



TEMPTATION OF THE BODY

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.

And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry.

And the tempter coming said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Who answered and said: "It is written, 'Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God'."

WHY DOES GOD ALLOW US TO BE TEMPTED?

1. SO WE MERIT HEAVEN

To struggle courageously against it is one of the most meritorious acts we can perform; and once we have triumphed with God's grace, we can repeat with St. Paul, that we have fought the good fight, and that it only remains for us to receive the crown of justice, which God has prepared for us.

2. TO PURIFY US

It reminds us that, through lack of vigilance and effort in the past, we have fallen, and it becomes thus an occasion for new acts of contrition, shame, and humiliation, all of which purify of the soul. It also obliges us to put forth earnest and sustained efforts lest we fall; it makes us atone for our negligences and for our surrenders by the performance of contrary acts which further purify the soul.

3. FOR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

It is like a crack of a whip at the moment we would lull ourselves to sleep and relax. It makes us realize the necessity of forging ahead, of not stopping midway, but of ever aiming higher.

It is a school of humility. When tempted we realize our weakness and powerlessness; feel the need of grace, we pray with greater efforts to better resist the temptation, and we turn to God for grace and strength.

It is a school of love of God; for we throw ourselves into God's arms as children of a most loving Father to Whom we have recourse in all our trials.

Hence, temptation possesses manifold advantages and it is on this account that God allows His friends to be tempted: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove you." (Tob. 12:13)



TEMPTATION TO PRIDE

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him:

"If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written: 'That He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone'."

Jesus said to him: "It is written again: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'."



TEMPTATION OF THE EYES

Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him:

"All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me."

Then Jesus saith to him:

"Begone, Satan: for it is written: 'The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve'."

THE STAGES OF TEMPTATION

SUGGESTION...PLEASURE... CONSENT

SUGGESTION is when our mind notices the attraction of the forbidden fruit; at times this is very alluring, but no matter how strong it may be, it is not yet a sin, if we have not provoked it, and do not agree to it. There is sin only when the will agrees.

PLEASURE then follows the suggestion. Instinctively our lower tendencies are drawn towards the suggested evil and some pleasure is experienced.

"Many a time it happens," says St. Francis de Sales "that the inferior part of the soul takes pleasure in the temptation, without consent from the soul's superior part."

CONSENT. If the will resists, fights the temptation and drives it away, then it has merited much grace. But if the will delights in the pleasure, willingly accepts, and enjoys it, then a sin is committed. **THERE IS NO CONSENT** if we feel disgust or anxiety at seeing ourselves tempted; or if we fight against it; or if we hold the evil suggestion in horror; or if we turn to God in prayer.

CONSENT IS IMPERFECT if (1) We do not drive away the temptation once its danger is seen. We sin against prudence, though not gravely, as it puts us in danger of consenting. (2) When we hesitate for a moment—we would like the forbidden pleasure, but do not want to offend God, then, after a short hesitation, we drive away the temptation. Here again there is a venial sin of imprudence. (3) If we resist the temptation in a half hearted way—in a feeble, lazy manner, with only a half resistance which implies a half consent, hence a venial sin.

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THE FREQUENCY OF TEMPTATION

Some are often and violently tempted; others are tempted but rarely and without being deeply stirred. There are many causes that account this:

1. TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

Some are very passionate yet weak-willed; often tempted, they are upset by temptation. Others are well balanced and energetic; rarely tempted, they keep their peace during temptation.

2. EDUCATION

Some are raised in a fear and love of God, and trained to do their duty, receiving only good example. Others are brought up to a love of pleasure and a fear of any kind of suffering, with too many examples of worldliness and sensuality. The latter will be more violently tempted than the former.