consequence of harbouring some secret jealousies concerning the love of Christ. The Child of God, in such a case, says, O what a depth of corruption! what a fountain of impurity is within me! I once thought myself among the number of the renewed and called people of God, looked on myself as sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, but alas! such a sight and sense of my inward sinfulness and corruption have been discovered to me in the hour of temptation, that I know not what to say or think of myself and state. I am vile in my own eyes, so that I cannot but most heartily loathe and abhor myself. And if I be thus exceedingly sinful, vile, and loathsome in my own sight, what must I be in the eyes of an holy God? Sure I am, the language of Job well becomes me, and fitly expresses my experience; "Behold, I am vile, I abhor myself, I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." The mind, thus deeply affected with the experience it hath of the body of inward corruption, and inwardly oppressed by the devil through his temptations and fiery as-

saults, is in heaviness for a season: and there is a necessity for it. By this mean the believer learns to know himself. He feels his great need of Christ. Those words from the mouth of his dear Lord serve to sustain him, " My grace is sufficient for thee." The temptations and assaults of satan, with which the believer hath been exercised, through the divine influence of the Holy Ghost have done him good: they have produced such frames and feelings, as will ever serve to humble him and keep him low in his own eyes. His mind is emptied of all high thoughts concerning himself. His frame of heart is meek and lowly. He views himself to be the least of saints and the chief of sinners. The publican's prayer suits his feelings as well as his case, and he offers it up with the energy of the Spirit, " God be merciful unto me a sinner," through the propitiatory sacrifice of thy coequal Son. In the valley of humiliation he prizes Christ's refreshings. When under darkness and in soul-distress without spiritual consolations such a scripture as this is prized beyond the gold of Ophir; " For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,

“saith the Lord thy Redeemer^a.” He experiences that the flesh lusteth against the spirit. He feels the effects of it, which leads him to see that his salvation is all of grace, and that he needs Jesus *every moment and for every thing*. The experience which he hath of himself with the rage and malice of satan against him only increases his importunity at the throne. He is poor and needy, and as such he betakes himself to the Lord, and finds a promise which exactly suits his case, frame, and feelings: “Fear not, “thou worm Jacob, I will help thee. “When the poor and needy seek water, “and there is none, and their tongue “faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear “them, I will open rivers in high places “and fountains in the midst of the val- “leys. I will make the wilderness a pool “of water, and the dry land springs of “water^b.” The fulfilment of which promise to the believer, in a time of spiritual need, renders the grace and good contained in it most inestimably precious. It gives a proof of God’s being *his* God, shews how his eye is on his child, is an expression of his mercy, and draws out the faith and hope of the believer into fresh act and exercise; so that he saith, “Truly my soul waiteth upon “God: from him cometh my salvation.

^a Isa. liv. 7, 8.^b Isa. xli. 14, 17, 18.

“ In God is my salvation and my glory :
 “ the rock of my strength and my refuge
 “ is in God. Trust in him at all times ;
 “ ye people, pour out your hearts before
 “ him. God is a refuge for us. Selah ! ”
 Thus, in the course of the believer’s ex-
 perience, a way is opened for his know-
 ing God more fully, as his covenant-
 God, and for trusting in him under that
 character. Looking on the promises and
 declarations of grace in Christ Jesus, as
 so many parts of the covenant, he finds,
 that, as there is a time for the execution
 of all God’s purposes, so there is for the
 fulfilment of all his exceeding great and
 precious promises, and that some of
 them would remain unknown to him, if
 he were not brought into soul-distress.
 Moreover, in some circumstances, he
 prizes spiritual strength more than di-
 vine consolations : and he sees ground
 for thankfulness for this promise *at all*
times, let his frames and feelings be ever
 so uncomfortable : “ He giveth power
 “ to the faint, and to them that have no
 “ might he increaseth strength.” From
 his own experience he can give God the
 honour of saying concerning him, “ He
 “ is faithful that promised ; ” and may
 add, “ He will not leave me nor forsake
 “ me.” I have his word for it. To live
 thus by faith on God, as he hath been
 pleased to reveal himself in the word,

and to hold communion with him by mixing faith therewith is the glory of our most holy profession: it is doing God the utmost honour, and giving him the highest glory we can possibly render him on this side heaven.

O my soul! learn thou to improve this subject daily. Seek to put honour on his word by stedfast faith continually. O thou blessed God and Father, who keepest covenant for ever, blessed be thy holy name! thou art ever mindful of it. O, look upon the glorious Mediator of it, and upon me in him! And, for his sake, bestow on me thy Holy Spirit, as the spirit of promise to put life into it; and send him to explain and apply thy promises, as my various cases may require. I thank thee for appointing Christ to be the captain of salvation, and for calling me to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil. Thou hast provided me with armour of proof. Lord, clothe me with it. Teach me the proper use of every part, and let me go forward, fighting the good fight of faith, laying hold of eternal life. I ask it for the honour of thy grace, and would ascribe all praise to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to whom, as coequal and coeternal in the unity of one undivided Godhead, be everlasting glory, blessing, and worship. Amen.

CHAP. VI.

On the manner in which the Holy Ghost carries on his own most bleſſed Work and Office in the ſoul, though it is imperceptible to the believer, who is the ſubject of it; and how it is opened to him in ſubſequent and matured experience.

WHEN *Solomon* at the dedication of the temple conſidered the immenſity, bleſſedneſs, and majeſty of the Eternal Three, he broke out with aſtoniſhment, ſaying, “ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much leſs this houſe that I have builded^a?” The temple was a ſymbol of *Chriſt’s* body, and a ſolemn pledge of his incarnation. It was an aſtoniſhing ſubject to contemplate, that the ſecond perſon in the divine eſſence would become man and appear in our world, “ God manifeſt in the fleſh.” And it is equally ſtupendous grace, that the third perſon in God ſhould, according to the œconomy of the covenant, which obtained between the divine perſons, dwell in his people, and thereby conſecrate them for fellowſhip with the

^a 1 Kings viii. 27.