

**The Screwtape Letters ~ Letter 4 ~ The Painful Subject of Prayer**  
October 11th, 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 4**.

This letter on the topic of prayer, is painful to Screwtape and Wormwood. From [Sparknotes](#), we read the following summary; *“Screwtape writes that it is best to keep the Patient from praying at all. But, if the Patient does pray, Wormwood should see to it that he invents his own prayers. His prayers should be more like a general mood than an act of concentrated meditation. Wormwood should make the Patient focus on his own feeling instead of God. He should make the Patient want to feel better. Rather than praying for forgiveness or courage, then, the Patient will try to feel forgiven or feel brave. Humans do not know the Enemy's full power, Screwtape writes, and so they can be tricked into thinking about and worshipping only images. They pray to the crucifix on their wall, not to the Enemy. Furthermore, people think that they want to feel fully exposed to the Enemy's divine presence, but they are, in reality, afraid to feel it.”*

Screwtape says; *“The amateurish suggestions in your last letter warn me that it is high time for me to write to you fully on the painful subject of prayer.”*

The prayers of the saints are a painful subject to the demonic realm, simply because the prayers of a righteous man or woman avails much in the spirit realm. **James 5:16** says; *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”*

When we confess our trespasses to one another and pray for one another, we are not only healed, but are delivered from the demons that are afflicting us.

**Psalms 34:18-19** says; *“18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as [a] have a contrite spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”*

This is why Screwtape refers to it as a painful subject to write to Wormwood about. Screwtape says; *“The best thing, where it is possible, is to keep the patient from the serious intention of praying altogether. When the patient is an adult recently reconverted to the Enemy's party, like your man, this is best done by encouraging him to remember, or to think he remembers, the parrot-like nature of his prayers in childhood.”*

So long as a demon can keep you offering up repetitive, parrot-like, religious prayers like those that you may have learned as a child, the demonic spirit realm that's assigned to your life to rob, kill and destroy you, are not affected at all. The painful prayers that Screwtape is talking about are those that are praying the word of God with the authority given to them as believers. Those, “now I lay me down to sleep I pray the Lord my soul to keep, kumbaya” prayers, are not going to stop the devil in his tracks. It's when you pray the word of the Lord found in the Bible, and in doing it you're reminding the demonic realm that, “it is written in the Bible”, and then quote the Bible scripture that would apply to the area that the demons are attacking you in, that's when you stop him in his tracks.

Jesus says in the following scriptures in **Matthew 18:18-20**; *“18 Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 “Again[a] I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*

These are some of the many Bible scriptures that give you authority over the demonic assigned to your life. So, for example when the demon attacks you with fear of one sort or another, rise up and speak the following scriptures:

- **2 Timothy 1:7**; “7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”
- **Isaiah 26:3**; “3 You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”
- **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.”

These are the painful prayers that Screwtape is talking about keeping the patient away from praying, because he knows that Bible is your only offensive weapon that is able to fight him with and ultimately defeat him with. That’s why in Ephesians 6:10-18, it shows that all the armour that a Christian wears is defensive, except for the sword, the word of God, which is offensive.

**Ephesians 6:10-18**; “10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [a]wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of [b]the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”

Screwtape says; “*In reaction against that, he may be persuaded to aim at something entirely spontaneous, inward, informal, and unregularized; and what this will actually mean to a beginner will be an effort to produce in himself a vaguely devotional mood in which real concentration of will and intelligence have no part.*”

If demons can keep your head, your will and intelligence, out the game by keeping you from reading your Bible and using it as a sword against them, you’re no threat to them. They will continue to slander your truthful witness, get you to doubt your righteousness found in Christ, get you to disbelieve the gospel you believe in and preach, rob you of your faith in God, and ultimately rob your salvation.

Screwtape says; “*One of their poets, Coleridge, has recorded that he did not pray "with moving lips and bended knees" but merely "composed his spirit to love" and indulged "a sense of supplication". That is exactly the sort of prayer we want; and since it bears a superficial resemblance to the prayer of silence as practised by those who are very far advanced in the Enemy's service, clever and lazy patients can be taken in by it for quite a long time.*”

The prayer of silence that is practised by those who are advanced in God’s service, is not the prayer of Coleridge, but is what Jesus spoke about when He taught on prayer which we read in **Matthew 6:5-7**; “5 And when you pray, you shall not be like the [a]hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But

*you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you [b]openly. 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."*

Jesus would easily include people like Coleridge or the religious pompous leaders of today in the hypocrite section. People might observe and say how spiritual it is, very deep, that they don't have to bow their knees or be prostrate before the Lord. But being prostrate before the Lord shows what's going on inside of the heart. Whether they are pompous, eloquent prayers with much repetition or prayers of silence, like Coleridge suggested, they have no power.

The powerful prayer of silence then is when you're in your private room, in the secret place. Why? Because there is no blasting of the trumpet that your praying to be seen by man but only seen and heard by God. The authority is in the prayer closet with your Bible as the offensive weapon to defeat the demons that are harassing you or others.

**2 Corinthians 10:3-5** says; *"3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not [a]carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"*

**1 Peter 5:8-10** also says; *"8 Be [a]sober, be [b]vigilant; [c]because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But [d]may the God of all grace, who called [e]us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, [f]perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you."*

Again, you may have the full armour of God on, but without the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, you'll be on the defensive all day.

