Temptation (John Owen)

The great Puritan John Owen unpacks **Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.** The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak."

Chapters

1. Intro
    1. Three cautions in Christ's words. (1) The evil cautioned against—temptation, (2) The means by which it prevails—by our entering into it, (3) The way of preventing it—watch and pray.
2. The General Nature of Testing
    1. The reasons God tests us
        1. He does it to show man what is in his heart. Suffering. God tested Abe. He didn't know nature of his own faith. Hezekiah tested to discover his pride. Didn't know depth of pride.
        2. He does it to show himself to man. "All men will do this, but not I!" Medicine precious only in light of disease.
3. What is Temptation?
    1. God allows some to be tempted (Dt. 13:3) but temptations not from God.
    2. Temptation may come from Satan, the world, from other men or from ourselves or a combination.
    3. Sometimes Satan goes by himself, sometimes makes use of world (Mt. 4:8) and other times gets assistance from ourselves
        1. Not like Christ when Satan came to tempt him.
        2. Jesus said Satan had "no claim on me" (Jn. 14:30), that is, no power over him. Not so with us.
        3. With us, Satan has an agreeable party (James 1:14-15).
        4. He tempted Judas this way by appealing to the lust of Judas as he planted in heart idea of betraying Christ. He entered into him (Lk. 22:3).
        5. Satan used world, money, Pharisees etc. as instruments and appealed to Judas' corruption and covetousness (Jn. 12:6).
        6. Temptation is complex. Impossible to organize means of temptation.
        7. Defin: Anything, for any reason, that exerts an influence to draw the heart of man from the obedience which God requires to any kind of sin. (10)
        8. Temptation causes man to sin or gives him an opportunity to sin or causes him to neglect his duty. May suggest evil to the heart or draw out evil.
4. Entering into Temptation
    1. Entering temptation not just temptation. We'll never be free on earth of the latter. No promise we won't be tempted.
    2. Never a time we should pray never to be tempted.
    3. What we are told is: "Lead us not into temptation" (Mt. 6:13). We are to pray against entering into temptation.
    4. Possible to be tempted and not enter into temptation. Latter is more specific. Latter doesn't mean you commit sin or evil or you've been conquered by it. May have latter but not former. He can escape the latter. Christ entered into temptation.
    5. Paul calls it a "fall into temptation" (1Tm. 6:9). Temptation "takes" us (1Cor. 10:13). This means you are entangled by it.
    6. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." (2Pt. 2:9). Entangled but God knows how to deliver.
    7. When we allow a temptation to enter into us, then we "enter into temptation."
    8. But when a temptation comes in and we allow it to speak to our heart, reason with our mind, entice and allure our affections, for a long or short time, then sin subtly draws our soul to take particular notice o it. We enter temptation. *PS: then how can you say above that Christ entered into temptation?*
    9. For us to enter into temptation, two things must happen

1. Satan uses some unusual occasion to attack us with greater force to sin. (e.g. fears, allurements, persecutions etc.)
2. Our hearts must be entangled enough in the temptation to cause it to rise up and in its own defense. Hearts surprised how hard it is to resist sin's temptation.

10. Occurs in two seasons:
    1. God allows Satan to have advantage over soul (e.g. Peter almost sifted as wheat)
    2. Man's lusts meet a provoking object (e.g. David). This is "hour of temptation" (Rv. 3:10). Temptation at its zenith. Entering into temptation. Take a while to get to this point. Greatest force. Dangerous hour. Now it has new strength as opposed to other weaker times perhaps because of certain circumstances. David maybe had small temptation to vuoswi with Abigail but not strong like Bathsheba.
        1. Beware of such a season, when temptation is urged, sin plausible, recovery seems easy and doors of evil beautiful. Be prepared.

