

MARCH 2004—*What Are You Becoming?*

What is shaping you? The more we ponder this question, the more we will recognize how our choices in life are shaping us into the person we will ultimately become. “Sow a thought and reap a deed; sow a deed and reap an action; sow an action and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny.”<sup>1</sup> In a very real sense, we make our choices, and then, for better or worse, our choices make us.

Nowhere is this more important than in temptation to sin. Sin is not taken very seriously these days, and temptation is often joked about. George Bernard Shaw’s well-known quip, “I can resist anything but temptation,” has become commonplace in American society. However, sin is a serious matter to God and has profound consequences in our lives.

Every temptation presents us with a fork in the road of life: our choice will either bring us closer to God or farther from him. If, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we choose to obey Him, we will be strengthened and confirmed in the particular virtue involved and become in some degree more like Jesus Christ our Lord. But, if we choose to disobey, even in small matters, we will to some extent corrupt and erode our character and weaken our ability to resist future temptation. And more importantly, we also break our fellowship with God and can begin to gradually drift from his presence.

C. S. Lewis’s classic book, *The Screwtape Letters*, reminds us that sometimes the devil is subtly at work in the temptations believers face: (Here the master demon Screwtape writes to his under-study Wormwood regarding the believer they are attempting to subvert.) “We know that we have introduced a change of direction in his course which is already carrying him out of his orbit around the Enemy [God]; but he must be made to imagine that all the choices which have effected this change of course are trivial and revocable. He must not be allowed to suspect that he is now, however slowly, heading right away from the sun in a line which will carry him into the cold and dark of utmost space.”<sup>2</sup>

How are you dealing with the temptations that come your way? A periodic self examination is helpful, asking yourself questions such as: What is the spiritual trajectory of my life? Where are my choices taking me spiritually? What am I becoming? Or, to put it another way, am I closer to God and more like Jesus than I was a year ago? If not, what temptations have I succumbed to that have arrested or reversed my growth in grace?

*So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!  
No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.  
And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.  
But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

I Corinthians 10: 12-13 NIV

<sup>1</sup> Author unknown.

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis. *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, ©1942 C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., Copyright restored © 1996 C.S. Lewis Pte. Ltd., p. 57.