

The Screwtape Letters ~ Letter 1

September 13, 2020

This powerful book by C.S. Lewis is one we've pondered on for some time to preach on. Please click on the link above to read the book and for today's Illustrated Message, please read **Letter 1**.

First of all let's read from [Sparknotes](#) a summary of the Preface and Letter 1;

"In the preface, C.S. Lewis writes that he will not explain how he came across the correspondence between two devils Screwtape and his nephew, Wormwood. He reminds the reader that devils are liars, so Screwtape's reports might not be accurate. In the first letter, Screwtape begins to advise Wormwood about how to tempt his assigned human, "the Patient," into sin and Hell. Wormwood should not try to convince the Patient with arguments. That may have worked in the past, but in the twentieth century, it's necessary to use. He should appeal to the Patient's emotions in order to keep him from using reason. Screwtape recollects how he kept an atheist from reasoning that the Enemy exists by tempting him to go to lunch. Wormwood should always remind the Patient about the ordinariness of things, and he should keep the Patient away from science. It will make the Patient think of things he can't touch or see."

I believe that the #1 most important note to be made and illustrated thru the Bible scriptures, is that satan and all his demons are liars and there is no truth in them.

When I was a child, we had a very common song that we sang about someone who was a liar, it went like this "Liar, liar, your pants are on fire, hanging on the telephone wire."

Let's look at how Jesus summed up His description of satan while He was talking to the Jews who believed in Him and claimed to be Abraham's descendants in **John 8:31,37-47**; "31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.... 37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

How many people who say they believe in Jesus are like this? These Jews were believers in Jesus and also claimed to be to Abraham's descendants. We can assume they recognized Jesus as a prophet but there was something about what He was requiring them to do that offended them – namely to listen and obey His Word – and they manifested anger to Him. It's like they had a superficial and insincere belief in Jesus. They had more faith in their father, who Jesus referenced to be devil. Jesus had exposed their hearts. He said that if they really believed in Him, they would believe the works of His Father – God.

They truly were physical descendants of Abraham, they recognized Jesus being of God yet hadn't totally given their lives to Him. Thus, they were still in the devil's camp, they were still sinners who needed to be born again

and that's why Jesus could unequivocally say that they were of their father the devil. The hope of Abraham's faith was to see his seed – the Messiah, Jesus Christ come into the world, and this is what these believing Jews had not fully accepted.

If anyone's pants were on fire hanging off the telephone wire it was these descendants of Abraham, but Jesus didn't waste any time to point out to them who their father really was as read in **verses 44 and 45**; *“44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.”*

If these believing Jews truly had a connection with Abraham, they would have fully accepted and believed in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, because that was Abraham's promise, [Galatians 3:16](#). However, because they didn't truly believe, that's why Jesus called them on the carpet by calling them liars believing them to be of their father the devil.

I've said this before and I'll say it again, “If Jesus is not your father then there is only one other father in your life and that is satan”. Until a person repents of their sins and receives Jesus into their heart and becomes born again, they are not being led by the Spirit but rather by lying demons assigned to their lives with one purpose in mind and that is to rob, kill and destroy them, and ultimately see them go to hell.

How many people today cling to their denominations and Godly heritage that carry the name of Jesus in some form or another, but they don't really believe in Jesus Christ and haven't truly made him Lord of their lives, just like these descendants of Abraham? They'll justify their stance by the history and years of that denomination, yet because of full, unequivocal obedience to the commands of Jesus, they too are liars as Jesus called out these believing Jews. People like this put their faith in their denomination, spiritual leaders but not fully in Jesus Christ.

People would be in church on the Lord's day if they're truly born again, they'd make it their priority to fellowship with the body of Christ regardless of circumstances. We're not talking about the bed-ridden, elderly or other genuine reasons who have no means to go to church but those who are living in the free world, healthy and able to use their faculties. When you recognize the Lordship of Jesus, your heart is to be with the body of Christ and to do what He's called you to do. There is no half-stepping it with Jesus. When you truly believe, you'll give your whole life to Him. Jesus doesn't evolve around your education, job, career or anything else, but you are to evolve your whole life around Him. Is your life evolving around Jesus or does He have to evolve around you?