5. Temptation's Hour
    1. Temptation obtains its hour in three ways
        1. By long solicitations
        2. By prevailing over others that makes the soul not filled with dislike or abhorrence of them.
    2. Two things for us to enter into temptation:
        1. Satan attacks with greater force than normal to get us to sin (uses fear, seduction)
    3. We're told how to avoid entering into temptation
        1. "Watch and pray"; this means, take heed.
6. Our Great Duty: To Avoid Temptation
    1. We must take great diligence to do this. Yes, God can deliver us, but we must take great care to avoid entering into temptation.
    2. Many verses tell us to do this.
        1. "Led us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" (Mt. 6:13)
        2. **"Considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1)**. He doesn't say "lest you sin" but "lest you be tempted". If greater than us have fallen and we can barely crawl, why put yourself in way of temptation? Yet we quickly put ourselves in the way of temptation.
        3. Don't flatter yourself that you can hold out. Secret lusts lie dormant in our hearts.
        4. "If a castle is very strong and well fortified, and yet there is a traitor on the inside who is ready to betray it at the first opportunity, that castle is not secure from the enemy,. We have traitor in our very hearts that is ready to take part and unite against us at every temptation. They will argue for us to give up in the assault; they will even solicit and bribe the temptation to do its work, just as a traitor incites the enemy." (26)
7. The Folly of trusting in our own hearts
    1. "The heart of the wicked is little worth." (Pr. 10:20).
    2. "He that trustees in his own heart is a fool" (Pr. 28:26)
    3. All of us think we would never fall to such sins
        1. "Am I a dog, said Hazael, that I should do this thing?"
        2. Though all men should deny you I will not, said Peter.
    4. "The heart is deceitful" (Jer. 17:9)
8. Temptation darkens the mind
    1. "Temptation will lay the rains on the neck of a lust, and put spurs to its sides, so that it may rush forward like a horse into the battle." (37)
9. Public temptations
10. Private temptations
    1. You'll never defeat the temptation until lust is killed.
    2. "Even though the temptation may not have prevailed as to the outward expression of the sin, have you not been baffled, your soul polluted, and your mind grievously perplexed with it?" (46)
11. Why must we fear temptation?
    1. We must not enter temptation.

2. Objections 1: Wasn't Jesus tempted? So why is it bad to enter into same state as He?
    1. Indeed, Jesus has gone through temptation and thus is able to help us (Hb. 2:18)
    2. Jesus' temptations came from without. He didn't willingly place himself into temptation. This would have been to tempt God (Mt. 4:7).
    3. No matter what we do, we'll still be tempted, thus we must labor much to avoid as much as possible falling into temptation.
    4. In one way we are like Christ, in that we face trials etc. In another way we are not like him in that we are defiled and entangled by temptation.
3. Objection 2: why must we be so careful to avoid temptation if Christ promised us not to give us more than we are able (1Cor. 10:13) and that he'll reduce us from temptation (2Pt. 2:9).
    1. How much will God help us if we willingly place ourselves in temptation.
    2. Promises above are to those who find themselves tempted, not for those who willingly put themselves in the way.
    3. To approach temptation thus that you expect God to forgive you is essentially sinning so grace may abound (Rm. 6:1-2)

12. Knowing our danger
    1. How may someone know if he has entered into temptation?
        1. When a man is drawn into any sin. All sin is the result of temptation (Jms 1:14)
        2. When we repent of sin, we should see temptation as cause of it and be careful not to enter into it again. Else he'll fall again.
        3. Many sensible of their sins but not temptations. Displeased with the bitter root but not poisonous root.
        4. **Hezekiah had a root of pride, David too, and Judas of covetousness but this didn't show up until temptations to manifest these things.**
        5. Also, when the heart secretly enjoys the temptation. (e.g man is known for piety and skill and in time the heart loves hearing these things). Often this way for scholars. They determine to study day and night, which is good in itself, but in order to have praise of men. This is fulfilling their lusts. Some wake up early and go to bed late to feed their own lusts.
        6. Also, whenever a man's life gives way to fulfill his lusts. Entering into temptation isn't merely being tempted. But to be under strong temptation and to be entangled by it. Almost impossible to find temptation well suited to him and not be entangled. When ambassadors came to Hezekiah, he fell in his pride. Priests revealed Judas' covetousness.
        7. Some think they can play on the hole of the asp and not be bitten or play with pitch and not get dirty or play with fire and not be burned.

13. Means of preservation
    1. What are the best ways to be preserved from falling into temptation? Watch and pray (Mt. 26:41)
    2. Be clearly aware of the evil and temptation around you
        1. Some only concerned about the outward sin.
        2. "Let no man pretend to fear sin that does not fear the temptation also! These two are too closely united to be separated."