

**The Delusions Which the Devil puts into the Minds of Sinners
– St. Liguori**

Taken from *Preparation for Death*

FIRST POINT

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I will Go to Confession --- I Cannot Resist

LET us imagine a young man who has fallen into grievous sins, which he has already confessed, and who is restored to the friendship of God. The devil again tempts him to relapse: the young man resists for a while; but, in consequence of the delusions suggested by the enemy, he begins to vacillate. Tell me, young man, I say to him, What will you do? Will you now, for this miserable pleasure, forfeit the grace of God, which you have just acquired, and which is more valuable than the whole world? Will you, yourself, write the sentence of eternal death, and condemn yourself to burn forever in Hell? No, you answer, I do not wish to damn myself, I wish to be saved: If I commit this sin, I afterward confess it. Behold the first delusion of the devil! Then you say that you will afterward confess it; but in the mean time you lose your soul. Tell me. if you had a jewel worth a thousand crowns, would you throw it into a river, saying, I will make a diligent search for it, and hope to find it? You hold in your hand the precious jewel of your soul, which Jesus Christ has purchased with His Blood, and you voluntarily cast it into Hell (for in punishment of every mortal sin, you are condemned to eternal fire), and say; I hope to recover it by a good confession. But should you not recover it, what will be the consequence? To recover the Divine grace, true repentance, which is the gift

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20 of God, is necessary. Should God not give you the grace of repentance; should
21 death overtake you, and not allow you time to go to confession, what will become
22 of you?

23 You say that you will go to confession before the lapse of a week. And who
24 promises you that you will live for a week? You then say that you will go to
25 confession tomorrow. And who promises you tomorrow? St. Augustine says: "God
26 has not promised tomorrow: perhaps He will give it, and perhaps He will not."
27 Perhaps He will deny it to you, as He has denied it to so many others who have
28 gone to bed in good health, and have been found dead in the morning. How many
29 have been struck dead in the act of sin, and sent to Hell? And should the same
30 happen to you, how will you be able to repair your eternal ruin? Be assured that by
31 this delusion ---I will afterward go to confession --- the devil has brought
32 thousands and thousands of Christians to Hell. It is difficult to find a sinner so
33 abandoned to despair as to wish for his own damnation. In committing sin, all
34 sinners hope to repent and go to confession; it is thus that so many miserable souls
35 are lost: and now there is no remedy for their damnation.

36 But you say: At present I cannot resist this temptation. Behold the second delusion
37 of the devil, who makes it appear to you that at present you have not strength to
38 resist your passions: First, it is necessary to know that, as the Apostle says, God is

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39 faithful, and never permits us to be tempted above our strength. [1 Cor. 10;13]
40 Moreover, I ask, if you are unable to resist your passions, how will you be able to
41 resist them hereafter? After you have yielded to one temptation, the devil will
42 tempt you to other sins, and by your consent to sin he will have gained an increase
43 of strength against you, and you will have become weaker. If, then, you are now
44 unable to extinguish the flame of passion, how can you expect to extinguish it
45 when it has grown stronger? You say: God will give me His aid. But this aid He
46 gives you at present. Why, then, do you not correspond with His grace and conquer
47 your passion? Perhaps you expect that God will give you more abundant helps and
48 graces after you have multiplied sins. If at present you wish for greater help and
49 strength, why do you not ask them from God? Ask, and it shall be given you. [John
50 16:24] God cannot violate His promise. Have recourse to Him, and He will give
51 you the strength which you require in order to resist every temptation. God does
52 not command impossibilities; but by His commands He admonishes us to do what
53 we can with the actual aid which He gives us; and when this aid is not sufficient to
54 enable us to resist temptations, He exhorts us to ask additional help, which He
55 gives whenever we pray for it.

