

The Screwtape Letters ~ Letter 8 ~ Lies About Trough (Low) Times
November 15th, 2020

Before reading the following overview of this Letter, please click on the link above to read the book and for today's Illustrated Message, please read **Letter 8**.

Screwtape says: *“Has no one ever told you about the law of Undulation? Humans are amphibians--half spirit and half animal. (The Enemy's determination to produce such a revolting hybrid was one of the things that determined Our Father to withdraw his support from Him.) As spirits they belong to the eternal world, but as animals they inhabit time.”*

As a clarification, we know by reading the scriptures that Lucifer – satan – was kicked out of heaven because of rebellion, wanting to set himself up as God according to [Isaiah 14:12-15](#) and [Ezequiel 28:13-19](#) and not that he withdrew his support from God as Screwtape suggests.

Screwtape begins this letter by lying about man being half animal and half spirit, amphibians, which reduces man to have been a partial product of evolution and not totally created in the image of God. This is a big lie. God created man in His image to have dominion over the animals and amphibians and was not to be reduced to being part animal.

Genesis 1:26-28 says; *“26 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over [a]all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that [b]moves on the earth.”*

Screwtape says; *“Their nearest approach to constancy, therefore, is undulation--the repeated return to a level from which they repeatedly fall back, a series of troughs and peaks. If you had watched your patient carefully you would have seen this undulation in every department of his life--his interest in his work, his affection for his friends, his physical appetites, all go up and down.”*

The law of undulation is another lie that the devil would like to propagate about Christian men and women who are not only created in the image of God, but also have the mind of Christ. This makes Christians different; we have the mind of Christ and no other voices to we listen to. Our emotions are to be led by the Spirit, if we choose, and not by the flesh.

In **1 Corinthians 2:13-16**, the Apostle Paul says; *“13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the [a]Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”*

As Christians, we have a sound mind, we're not to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine as we talked about in our previous message. We're not to have a mind that is subject to the ups and downs, but the ups and downs are to be subject to the mind of Christ.

The law of undulation applies to non-Christians because they have not been born again of His Spirit and that is why Jesus is able to say this of those who did not believe in Him in the following scripture; **John 8:42-46**;

“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.”

It’s important to note that these ‘apparent godly individuals’, were rebuked by Jesus. He pointed clearly that their father was not God but the devil and they were doing the works of their father the devil.

Colossians 1:12-14 says; *“12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and [a]conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption [b]through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”*

We have been delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and are not to go back in. If a person is not born again of the Holy Spirit, their father is Satan, and that’s why they do works of their father, it’s just normal behavior for someone who is in the kingdom of darkness.

Christians are delivered out of the kingdom of darkness and are not subject to the laws of undulation but rather are subject to work of the Holy Spirit, regardless of how it looks in the natural.

This is why the Apostle Paul, who had every appearance in the natural, of being in what Screwtape calls the trough or low times, is able to say in **Philippians 4:6-7**; *“6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

This is the remedy for soundness of mind. When it seems like in what would appear to be a trough, the tough time in life, the trial of the century, or something totally overwhelming; you’re to take captive the anxious thoughts, pray and then God guards your heart and mind through Jesus. The trough is subject to the Holy Spirit, you’re not subject to the trough or trial. You can have soundness of mind in Jesus if you’re in a trial or trough.

Paul continues in **verses 8-9**; *“8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—**meditate on these things**. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

So in the midst of the trial or trough, meditate and set your mind on these things! You’re to be subject to the power of the Holy Spirit in you and what He’s doing in you.

In **Philippians 4:12-13**, the Apostle Paul says; *“12 I know how to [a]be abased, and I know how to [b]abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through [c]Christ who strengthens me.”*

Paul knew a thing or two about troughs and trials, but he knew the greater victory in Jesus, and to not be subject to or to be subordinate to the trough. Christians are not to be subject to ups and downs, but rather the ups and downs are subject to the word of God as they obey it.

Screwtape says; *“It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that it is growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be. Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please Him best. We can drag our patients along by continual tempting, because we design them only for the table, and the more their will is interfered with the better.”*

The demons know that Christians have come out of the kingdom of darkness and fight them hard in the trials and trough times with temptations to get them to lose faith and backslide. God created man with a free will and He will not over ride it, but He will not allow them to be tempted with out providing a way of escape.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says; “13 *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to [a]bear it.*”

2 Corinthians 12:9 also says; “9 *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*”

In the trough period, grace is the ability that God gives the Christian to take the way of escape when tempted, and they are without excuse when they sin.

That saying, “the devil made me do it,” cannot not apply to the Christian, but can apply to the non-Christian, simply because their father is the devil and are more subject to do work of their father when it comes to overcoming temptations.

