

The Screwtape Letters ~ Letter 18 ~ Lust Problem or a God Problem?
March 21st, 2021

Before reading the following overview of this Letter, we suggest that you click on the link above to read the short **Letter 18** for today's Illustrated Message, which will help you understand the following message.

Screwtape says to Wormwood: *“Even under Slubgob you must have learned at college the routine technique of sexual temptation, and since, for us spirits, this whole subject is one of considerable tedium (though necessary as part of our training) I will pass it over. But on the larger issues involved I think you have a good deal to learn. The Enemy's demand on humans takes the form of a dilemma; either complete abstinence or unmitigated monogamy.”*

Demons are of the spirit realm and not the physical realm, thus they don't have sexual relations with each other but know that because God has made it holy, they use whatever means necessary to use it as a temptation. As a reminder, the 'Enemy' referred to here is Almighty God, who requires His church to abstain from sex before marriage and in marriage, to make it monogamous – one man and one woman.

Let's get the definition of the word 'abstain'. *“In Latin is abstineo, to keep from; abs and teneo, to hold. In a general sense, to forbear, or refrain from, voluntarily; but used chiefly to denote a restraint upon the passions or appetites; to refrain from indulgence.”*

So in this Letter, as the Patient is a single man, it means to abstain from sex before marriage which is fornication.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 talks about abstaining from sexual sin; *“3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. 7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. 8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who [a] has also given us His Holy Spirit.”*

We see that the Apostle Paul is talking to Christians and separates them from what the Gentile or non-Christian do. The unsanctified Gentile is only acting like their father – who is the devil. Now we know not everyone who is not born again commits sexual sins, but as they don't have the conviction of the Holy Spirit living in them, to them it is the norm or acceptable and they don't see it as sin at all. But as for Christians, we live by a different standard according to God's commands. All the more reason to reject the temptation of sexual sin because it breaks your relationship with God. Paul also says that if Christians in Church commit sexual sins with each other, he says they're defrauding their brother or sister.

The definition of monogamy is this; *“the practice or state of being married to one person at a time, the practice or state of having a sexual relationship with only one partner, the habit of having only one mate at a time.”*

Jesus says this in **Matthew 19:4-6**; *“4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who [a]made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

In **Ephesians 5:25-33**, the Apostle Paul says this; *“²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might [a]sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,*

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but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, ^[b]of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Screwtape is instructing Wormwood to make sure the Patient abstains from a monogamous relationship which is blessed by God as it clearly shows from this passage of scripture. Screwtape only wants the Patient to see marriage as love and not as a binding contract with God, this way, if the marriage loses its love, then it can break and the Patient can easily enter into another relationship where ‘love’ is perceived. The devil wants to pervert what God said and convince the Patient that God’s way isn’t the best way. That’s why Screwtape calls it a parody – it’s a mockery of the best of what God has in a monogamous marriage. This shows the clear character of the devil that he’s a liar and the father of lies.

Screwtape says; *“We have done this through the poets and novelists by persuading the humans that a curious, and usually short-lived, experience which they call "being in love" is the only respectable ground for marriage; that marriage can, and ought to, render this excitement permanent; and that a marriage which does not do so is no longer binding. This idea is our parody of an idea that came from the Enemy.”*

This lie of the devil is less binding, less restricting and less having to love one’s wife as Christ loved the Church, so when the love fades, the person can move on and find someone else.

The Patient in Letter 18 is not married and Screwtape wants Wormwood to sow lies and twist what God, who he refers to as the Enemy, says about marriage, love and sex, so that the Patient will not abstain from sex before marriage.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 says;. *18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body [c]and in your spirit, which are God’s.”*

It’s interesting to hear Christian’s say that all sin is on the same page, and one sin is not greater than another, but we just read that, “every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” The body of a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As soon as a Christian makes a decision to yield and surrender to sexual temptation, the Holy Spirit leaves. You see, when a Christian sins like this, they actually have a problem in their relationship with God. That’s the main problem. It’s not a lust problem, it’s a God problem.

We read in [Matthew Henry’s Commentary](#) the following regarding 1 Corinthians 6:18; *“IV. A fourth argument is that it is a sin against our own bodies. Every sin that a man does is without the body; he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (1 Cor. 6:18); every sin, that is, every other sin, every external act of sin besides, is without the body. It is not so much an abuse of the body as of somewhat else, as of wine by the drunkard, food by the glutton, etc. Nor does it give the power of the body to another person. Nor does it so much tend to the reproach of the body and render it vile. This sin is in a peculiar manner styled uncleanness, pollution, because no sin has so much external turpitude in it, especially in a Christian.”*

When a Christian sins sexually, the greater sin lies in disobeying God and His commands and it is not a problem with lust alone, but rather a problem with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and it can be clearly said that a Christian does not have a lust problem but rather a God problem. Temptations will come and go, but Jesus is the

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same yesterday, today, and forever, He does not change. His word does not change to accommodate what a Christian would call a 'problem with lust', when the real problem is with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

So when a person starts drifting from God by slacking off in their prayers, devotions, regularly going to church and fellowshiping with Christians to name a few; the little leaven will contaminate the body and your relationship with God will go first before actually falling into sin. **James 1:14** says; "*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.*" And even if a Christian would continue in those things on the exterior in a religious form, but their heart is not in it, they too will be easy prey for the devil.

