

FEBRUARY 2005—*An Unrecognized Danger*

It is easy to think that we are most vulnerable spiritually when we are going through times of trial and adversity—and there is no question that such times do present great dangers to us. But, there is another danger that is perhaps greater because we so rarely recognize it.

C. S. Lewis describes this in *The Screwtape Letters* through the advice of the senior devil, Screwtape, to his apprentice, Wormwood:

The Enemy has guarded him from you through the first great wave of temptations. But, if only he can be kept alive, you have time itself for your ally. The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it – all of this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition. If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels he is 'finding his place in it,' while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation, his widening circle of acquaintances, his sense of importance, the growing pressure of absorbing and agreeable work, build up in him a sense of really being at home in earth, which is just what we want. You will note that the young are generally less unwilling to die than the middle-aged and the old.<sup>1</sup>

Adversity is certainly a danger to our spiritual life, as anyone who has experienced it can attest. But, success and prosperity can be an even greater danger. Many of us have achieved a measure of success and prosperity and many others are on the way to achieving it.

May God give us the grace to examine our lives, eyes to see the truth, and courage to take action.

*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.*  
I Corinthians 10:12 NASB

<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, ©1942, Harper edition 2001, pp. 154-155.