56 *Affections and Prayers*

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57 Then, my God! why hast Thou been so bountiful to me, and I so ungrateful to
58 Thee? We have been engaged in a mutual contest. I fled away from Thee, and
59 Thou didst seek after me. Thou didst confer benefits on me, and I offered insults to
60 Thee. Ah, Lord! the goodness alone which Thou hast shown me ought to enamor
61 me of Thee; for, when I multiplied sins, Thou didst multiply Thy graces. And when
62 have I merited the light which Thou now givest me? My Lord! I thank Thee for it
63 with my whole heart, and I hope to thank Thee for it eternally in Heaven. I hope in
64 Thy Blood for eternal salvation, and I hope for it with certainty, since Thou hast
65 treated me with so much mercy. I hope that Thou wilt give the grace never more to
66 betray Thee. I purpose, with Thy grace, to die a thousand times rather than ever
67 again offend Thee. I have offended Thee sufficiently. During the remainder of my
68 life I wish to love Thee. And how can I but love a God Who, after having died for
69 me, has waited for me with so much patience, in spite of the numberless injuries I
70 have done Him. O God of my soul! I repent of all my sins with my whole heart; I
71 would wish to die of sorrow for them. But if I have hitherto turned my back upon
72 Thee, I now love Thee above all things; I love Thee more than myself. Eternal
73 Father! through the merits of Jesus Christ, assist a miserable sinner, who wishes to
74 love Thee. Mary, my hope! assist me; obtain for me the grace always to have
75 recourse to thy Son and to thee-- as often as the devil tempts me to offend God
76 again.

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SECOND POINT

77

78

God is Merciful

79 God is merciful. Behold the third delusion of sinners by which an immense number

80 are lost! A learned author says, that the mercy of God sends more souls to Hell

81 than His justice; for sinners are induced, by a rash confidence in the Divine mercy,

82 to continue in sin, and thus are lost. God is merciful. Who denies it? But great as is

83 His mercy, how many does He send to Hell every day? God is merciful: but He is

84 also just; and therefore He is obliged to punish those who offend Him. He shows

85 mercy; but to whom? To them who fear Him. He hath strengthened His mercy

86 toward them that fear Him. As a father hath compassion for his children, so hath

87 the Lord compassion on them that fear Him. [Ps. 102:11, 13] But He executes

88 justice on those who despise Him, and abuse His mercy to insult Him the more.

89 God pardons sin; but He cannot pardon the will or the determination to sin. St.

90 Augustine says, that he who sins with the intention of afterward repenting, is not a

91 penitent, but a mocker of God's majesty. But the Apostle tells us that God does not

92 allow Himself to be mocked. Be not, deceived. God is not mocked. [Gal. 6:7] It

93 would be a mockery of God to insult Him as often and as much as you please, and

94 afterward to expect Heaven.

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95 But as God has shown me so many mercies hitherto, so I hope He will treat me
96 with mercy hereafter. Behold the fourth delusion! Then, must the Lord, because He
97 has had compassion on you, show mercy forever, and never chastise you? No: the
98 greater have been His mercies to you, the more you have reason to fear that, if you
99 offend Him again, He will pardon you no more, but will take vengeance on your
100 sins. Say not: I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most high is a
101 patient rewarder. [Ecclus. 5:4] Say not: I have sinned; and have not been punished;
102 for though God endures, He will not do so forever. When the number of mercies
103 which He has resolved to show to the sinner is exhausted, He then punishes all his
104 sins together. And the longer God has waited for his repentance, the more severe
105 will be his punishment, says St. Gregory.

106 If then, O my brother, you see that you have often offended God, and that He has
107 not sent you to Hell, you should say: The mercies of the Lord that we are not
108 consumed. [Lam. 3:22] Lord! I thank Thee, for not having sent me to Hell as I
109 deserved. Consider how many have been damned for fewer sins than you have
110 committed. and labor to atone, by penance and other good works, for the offences
111 you have offered to God. The patience which He has had with you, and the great
112 mercies which He has shown to you, and not to others, ought to animate you not to
113 offend Him again, but to serve and love Him.

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Affections and Prayer

114

115 My crucified Jesus, my Redeemer and my God! behold a traitor at Thy feet. I am
116 ashamed to appear before Thee. How often have I mocked Thee! How often have I
117 promised to offend Thee no more! But my promises have been so many treasons;
118 for when the occasion of sin was presented to me I have forgotten Thee, and have
119 again turned my back upon Thee. I thank Thee that I am not now in Hell, but at
120 Thy feet, where Thou enlightenest me, and callest me to Thy love. Yes; I wish to
121 love Thee, my Saviour and my God! and I wish never more to despise Thee. Thou
122 hast borne with me long enough. I see that Thou canst bear with me no longer.
123 Unhappy me, if after so many graces, I offend Thee again! Lord, I sincerely wish
124 and resolve to change my life; I wish to love Thee as much as I have offended
125 Thee. It consoles me to have to deal with Thee, Who art infinite goodness: but I am
126 sorry above all things for having so much despised Thee, and I promise Thee all
127 my love for the future. Pardon me through the merits of Thy Passion; forget the
128 injuries I have done Thee, and give me strength to be faithful to Thee during the
129 remainder of my life. I love Thee, O my Sovereign Good! and I hope to love Thee
130 forever. My dear God! I will never more abandon Thee. O Mary, Mother of God!
131 bind me to Jesus Christ, and obtain for me the grace never again to depart from His
132 feet. In Thee I trust.

