

he would fain blow them out; the epistles of divine truth, and he is ever anxious to tear them to pieces; the golden vessels of the upper sanctuary, destined forever to reflect God's praise and his disgrace, and hence he seeks perpetually to mar their beauty. Mere professors cost Satan but little trouble and seldom excite his ire; they mostly sleep in his arms, and he carries them where he pleases without trouble; their words, for the most part accord his will, and their lamp has no light to expose his designs; but all true Christians he hates, because they belong to Christ, love Christ, exhibit Christ, and fight for Christ; because they expose his designs, pierce him with the truth, and frequently conquer him by their prayers. Now the danger of Christians, as arising from their great adversary, is to be traced chiefly to two things; the character of their foe, and the failure of their faith.

*The character of their foe.*—Satan is not omniscient, but he has great knowledge; our acquaintance with ourselves may be very superficial, but it is not so with Satan—There may be but very little introspection with him, for what can he see within himself but misery? But he has a peculiar desire to look into man—has made him his especial study, and age after age has accumulated all kinds of information respecting him; and as the result, most men are better known to their great adversary than to themselves. This might well fill them with terror, and would, if they fully believed it. Most men, however, laugh at Satan's chains while they wear them. Philosophic pride may think itself quite able to fortify the soul against all danger, while Satan laughs at its efforts, and sits smiling in the midst of its fruitless labours. Living age after age, man's great foe seldom witnesses anything new, whilst his vast memory, with the experience of the past, can supply him in a moment with a suitable weapon, wherewith to bring down any foe. The heart of man may be deep, but he can find his way into its most secret recesses, and is perfectly at home amid all its unfoldings; hence, while man is often an enigma to himself, his arch enemy reads him with the greatest ease, and will ever present the right bait at the right time; and while his knowledge is ever accurate, practical, profound, and present, it does not terrify him. He has but to look within for the darkest and most bloody episodes of this world's history; but the sight of it does not unnerve him or divert him from his purpose. He has been accumulating wrath against the day of wrath, age after age, but still he works on, nor does the awful mound paralyse him. He delights in cruelty; and hence with the arrows of the Almighty in him, he loves to inflict

pain. He has witnessed the tears, the cries, and despairing and dying agonies of myriads not only without pain, but with joy. He is persevering, too, in the accomplishment of his designs: whoever may sleep he never does, but by night and day, at all times, and under all circumstances, he works on for the destruction of men. Arising out of his knowledge, cruelty, and perseverance, he has great power; so that even those who have been helped to conquer him, have mostly had to feel and to acknowledge the weight of his hand. This fact our Saviour brings before us, in the figure he employs. "Satan has desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat." Just as easily as a strong man tosses about wheat in a sieve, so easily does Satan toss men about under the influence of temptation.

What a forcible illustration we have of this in the life of Peter: had not the intercession of his Lord grasped the hand of his great adversary, with what ease would he have tossed him into hell, as has done numbers even while in the very act of denying his power. While thus contemplating man's weakness in contrast with Satanic power, with what a solemn emphasis do the words of Christ fall upon the ear, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat."

"Ah, Simon, thou art full of love, and zeal, and self-confidence, but alas! alas! shouldst thou be left for a single moment, did my prayers cease to embrace thee, thy weakness would soon appear, and thy soul would be lost. The enemy would put his hand upon thee, and thy ruin would be sealed." Dear reader, does not thy soul shrink within thee lest thou shouldst be so left? Oh, think of the numbers who have fallen in a moment, and that to rise no more. Oh, think of their tears and confessions; they meditated not the deed which destroyed them, but Satan was at hand, and they believed it not, and down they went. Trifle not with temptation; fly for thy life at once, O reader to the strong for strength.

But, after all, our great danger arises from another source, the failure of our faith. "I have prayed for thee," said Christ, "that thy faith fail not." While the hand of faith grasps its shield we are safe, the fiery darts of our great enemy fall harmless at our feet; but this hand, it seems, may, for a time be paralysed, and so leave us open and exposed to the assaults of our dreaded foe. Here, then, we have that which is more to be feared than Satan himself. Oh, ye who have no faith, what will ye do in the day of battle? do ye not perceive how certain it is, that unless this shield is thine the battle must prevail against thee? "Fight the good fight of faith,"