

How to Overcome Temptation

Dr. M. W. Lewis

San Diego, 4-7-57

Our subject this morning: "How to Overcome Temptation," how to overcome temptation.

Some say temptation has no power unless you recognize it, but this is not so. Temptation is a force. It's a part of the Evil Force that has definite power. So do not treat it lightly. Scriptures attest to this very fact that temptation must not be dealt with lightly. It is a force, a strong force.

In the Bible, in Isaiah, 45th Chapter, 7th Verse, we read, "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." So we cannot deny that evil, which tempts us, is a force created by God. And so let us not treat it lightly.

Also in the Bhagavad Gita, in the 10th Discourse, we read as follows: "I am the splendor of splendid things. I am the gambling of the cheat." So you see that God has created evil. It is a definite force. And that's why Jesus said in Matthew, 6th Chapter: "Lead us not into temptation." He recognized it was a force. And also in Luke, the 22nd Chapter, "Pray, pray that ye enter not into temptation." Pray about it. It is a force, a definite force. We must be on our guard.

Therefore, you can see it is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin not to resist it. It is not a sin to be tempted. God has created this force of evil, but it is a sin not to resist it and do your best to offset it. Therefore, the first thing we have to realize in discussing this subject of overcoming temptation is to be thoroughly honest with our self. When problems come up be honest with ourselves, and ascertain if we really want to do this thing, or that thing. If we really want to follow something in outward consciousness of a worldly nature which will really not be good for us, or we want to follow the better thing. Be honest with yourselves. That's half the battle. Then, then do what? Resist it. Resist the temptation which comes to keep you from doing that which you know you should do according to your best judgment and conscience. That's resisting temptation.

Now, we may not always succeed in resisting temptation one hundred percent. That's where people make the mistake. They think, "Well, I didn't succeed." But whatever resistance you offer, whatever resistance you give to temptation is stored up in your consciousness within. "And your consciousness," as the Master has said, "is the only reality we have." And that resistance reserve, which you lay up in your consciousness, will influence your thoughts and action at a later time. That's why resistance is so necessary, because it affects your consciousness, and lays up within your consciousness a resistance, a resistance reserve which will come and help you the next time you're tempted. Do you realize that?

So don't think, do not think if you fail you've lost everything. Resist. What of it, what of it if you do fail? Everybody fails. But don't stop resisting. That's what gives you strength. That's what gives you power to overcome temptation. And so, realize it is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin not to resist it. And realize that "Consciousness," as the Master has said, "is a relative thing." Remember the moving picture. You see in the moving picture. You see the sea, and you see the sky. What's the difference? The difference is in the rate of vibration, that's all.

So consciousness is relative. But as long as we are in this relative state of outward existence, this Cosmic Dream, we are subject to pain and pleasure, all sorts of opposites, and we are tempted as long as we are in this Cosmic Dream. But when we realize that this Dream is simply a play of light and shadow, just like the motion picture, then we are tempted to get out of the delusion. Get out of the Cosmic Dream into the one reality. Be above temptation.

So that leads us to the question, if the above is true, if we must resist temptation. Why, why? Well, the answer is simple. If you don't resist, you're going to suffer. And who wants to suffer – nobody. We want to get rid of suffering – permanently. We want to be rid of it. And as long as you stay in the outward consciousness, of which I have just spoken, this duality of consciousness, you will suffer from the law of opposites. But, remember, as the Gita says, "Get out of My delusion." Get out of this worldly consciousness. See behind it the Reality. Knowing that, temptation will not touch you. You will be above temptation there. But you must realize that you have to get out of this Cosmic Dream. Otherwise you're gonna suffer.

But as long as you resist temptation and lay up, as I have said, that reserve of power within your consciousness, by and by, by and by, you will know, realize, the difference between outward consciousness in which you suffer, and that inner Peace and Bliss of God wherein there is no suffering.

So that's why we must resist temptation, for the simple reason, we suffer. But if we keep resisting, our consciousness, which, is our own reality, gradually be, will be purified so that we can realize the underlying Unity of God's Presence, and, therefore, be above temptation. And it takes prayer. It takes action. Jesus prayed, you read in the Bible many times. The Master often came to me and said, "Pray for such and such a thing." Why, because temptation is a force. This outward consciousness of delusion is a force – a terrific force. So we have to resist it with all our strength – with all our might.

Then comes the problem, how to resist temptation, how to resist temptation. What actions should be taken? Just denying it is not enough, as I have pointed out. We have to take definite action to resist temptation that we may overcome. First, the negative aspects of resistance are these. Watch, watch, watch your environment, your company. I doubt if anyone here in this room will be tempted very much. Why, because the environment is conducive to the Presence of God, but if your environment is in outward consciousness, naturally you are under the laws of that consciousness. And if you go in

places where you shouldn't go, you are leading yourselves into temptation. And so, the first thing is to watch, watch your environment.

