

was to the consideration of our own evil and corrupt inclinations, when we take into account the special dangers to which, being such as we are, we are continually exposed, whether from our position in life, our employment, our difficult surroundings, we may well feel the need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Gethsemane has furnished the best commentary on that petition. No need to particularize that it is an *a fortiori* argument. We cannot know beforehand what is the strength God may vouchsafe at need when the dreaded crisis is actually upon us, so that sensible only of our own weakness in the anticipation, our prayer, if it is to be an honest one, the natural expression of the heart's instinctive yearning, will be the Lord's Prayer, and no other. And that Lord, both by precept and example, has taught us to give utterance to this sense of weakness, and to make supplication according to that true estimate of the danger to be confronted without which genuine courage is impossible, because in this sense of weakness lies our only real strength. A paradoxical form of words this may appear, but, paradox or no paradox, it is the matter of fact we are concerned with. Thrice did St. Paul, when buffeted by Satan, beseech earnestly for exemption. A little while and he is glorying in his infirmities. A strange new pleasure has been unlocked for him through prayer, the strange new pleasure of realizing to the full a paradox, if the world be pleased to name it so, but a certainty nevertheless, if Christian experience is to count for anything,—and no fact could well be asserted in plainer terms than this, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

It is when a man is careless, or, like St. Peter, self-confident, that he falls. It is when a man foresees temptation, fears it, and prays against it, that he stands. It may be that Satan will receive permission to tempt us notwithstanding ; it may be that the temptation will continue long in spite of prayers ; but assuredly, if we look for it, God's grace shall be sufficient for us : His strength, if we rely on it, shall be made perfect in our weakness.

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