

**Chapter 17 of the 1689 Confession of Faith: “Of The Perseverance of the Saints”,
Session # 8, “Perseverance and Spiritual Battle”, Presented by Pastor
Paul Rendall in the Adult Sunday School, on September 24th, 2017.**

Paragraph 3 - And though they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous i)sins, and for a time continue therein j), whereby they incur k)God’s displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and l)comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, m)hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments n)upon themselves, yet shall they renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

i) Matthew 26: 70, 72, 74; k) Isaiah 64: 5, 9; Ephesians 4: 30; l) Psalm 51: 10,12;

m) Psalm 32: 3-4; n) 2nd Samuel 12:14; o) Luke 22: 32, 61-62

1st Peter 5: 5-9 – “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

It is good to understand that in the spiritual battle with Satan, the best possible spiritual position that you can take is to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble. One thing that we can conclude from the arrangement of these verses is that Satan can greatly take advantage of a person who does not want to submit themselves to their elders. Indeed all of us should be submissive in our attitude towards one another, realizing that we are all under Christ’s authority. We therefore ought to be clothed with humility. Pride was the sin of the Devil in the beginning, that led to his fall. It ought not to be ours.

Our responsibility in respect of being able to do battle with the Devil’s schemes is to be watchful, sober, and vigilant, because the Devil is prowling about like a roaring lion, seeking whom He might devour. We are to resist him, steadfast in our faith. What does it mean to watch? Turn with me over to Luke 24: 31.

Luke 22: 31 – “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon!’ “Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.” “But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” “But he said to Him, Lord I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” “Then He said, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

Matthew 26: 31 – “Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I WILL STRIKE THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK WILL BE SCATTERED.' But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter answered and said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." Peter said to Him, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And so said all the disciples. Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot

pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

Now, how do you think that Satan "sifted" Peter like wheat? He got him to thinking that his own determination to do what was right was enough to enable Him to go with Christ into this great spiritual battle. He didn't have to watch and pray. Jesus had warned him twice that he needed to watch and pray lest he enter into temptation. His spirit was willing, but His flesh was weak. This is how it is for all Christians. This principle of truth must be believed and we must indeed watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. To enter means to give in to the temptation. What then must we do that we not enter in? Watch and pray. Watch against fleshly weakness and try to understand the Devil's tactics. In Peter's case it was to get him to think that he could follow his Master to the cross and die, without wrestling and struggling in prayer over it like Jesus Himself did.

Listen to John Calvin here: "Watch and pray. As the disciples were unmoved by their Master's danger, their attention is directed to themselves, that a conviction of their own danger may arouse them. Christ therefore threatens that, if they do not watch and pray, they may be soon overwhelmed by temptation. As if He had said, "Though you take no concern about Me, do not fail, at least, to think of yourselves; for your own interests are involved in it, and if you do not take care, temptation will immediately swallow you up." For to enter into temptation means to yield to it. And let us observe, that the manner of resistance which is here enjoined is, not to draw courage from reliance on our own strength and perseverance, but, on the contrary, from a conviction of our weakness, to ask arms and strength from the Lord. Our watching, therefore, will be of no avail without prayer."

"The spirit indeed is willing." That He may not terrify and discourage His disciples, He gently reproves their slothfulness, and adds consolation and good ground of hope. And, first, He reminds them, that though they are earnestly desirous to do what is right, still they must contend with the weakness of the flesh, and, therefore, that prayer is never unnecessary. We see, then, that He gives them the praise of willingness, in order that their weakness may not throw them into despair, and yet urges them to prayer, because they are not sufficiently endued with the power of the Spirit. Wherefore, this admonition relates properly to believers, who, being regenerated by the Spirit of God, are desirous to do what is right, but still labor under the weakness of the flesh; for though the grace of the Spirit is vigorous in them, they are weak according to the flesh. And though the disciples alone have their weakness here pointed out to them, yet, since what Christ says of them applies equally to all, we ought to draw from it a general rule, that it is our duty to keep diligent watch by praying; for we do not yet possess the power of the Spirit in such a measure as not to fall frequently through the weakness of the flesh, unless the Lord grant his assistance to raise up and uphold us. But there is no reason why we should tremble with excessive anxiety; for an undoubted remedy is held out to us, which we will neither have, nor to seek, nor to seek in vain; for Christ promises that all who, being earnest in prayer, shall perseveringly oppose the slothfulness of the flesh, will be victorious."