

Temptations work for our good

Daily meditation

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Temptations work for our good, by Thomas Waston.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose,” Romans eight verse 28.

Even temptations are overruled for good to the children of God. A tree which is shaken by the wind is more settled and rooted. Just so, the blowing of a temptation does but settle a Christian the more in grace.

Temptations are overruled for good in eight ways.

Number one. Temptation sends the soul to prayer. The more furiously Satan tempts, the more fervently the saint prays. The deer being shot with the dart runs faster to the water. When Satan shoots his fiery darts at the soul it then runs faster to the throne of grace.

When Paul had the messenger of Satan to buffet him he says, “Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me,” 2 Corinthians 12 verse eight.

That which makes us pray more, works for good.

Number two. Temptation to sin is a means to keep from the perpetration of sin. The more a child of God is tempted the more he fights against the temptation. The more Satan tempts to blasphemy the more a saint trembles at such thoughts and says, "Away from me, Satan."

When Joseph's mistress tempted him to lust, the stronger her temptation was the stronger was his opposition. That temptation which the devil used as a spur to sin, God makes a bridle to keep back a Christian from sin.

Number three. Temptation works for good as it abates the swelling of pride.

“To keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud,” 2 Corinthians 12 verse seven.

The thorn in the flesh was to puncture the balloon of pride. Better is that temptation which humbles me than that duty which makes me proud. Rather than a Christian shall be haughty minded. God will let him fall into the devil's hands awhile to be cured of his swelling pride.

Number four. Temptation works for good as it is a touchstone to try what is in the heart. The devil tempts that he may deceive us, but God allows us to be tempted that he may test us.

Temptation is a trial of our sincerity. It argues that our heart is chaste and loyal to Christ. When we can look a temptation in the face and turn our back upon it many have no heart to resist temptation. No sooner does Satan come with his bait, but they yield. They are like a coward who, as soon as the thief approaches, gives him his purse. But he is the valorous Christian who brandishes the sword of the Spirit against Satan and will rather die than yield.

The valor and courage of a saint is never more seen than on a battlefield when he is fighting the red dragon and, by the power of faith, puts the devil to flight. That grace is tried gold which can stand in the fiery trial and withstand Satan's fiery darts.

Number five. Temptations work for good as God makes those who are tempted fit to comfort others in the same distress. A Christian must himself be under the buffetings of Satan before he can speak a word in due season to him who is weary.

Paul was well versed in temptations. "We are very familiar with his evil schemes," 2 Corinthians two verse 11.

Thus, he was able to acquaint others with Satan's cursed wiles, 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13.

A man who has ridden over a place where there are bogs and quicksands is the fittest to guide others through that dangerous way. He who has felt the claws of Satan, the roaring lion, and has lain bleeding under those wounds is the fittest man to deal with one who is tempted. None can better discover Satan's subtle devices than those who have been long in the fencing school of temptation.

Number six. Temptations work for good as they stir up fatherly compassion in God to those who are tempted. The child who is sick and bruised is most looked after. When a saint lies under the bruising of temptations Christ prays and God the Father pities. When Satan puts the soul into a fever God comes with a cordial.

This made Luther say that, "temptations are Christ's embraces because he then most sweetly manifests himself to the soul."

Numbers seven. Temptations work for good as they make the saints long more for heaven. There they shall be out of gunshot.

Heaven is a place of rest. No bullets of temptation fly there. The eagle which soars aloft in the air and sits upon high trees is not troubled with the stinging of the serpent. Just so, when believers are ascended to heaven they shall not be molested by the old serpent, the devil.

In this life when one temptation is over another comes. This makes God's people wish for death to call them off the battlefield where the bullets fly so quick and to receive a victorious crown where neither the gun nor cannon, but the harp and violin, shall be eternally sounding.

Number eight. Temptations work for good as they engage the strength of Christ. Christ is our friend, and when we are tempted he sets all his power working for us.

“Since he himself has gone through suffering and temptation, he is able to help us when we are being tempted,” Hebrews two verse 18.

If a poor soul was to fight alone with the Goliath of hell he would be sure to be vanquished. But Jesus Christ brings in his auxiliary forces. He gives fresh supplies of grace.

“We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us,” Romans seven verse 37.

Thus the evil of temptation is overruled for our good.

Question: But sometimes Satan foils a child of God. How does this work for good?

Answer: I grant that, through the suspension of divine grace, and the fury of a temptation, a saint may be overcome. Yet this foiling by a temptation shall be overruled for good. By this foil God makes way for the augmentation of grace.

Peter was tempted to self confidence. He presumed upon his own strength and Christ let him fall. But this wrought for his good. It cost him many a tear.

“He went out, and wept bitterly,” Matthew 26 verse 75.

And now he grows less self reliant. He dared not say he loved Christ more than the other apostles.

“Do you love me more than these?” John 21:15.

He dared not say so. His fall into sin broke the neck of his pride.

The foiling by a temptation causes more circumspection and watchfulness in a child of God. Though Satan did before decoy him into sin, yet for the future he will be the more cautious. He will beware of coming within the lion's chain anymore. He is now more vigilant and fearful of the occasions of sin. He never goes out without his spiritual armor

and he girds on his armor by prayer. He knows he walks on slippery ground. Therefore he looks wisely to his steps. He keeps close sentinel in his soul and when he spies the devil coming he grasps his spiritual weapons and displays the shield of faith.

This is all the hurt the devil does when he foils a saint by temptation. He cures him of his careless neglect. He makes him watch and pray more. When wild beasts get over the hedge and damage the grain a man will make his fence the stronger. Just so, when the devil gets over the hedge by a temptation, a Christian will be sure to mend his fence. He will become more fearful of sin and careful of duty. Thus, the being worsted by temptation works for good.

Objection: But if being foiled works for good this may make Christians careless whether they are overcome by temptations or not.

Answer: There is a great difference between falling into a temptation and running into a temptation. The falling into a temptation shall work for good, not the running into it. He who falls into a raging river is fit for help and pity, but he who desperately runs into it is guilty of his own death.

It is madness running into a lion's den.

He who runs himself into a temptation is like king Saul who fell upon his own sword.

From all that has been said see how God disappoints the old serpent by making his temptations turn to the good of his people.

Luther once said, "There are three things which make a godly man: prayer, meditation, and temptation."

The wind of temptation is a contrary wind to that of the Spirit, but God makes use of this cross wind, to blow the saints to heaven.

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