

Benefits of Temptation

By G.A.W.

Grace has to work a great many miracles in us before we get far enough along to heartily sanction the words of St. James, to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations." But there is a place of such victory and union with Christ that the soul can really find a source of joy from every trial and temptation through which it has gone. It is almost impossible for us to see any benefits of being tempted while we are passing through them; the sensibilities are so pierced by fiery darts, the mind is so distracted by evil suggestions, the will is so beset with opposite motives, the rattle of spiritual musketry and smoke of battles obscures the vision from seeing any blessing likely to come out of it. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are properly exercised thereby. Among the benefits of being tried by temptation, we may mention.

1. Resisting any given evil to which the soul is tempted will induce an increased hatred for that sin. The very habit of fighting any particular sin will form a habit of loathing for that sin. It is watched as an old and bitter foe. In long and bitter feuds between families there is not only hatred for the principal agents, but hatred for the children, their relatives, their property. So the persistent fight against some old ruling passion, some old besetting sin, arouses in the soul a universal revenge, not only against the old sin itself, but against all its family relatives, and a jealous hatred to all the insidious steps that lead to that sin. The holiest saints in all ages have been those who were the most sorely tempted. Surely it is a great blessing to loathe sin, and a still greater blessing to loathe that particular sin that has done us the most damage. It is God's design that we shall have the most perfect victory on the very points where we have been the weakest. This requires a limitless crucifixion of self and a complete possession by the Holy Ghost. But it can be done, and has been done, in thousands of cases. And such victory has been brought about by awful temptations to some sin which developed a boundless, unrelenting hatred for that sin.

2. Temptation drives us to a deep, serious study of ourselves; it makes us take ourselves all to pieces, to analyze our affections, our wills, our motives, our propensities; it makes us search the quality of our actions, thoughts, words; it makes us scrutinize our real chances for heaven or hell; it makes us

dig in solitude to the very secret foundation of our character. Temptation compels us to study the awful nature of sin; it makes us trace the danger of wrong affections, of evil thoughts, of improper words; it opens our eyes to see the hell-fire that stealthily sleeps in so-called little sins. To be thoroughly tempted is the pathway to a thorough knowledge of ourselves and of the malignity of sin.

3. Temptation makes us see our true nothingness and weakness. It withers our cleverness, cauterizes our smartness, teaches us true humiliation and self-abasement. It clips the rattling talkativeness from our tongues, gives us a real, healthy hatred of ourselves, and shows us our demerit in a strong light. It leads us to patient endurance. When we are first tempted, we chafe and fret; when it comes back still stronger, we whimper and whine; the next time, we try to fight the devil with our fist, we bluster with our will-power against being so assaulted; at the next time, we break down and cry like a child whose Sunday clothes have been bespattered by a bad boy; then we wonder what we shall do; then we half despair of getting complete victory; at last we quiver long-sufferingly in the hand of God, and patiently look to Jesus as an afflicted child looks to its mother's face while its wound is being dressed. But for the severe temptations, the soul would go skipping along, gloating over its own pretty piety, full of self-admiration. As a severe case of smallpox will prevent a pretty face from standing before a mirror, so terrible temptations prevent holy souls from admiring their own graces.

4. Temptation leads us into real heart-felt sympathy and compassion for others. It takes deep trials to soften and widen the sympathies. Every tree has its special parasites to attack it, and it does seem that *severity* is the special parasite that fastens itself onto religion in a human soul. If a cold, condemnatory saint is put through an unexplainable conflict of soul that makes him roll on the floor in agony for hours at a time, while his body is wet with perspiration, when he comes out of that sulphur bath, if he comes out on the Christ-side, there will be a tenderness in his judgment and a broadness in his compassion which no camp-meeting hallelujahs could ever impart.[Amen! Editor] Blessed are they that endure temptation till not only sinful self is purged out, but till the last form of righteous self is gone, and the soul is taken out of its furnaces into a supernatural embrace of the Holy Spirit.

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