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THIRD POINT

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134

I am Young --- Perhaps

135 But I am young. God compassionates youth. I will hereafter give myself to God.

136 We are now at the fifth delusion. But do you not know that God counts, not the

137 years, but the sins of each individual? You are young! But how many sins have

138 you committed? There are many persons of very advanced age who have not been

139 guilty of the tenth part of the sins which you have committed. And do you not

140 know that God has fixed the number and measure of sins which He will pardon

141 each? The Lord waiteth patiently, says Holy Scripture, that when the day of

142 judgment shall come, He may punish them in the fullness of their sins. [2 Mach.

143 6:14] That is, God has patience, and waits for a certain time; but when the measure

144 of the sins which He has resolved to pardon is filled up, He pardons no more, but

145 chastises the sinner by sending him a sudden death while in the state of damnation,

146 or He abandons him in his sin --- a chastisement worse than death. I will take

147 away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted. [Isa. 5:5] If you had encompassed a

148 field with a hedge, and cultivated it many years, and found that after all your labor

149 and expense it produced no fruit, what would you do with it? Would you not take

150 away the hedge and abandon it? Tremble, lest God should treat you in a similar

151 manner. If you continue to offend Him, you will gradually lose remorse of

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152 conscience --- you will cease to think of eternity, or of the salvation of your soul ---
153 you will lose all light and fear: behold the hedge taken away: behold your soul
154 already abandoned by God.

155 Let us come to the last delusion. You say: It is true that if I commit this sin, I shall
156 lose grace of God, and shall be condemned to Hell; it may be that in punishment of
157 it I shall be damned; but it may also happen that I shall afterward make a good
158 confession, and save my soul. Yes, it may, I admit, happen that you will be saved;
159 for I am not a prophet, and therefore I cannot say for certain, that, if you commit
160 this sin, God will show you no more mercy. But you cannot deny that, if, after the
161 great graces God has bestowed upon you, you offend Him again, you will expose
162 yourself to very great danger of being lost forever. Attend to the language of
163 Scripture. A hard heart shall face evil at the last. [Ecclus. 3:27] Evil-doers
164 shall be cut off. [Ps. 36:9] The wicked will in the end be cut off by Divine justice.
165 What things a man shall sow, those also he shall reap. [Gal. 6:8] He that sows sins,
166 will reap nothing but pains and torments. I called and you refused. ... I will laugh
167 in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared.
168 [Prov. 1:24] I have called you, says the Lord, and you have mocked Me; but I will
169 mock you at the hour of death. Revenge is mine, and I will repay them in due time.
170 [Deut. 32] To Me belongs the punishment due to sins: I will inflict it when the time

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171 of vengeance arrives. Such are the threats of the Scriptures against obstinate
172 sinners; such is the chastisement which reason and justice demand. You say: It
173 may happen, after all, that I shall be saved. I again admit that this may happen; but
174 is it not the height of folly to trust the eternal salvation of your soul to a perhaps? --
175 - to a possibility of escaping Hell when your salvation is so very improbable? Is
176 eternal life an affair to be exposed to such imminent danger.

177 *Affections and Prayers*

178 My dear Redeemer! prostrate at Thy feet, I thank Thee for not having abandoned
179 me --- after I had committed so many sins. How many who have offended Thee
180 less than I have will never receive the light which Thou now givest me! I see that
181 Thou earnestly desirest my salvation. and I wish to be saved, principally for the
182 sake of pleasing Thee. I wish for Heaven that there I may eternally sing the
183 mercies which Thou hast shown me. I hope that Thou hast already pardoned me.
184 But should I still be Thy enemy in consequence of not repenting as I ought of the
185 offences I have offered to Thee. I am now sorry for them with my whole soul; they
186 displease me above all things. Pardon me for Thy mercy's sake, and increase
187 continually my sorrow for having offended Thee, Who art so good a God. Give me
188 sorrow --- give me love. I love Thee above all things, but I love Thee too little. I
189 wish to love Thee ardently. This love I ask and hope for from Thee. Hear me, O

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190 my Jesus! Thou hast promised to hear all who pray to Thee. O Mary, Mother of
191 God! all tell me that thou never allowest a soul that recommends itself to thee to go
192 away disconsolate. I trust in thee; recommend me to thy Son, and obtain for me
193 eternal life.