The second thing is, do not get under the influence of the power of evil. Each one of us has latent impulses within us, which tend to take us into places where the power of evil can operate and influence our existence. We have those tendencies. Some people are always in trouble – hot water. Always in hot water, because those impulses take them into the wrong place, help them to say the wrong thing, and they yield to temptation. So realize that. Do not go to those places whereby, or rather get under, the influence of the power of evil due to your own latent impulses, the influence of your own latent impulses. They take you into the wrong environment. They help you to say the wrong things, and you fall for temptation. Watch those things. Watch the power of evil according to your particular makeup. Some people keep out of trouble easily. Others are always in hot water. These are forces. We must watch out.

Don't lead yourself into places of temptation, is another aspect of resistance. And finally, use your will, whatever it is, whatever it is, use your will to resist temptation. Act against it. And, as I have said, you lay up within yourselves a resistance which is accumulated, little by little. As the great Lahiri Mahasaya said: "Striving, striving, striving, one day the divine goal." One day you'll be able to resist anything the Devil can put in your way, or the Power of Evil.

So these are the negative aspects, and remember this one thing, that resisting, resisting, by independent action, not by following automatically your latent impulses, or the effect of environment upon you. Resisting by independent action, increases your wisdom, and that wisdom within you is the Power of God, sufficient to overcome every temptation that will come in your path. Realize that, that when you resist, that's independent action, when you give in, that's automatically following the way of temptation. Resist it by independent action from your soul, and then you have the Power of God behind you sufficient to overcome each and every temptation that comes in your path.

We have a wonderful reference, two references, about this. I must read them to you. Just remember that this Soul power within you, which comes from independent action, is stronger than temptation. Do you realize that? Don't say, "I can't resist." Put the effort into being one with God. That Power will overcome every temptation, and we have the scripture to back these words up.

First Corinthians, 10th Chapter, 13th Verse – most beautifully written. "There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man." This once more proves it's a force. Don't you see? "But God is faithful, He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which ye are able; but will with the temp. . .with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Isn't that wonderful? All we have to do is try – resist. God is behind us, because His Own Consciousness is our consciousness. We can overcome all temptation.

And we have another very important reference in 2nd Peter, the 4th 2nd Chapter, 9th Verse, and this is even more comforting than the passage I have just read. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." We're interested in the first part, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." Why shouldn't He? His Omniscience is All-pervading, Ever-attentive, All-watchful, and we are one with that Omniscience when we so desire, and will, and act. Certainly, He can take care of us.

As Master used to say many times and wrote, "God, God loves us more than we can imagine, more wonderfully, and silently, and through the hearts of His devotees." So temptation should not frighten us. What should frighten us, if we're to be frightened, is that we're not resisting it, giving God a chance to prove that He is our Father, one with us.

Now comes the question, of the positive means, positive means of resisting temptation? This only takes just a minute, because they are positive. There is no question there is no help like God's help. There is no help like God's help. What people need is God, nothing else. And so, the positive way to overcome temptation is to contact the Divine – to contact God. There's no help like His help, and there's no power like the Power of God.

If you can realize that you don't need anything but God's Power in you to help you, you can overcome temptation, and you will know that by God contact. Self-Realization gives the ways and the means for each and every one of us to know God. Contact Him. Thereby receive His help, and to couple our will with His Will. What temptation can resist us? What can temptation stand before the Power of God which is in each and every one of us? No temptation. If you wanna overcome temptation in a positive way, contact God through the methods of Self-Realization.

Now just a word about metaphysics of temptation is this. God put this temptation before us. He created this temptation for one reason – so that we would make the effort to be free. As long as we are satisfied with Satan's way of seeking fulfillment in outward consciousness and things, where he promises much but in the end there's nothing; as long as we follow that, we will not be free. We go from one thing to another seeking that freedom of the soul. But God's way is different. God wants us to struggle against temptation. The way of the cross leads home. You cannot escape it. Read any scripture. Talk to any saint. He will tell you that – the way of the cross leads home. The struggle is necessary to resist temptation. But what do you receive? You receive the lasting Peace and Bliss of God's Presence. Satan says take this, take that, as he tempted Jesus, I'll give you all things. God says, through His Silently Beckoning Intuition within you, in your Soul, "Won't you come unto me. I will give you rest. I will give you peace. I will give you Eternal Bliss and Happiness." And so, that's God's way – the way of the cross – the way of struggle leads home.

Now, finally, resist temptation. Overcoming is worth it – overcoming temptation. Putting the effort into it is surely worth it. And I give you in closing this beautiful reference from the scripture. In Revelation, the 21st Chapter, the 7th Verse, to show you that the battle of overcoming temptation is really worth it. "He that overcometh shall

inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son.” Isn't temptation worth mastering? Isn't the resisting of temptation worth being one with God in a dynamic way and knowing, as the Master often said, "Always remember, the same Father who protects me, protects you. He is our common Father.” If we could but know that, then we would surely know how to overcome all temptation.