I question the validity of a person's salvation when they refuse to attend church regularly and when they're not committed to a church body – pandemic or not. It's either they're not truly born again or they have believed a lie that the devil sowed in their lives to keep them out of church. I have to ask; who are you behaving like? If you love Jesus, where are you on the Lord's day? The very gift that God has given you is to operate in the body of Christ but it can't operate if you're not in church. You need to bear fruits of repentance and obedience to Jesus. If you really believe in Jesus you'd be in His Father's house, serving Him with the gifts He's given you, you'd be stepping out in faith, not in fear, doubt and unbelief. I don't think you'd want Jesus to say these same words to you as He did to these 'believing' Jews.

Maybe that's why Jesus rebuked Peter by saying ‘get behind Me satan because you're a stumbling block to Me.’ That may have seemed terribly abrasive but Peter was giving Jesus advice that was contrary to the call of Jesus' life. That's why Jesus says too in **Matthew 7:21**; *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says; “*3 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*”

‘The patient’ in Letter 1 of the Screwtape Letters, is being lead around by a demon named Wormwood who is under the direction of another demon, Screwtape, with one intent in mind and that is keep him blinded from any and all influence of the Gospel of Jesus that would lead him to become a Christian. One of the main tactics of these devils is to use materialism as a means to keep him from the enemy’s Camp, God’s Church. Devils will keep people out of church no matter how and by what means.

Uncle Screwtape says: “*Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false", but as "academic" or "practical", "outworn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless". Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it is strong, or stark, or courageous--that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.*”

When a person who is not a Christian is driven by materialism, they are being led to believe in lies that ultimately don’t lead them to Jesus but rather away from Him and His Church. This is being addressed to the unbeliever.

Jesus spoke these words explaining the parable of the Sower in **Mark 4:18-19**; “*18 Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, 19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*”

Jesus is talking about unbelievers here. They listen but materialism chokes the word. How many non-Christians today have heard the gospel preached to them but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke word and it becomes unfruitful in their lives.

In **Matthew 16:24-26**, Jesus says; “*24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*”

A good dose of reality seems to be another tactic that Screwtape used to keep the non-believing atheist from becoming a Christian. I’ve heard it said that a person can be so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good, but this statement is just another lie that esteems rationalism and reality to be above God’s word. So long as the devil is able to keep a non-believer codependent on good doses of real life and keeps him from any and all notions of faith in God’s word, he ultimately will be able to say of them after they die, “He or she is now safe in our fathers house”, this simply means that they are in hell and there is no way out.

Romans 8:5-8 says; “*5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be [a]carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the [b]carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*”

You’re an enmity with God when your reason, rational and unrenewed mind are above His word.

Those patients mentioned in Letter 1, are and were not in spiritual warfare with the demons but rather are already in the devil’s camp, and the only thing the demon uses to keep them in the kingdom of darkness is materialism, rationalism and that invaluable dose of real life. Anytime they wander from that by hearing the gospel, the devil comes along to give them another dose of real life.

Romans 10:8-10 says; “8 *But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*”

John 3:1-17 talks about the new birth or being born again; “3 *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born [a]gain, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” 9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” 10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man [b]who is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should [c]not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”*

Nicodemus’ heart was different than the believing Jews we read about at the beginning. He really wanted to know what Jesus’ requirements were and what was needed to follow Jesus. It’s still foreign to Nicodemus that he has to be born again spiritually and yet he should have known because he was the teacher of Israel. The veil was still covering his spiritual eyes. We see that Nicodemus did come to know that Jesus was the Messiah because together with Joseph of Arimathea, they took Jesus’ body down from the cross to bury Him.

The Jews we read about at the beginning were so caught up in religion, heritage and lineage being descendants of Abraham that they could not see that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham and that Jesus was doing something new and a new covenant was being written by Him. But they could not receive Him because they were still spiritually descendants of their father the devil.

So if you are a non-Christian, the only way you can avoid satan saying after you die that, ‘you are safe in his fathers house’, is to repent of your sins, and receive Jesus the Holy Spirit into your body and become born again of His spirit, and live the life of a Christian. This is God’s will for you not to be lied to by the devil. Jesus offers truth and the devil can only lie. What a great exchange to come out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light in Jesus Christ!

Here is a great music video, a blast from the past released in 1991, from Carman entitled; “[Satan, Bite The Dust](#)”