Let’s just use for example the temptation of adultery, where Jesus says in **Matthew 5:27-29**; “27 *You have heard that it was said [a]to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to [b]sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*”

If the adulterous thoughts in a Christian are not repented of, it’s just a matter of time that they will be abhorred of the Lord, and end up committing adultery in their actions, which started as a temptation in the heart and mind. It starts in the heart; meditating on it, looking at it, searching it out in on the internet, TV, media or print and if it’s not repented of, God puts you under a curse and you’ll fall into the temptation. King Solomon clearly says this in **Proverbs 22:14**; “14 *The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; He who is abhorred by the Lord will fall there.*”

This is why it’s so important to take the way of escape that God gives when tempted and not allow it to grow in your heart and mind. You have to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ, you have to turn off the media or source of your temptation immediately, stop going to the places where you’re being tempted, stop allowing yourself to be around certain individuals who are tempting you. You need to pick up your Bible, meditate on it, find scriptures that will guide you to how to overcome temptations.

Screwtape says; “*Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger, than when a human, no longer desiring, but intending, to do our Enemy's will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.*”

The days in which we’re in are getting darker and darker, and there might be times that you ask yourself if God has forsaken you. You may not ‘feel’ His presence in the trough or trial. You may feel He’s lifted His hand off of your life. You may not ‘see’ the work of God in this trough your in. And yet, He keeps calling you to walk by faith and not by sight.

A Christian who obeys God in the trough(low times) when it appears that He is not involved in their trial, is dangerous to the kingdom of darkness. In the trough or trial, as you’re making a conscious decision to live your life as a Christian, to keep living in the power of the Holy Spirit, preaching, teaching, praying for the sick, casting out devils, prophesying etc., you are extremely dangerous to the devil’s kingdom. Why? Because you’re

walking by faith and not by the circumstances that are around you. In the natural, it may look like God has lifted His hand, you may feel alone – in the natural. But in the supernatural, you’re walking by faith and not by sight. You’re obeying His word and applying His word to your situation.

The Apostle Paul had times in the trough where he had to simply walk by faith and not by sight. We read this in **2 Corinthians 11:24-28**; “*24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.*”

In the midst of Paul’s ministry, if we look at it in the natural, I can only assume that he had seasons and wondered why God had allowed these things to happen to him. Even though he knew that he would suffer persecutions, he probably didn’t realize the extent of the severity of them that would come upon him, which probably caused him to doubt where Jesus was in the midst of it all. Yet, he wasn’t subject to the trough, but the trough was subject to the Holy Spirit in him, even in the midst of questioning where God was in the middle of everything. He probably had questions like; where did I get off track, am I out of God’s will, where is God in the midst of this?

Paul says this about himself and the rest of the apostles in **1 Corinthians 4:9-13**; “*9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle [a]to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! 11 To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12 And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13 being defamed, we [b]entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.*”

It sounded like a very low time or trough for the apostles in the natural, but again, they were not subject to the trough, the trough was subject to the Holy Spirit in them. This is what exposes the truth from the lie. In the natural, it looked like they were written off, done, but in the supernatural God was building His church. Sometimes you may feel like your written off and done – in the natural. But God is doing a supernatural work that goes beyond the natural.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 says; “*8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our [a]trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and [b]does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.*”

The reason these men were the most dangerous to the kingdom of darkness at what appeared to be their lowest points in ministry, is that they were not allowed to be exalted above measure, but were kept humble and dependent on God’s grace alone that enabled them to endure and establish the early church.

The following scripture sums this up, **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**; “*7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to [a]buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*”

ILLUSTRATED MESSAGE SERIES BY PASTOR RICHARD BASED ON
THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS BY C.S.LEWIS

It's not clear what Paul's thorn in the flesh was, but is clear that God allowed Satan to buffet him with it knowing that Paul would depend on God's grace alone.

Verse 10 says; *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

No matter the trial or trough you're in today, keep in mind that the trough is subject to the Holy Spirit and what He's doing in the trough or low time. It's not the opposite. If the Holy Spirit wants to use the trial or trough to display His grace in your life, so be it, because that's where He gets the glory and not you. I can only imagine there are Christians reading this that are going through some sort of trial or trough in one way or another in these dark days we're living in worldwide. Just like Paul, you too can say that God's grace is sufficient for you and you're strength is being made perfect in your weakness.

I can imagine God saying to Paul in his trials and troughs; “Paul, just stay where you're at right now, I'm doing the greatest work in you that can be done”. It was a work of the Holy Spirit, even though in the natural it didn't look good. But in the supernatural God was getting all the glory. So, get of the natural when you're in trials, tribulations and troughs and get into the supernatural because that's where the work of the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit is giving you grace in the trough to be able to stand, that's the supernatural part!

We have to remember, above all, that satan is a liar. When Screwtape says; *“He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish.”* You can misinterpret this to think you need to stand on your own and take your own responsibility for your own life. But that's not true. That's an independent spirit in operation. The reason why this would happen is so that your dependant on the Holy Spirit even though it may 'appear' that He's withdrawn His hand from you. He's more involved in these trough times that you can imagine or see. He's doing a deep work in you as well as in the lives of those around you.

Here's another blast from the past by Carman entitled, ['Holdin On'](#) from 1993.

For teaching on the Holy Spirit, please go to [The Holy Spirit Series](#) on our website.