Screwtape says; *"it is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds: in reality our best work is done by keeping things out."*

As good and proper as it is to put a guard over your eyes and ears as to what you watch on TV, the internet or literature, it's equally important to remember the demons best work is done when he can keep the Bible scriptures **out** of a Christians mind and disable its use as an offensive weapon against them.

**Hebrews 4:12** says; *"12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*

When the demons come in like a flood in your life, invite them to a Bible study and start speaking the Word of God to them....they won't hang around for very long, they'll flee. Remember, every temptation of the devil that Jesus came up against in the wilderness, He always spoke to satan by saying; 'it is written', and then quoted scriptures. Likewise, when temptations come to you and you're being harassed by demons, speak the Word of God and say, 'it is written', and then speak the scripture that pertains to what they're attacking you in.

Screwtape says; *"Whenever they are attending to the Enemy Himself, we are defeated, but there are ways of preventing them from doing so. The simplest is to turn their gaze away from Him towards themselves. Keep them watching their own minds and trying to produce feelings there by the action of their own wills. When they*

*meant to ask Him for charity, let them, instead, start trying to manufacture charitable feelings for themselves and not notice that this is what they are doing. When they meant to pray for courage, let them really be trying to feel brave. When they say they are praying for forgiveness, let them be trying to feel forgiven.”*

It’s a classic tactic by Satan to try to get your attention off of God and onto yourself. Get you to be self-centered and manufacture your own religion that has similarities to true Christianity. Sounds like the Church of Me, Myself, and I. Christians who don’t attend church and rely on the selective hearing of radio and TV preachers as their Church; that’s the Church of Me, Myself and I.

Jesus says in **Matthew 12:43-45**; “*43 When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.*”

It resembles religious spiritual house cleaning, cleaning up your lives without God’s word, but rather by good works, self-help programs, motivational speakers, selective radio and TV preachers, etc. When you don’t use the Bible as a weapon against the demon that has been driven out of your life when you became a Christian, the demon will turn to what was supposed to be fleeing from you in terror, to a welcoming party for him again and 7 more spirits.

People may refute this, but after you became a Christian, what have you been using to keep your spiritual house clean? Religion and religious works or by speaking the Word of God over it and keeping the doors shut to the demons?

Let’s be clear, when a person is born again and Jesus Christ becomes Lord of their lives, the devil is driven out. Because until your born again, your father is not God, but the devil, because you’re still in the kingdom of darkness. So, when Jesus comes into the ‘house’, your heart, the devil flees. But if it’s only religiously swept clean and there is a ‘good image’ of Christianity, the devil will see right through the facade and come back with 7 more demons more wicked than itself.

What wicked generation is Jesus talking about? Surely it must be the heathen that are not in church, right? But not necessarily. It’s a wicked generation that has rejected the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the word of God that has authority over the demons, and exchange and replace it for religious works. That’s why the devil has access back into a Christian like this and bring 7 demons along with him.

Screwtape continues to say; “*I have known cases where what the patient called his "God" was actually located-up and to the left at the corner of the bedroom ceiling, or inside his own head, or in a crucifix on the wall. But whatever the nature of the composite object, you must keep him praying to it--to the thing that he has made, not to the Person who has made him. You may even encourage him to attach great importance to the correction and improvement of his composite object, and to keeping it steadily before his imagination during the whole prayer.*”

Does this sound familiar? Religion; worshiping an object or idol, with a house that is swept clean with religious acts? Idols on the walls between them and God.

Idolatry is a sin as we read about in **Exodus 20:4-6**; “*4 You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the*

*earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor [a]serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting[b] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who **hate Me**, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”*

The ‘house’, which is the body – the temple of the Holy Spirit, is the place where you asked Jesus to come into your heart. But when you reject the baptism of the Holy Spirit and you reject God’s authority of the Word in exchange for religion, people will start wondering what happened to you. It is pretty obvious that the devil got up inside of their head convincing them that they didn’t have to take their Word, the Bible, the sword out and drive him out. He knew that religion would get them to ‘feel’ and ‘look’ good, but he also knows that if you’re using the sword – the Bible on him, he has to flee.

It's good to examine your heart today. Demons don't mind you living the kumbaya religious life because they have the upper hand, but they do mind you reminding them of what is written in the Bible and using your sword as an offensive weapon against them. Are you speaking out loud the word of God to them to keep them out of your house or are you settling to just keep a clean house with religion and religious exercises? You don't want 7 more demons to come back in after the one was driven out when you became a Christian. Have you grieved the Holy Spirit and he's had to leave your temple? That's why you need the baptism in the Holy Spirit because you need the power and authority over the devil in Jesus' name.

I don't believe in eternal security. I believe it's not how you start the race by being born again, but how you finish the race. There is a gap between the start and the finish line of life where you have to continually take the sword of the Spirit – the word of God – and fight the devil with it as part of your armour. Every day you're in spiritual warfare and you have to stand firm in spiritual authority with the Word of God. You also need the baptism in the Holy Spirit who will give you power and authority to resist the devil with and to live in victory so you can run the race, not quitting or giving in but finishing a winner.

There are many Christians who are born again but have never used the Bible as an offensive weapon and you're in a lot of trouble right now as a result. You need to repent, ask Jesus to forgive you and let Him clean your house and those demons will go, just like they did when you first got born again. Then, moving forward, you can be changed, 100% guaranteed, but it's up to you. **2 Timothy 4:7** says; *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*

For more study tools on the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, please go to the Holy Spirit Series link.