Sex before marriage is what God calls fornication, and it is listed as one of the works of the flesh that are found in **Galatians 5:19-21**; "*19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: [a]adultery, [b]fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, [c]murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things **will not inherit the kingdom of God.***"

Again, when these things start slipping; prayers, devotions, reading the Bible, regularly going to church and fellowship with Christians, is it worth it to know that if you participate into the sins of the flesh that you will not inherit the kingdom of God? When the temptations hit you and you don't have the strong relationship with the Lord, you're open prey for satan to kill, steal and destroy your life through these sins of the flesh. Remember, you forsook Christ first in your heart and He is not participating with you as you indulge in the fleshly appetites.

We know that Jesus will never leave us or forsake us, but when you start backsliding in heart and then in action, He will not participate with you in your sins. As a Christian, you are bound together with Christ as the bride and just like a man or woman don't physically participate in their partners betrayal in marriage in fornication or adultery, so Christ will not participate with you in sexual sins. Do you really think that the Holy Ghost will go in bed with you as you're with a harlot? That would be emphatically, no! You're on your own.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 says; "*9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived.** Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor [a]homosexuals, nor [b]sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*"

It comes right back to a Christian not having a problem with lust, but rather a problem with God and His laws and this is what Screwtape and Wormwood want the Patient to have a problem with; God and His laws. It's unrealistic to think that a Christian would not be tempted to sin sexually, but it is realistic to think that a Christian who yields to sexual sin has a problem in his or her relationship with God.

Screwtape says; "*The whole philosophy of Hell rests on recognition of the axiom that one thing is not another thing, and, specially, that one self is not another self. My good is my good and your good is yours. What one gains another loses. Even an inanimate object is what it is by excluding all other objects from the space it occupies; if it expands, it does so by thrusting other objects aside or by absorbing them. A self does the same. With beasts the absorption takes the form of eating; for us, it means the sucking of will and freedom out of a weaker self into a stronger. "To be" means "to be in competition."*

This is a very destructive and competitive way of survival, where everybody is a lover of themselves, seeking their own interest.

The following scripture pretty much sums up the philosophy of hell being acted out on earth in **2 Timothy 3:1-5** where the Apostle Paul tells Timothy the following; "*3 But know this, that in the last days [a]perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient*

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to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, [b]unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”

Everything is focusing on self; competition for the mate, or careers, or material realm, or education, or with the neighbours, lusting after your neighbours husband or wife, coveting others possessions. It can be so depraved that if adultery happens, the attitude is ‘oh well, it’s your loss and my gain’. Christians cannot walk in this philosophy of hell.

You can have a form of Godliness as a Christian and yet deny the power God gives you to live Godly. It all predicated on your relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and that’s why it’s so important remain in a good relationship God and not allow anything to come between you and Him. Sexual sins begin and end with a broken relationship with Jesus, and until the relationship is restored, there is no power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sexual temptations.

If the devil can get the Christian to believe that they can continue in sexual sin and it won’t affect their Salvation, and that they are eternally secure, it’s very obvious that the Holy Spirit that secures their Salvation has left their body and they are back in the Kingdom of darkness until they repent to be restored again to Jesus.

Romans 6:18-19 says; “*18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body [c]and in your spirit, which are God’s.*”

I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again; there are only two kingdoms with two leaders, one is Jesus, the other is Satan, and there is no middle ground to stand on, either your father is Jesus or your father is Satan. There are only two eternal destinies’, one is Heaven with Jesus, and the other is Hell with Satan. So Christian, the next time you are considering to sin sexually, ask yourself the question; “Is this moment of pleasure worth losing my salvation in Heaven over”?

Hebrews 13:4 says; “*4 Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*”

Ephesians 5:5 says; “*5 For [a]this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*”

Colossians 3:5-6 says; “*5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,*”

You must know that Paul is talking to Christians here and is making the obvious statement that just as it is with the heathen or Gentile that the wrath of God will come to those who practice these things, so it will be for the Christian who backslides and willingly operates in the lusts of the flesh. In other words, especially when it comes to sexual sins, you’ve rejected God in exchange for what the heathen are doing, instead of praying, waiting, trusting in God for His best in your life in marriage.

There’s a similarity with Esau who went after the food by selling his birthright to his brother. Likewise here, a Christian who sells his birthright to the kingdom of heaven in exchange for sexual pleasure, a season of sin, and if not repented of will suffer the wrath of God because of disobedience.

Revelation 21:8 says; “8 *But the cowardly, [a]unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*”

So Christian, if you are yielding to sexual temptations, keep in perspective that you have a broken-down relationship with God that needs to be restored first by repenting of your sins and receiving Jesus in the form of the Holy Spirit back into your body again, that you may be forgiven.

2 Peter 3:9 says; “9 *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward [a]us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*”

1 John 1:9 says; “9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

This is the heart of the Father. He wants restoration with the backslider. He wants to be Lord of your life again. The greater sin as we see, is not the sexual sin, but the broken relationship that one has with Father God.

Proverbs 28:13 says; “13 *He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*”

James 5:19-20 says; “19 *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save [a]a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*”

James makes it clear here that there is no eternal security. He’s talking to Christians who wander from the truth who need to be turned back to have their souls saved and their sins forgiven.

Today, if you are in sexual sin, you first need to repent of your broken relationship with Christ where you’ve gotten distracted from the Lord’s work, left your devotions, your Bible reading, your church participation and communion, and fellowship with Christians, then receive forgiveness of your sin, and then like Jesus said, go and sin no more. Don’t be restored into religion, but into relationship where the Holy Spirit is leading and guiding you in prayer, Bible reading and church attendance is out of your love and obedience to Him, not out of compulsion or religious duties. Remember, as a Christian, every day you’re in a spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6) where the Screwtapes and Wormwoods that have been assigned to your life, want you to backslide and get off of the straight and narrow path.