

The Screwtape Letters ~ Letter 21 ~ Self-Worship
April 18th, 2021

Before reading the following overview of this Letter, we suggest that you click on the link above to read the short **Letter 21**, for today's Illustrated Message, which will help you understand the following message.

Screwtape says to Wormwood; *“Yes. A period of sexual temptation is an excellent time for working in a subordinate attack on the patient's peevishness. It may even be the main attack, as long as he thinks it the subordinate one. But here, as in everything else, the way must be prepared for your moral assault by darkening his intellect.”*

Let's look at the definition of peevish; it means easily irritated, especially by unimportant things.

The demons know that what makes a Christian easily irritated by unimportant things in life that cause them to be fretful and peevish, will as a result, darken their intellect. This makes them more vulnerable to sexual temptations that come their way, which only brings temporary relief from the ongoing irritations that demons attack them with.

I believe that the main reason that demons get away with the attacks that set Christians up for sexual temptations is simply that Christians are not living a sanctified life and have not died to self.

We read this in **Galatians 2:20**; *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

As Christians, we are to live a crucified lifestyle every day. Jesus says clearly in **Luke 9:23-24**; *“23 Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross [a]daily, and follow Me. 24 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.’”*

Romans 6:10-11 also says; *“10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, [a]reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

A good question to ask yourself today is, are you dead to sin and alive to Christ Jesus?

Ephesians 4:17-24 says; *“17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as [a]the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*

So long as Screwtape and Wormwood can keep the Patient from living a crucified life that is sanctified, they are easily able to set him up to yield to sexual temptations. If a Christian is truly dead to self, none of these attacks would move them to become peevish and easily irritated because they are truly living a life that is crucified to the things of the world and the devil has no place in them.

Are you easily irritated and peeved when the devil comes in to rob you of certain time slots in your life that you think you own? Allow the Holy Spirit to examine your heart today.

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

Screwtape says; *“Now you will have noticed that nothing throws him into a passion so easily as to find a tract of time which he reckoned on having at his own disposal unexpectedly taken from him. It is the unexpected visitor (when he looked forward to a quiet evening), or the friend's talkative wife (turning up when he looked forward to a tete-a-tete with the friend), that throw him out of gear. Now he is not yet so uncharitable or slothful that these small demands on his courtesy are in themselves too much for it. They anger him because he regards his time as his own and feels that it is being stolen.”*

Have you been thrown out of gear this week because your time that you thought you owned got robbed of you? It could be any number of things that in the end, get you peeved and irritable. If so, it shows that you're not dead in Christ yet and are still in the flesh.

The Apostle Paul says clearly in **Philippians 2:4**; *“4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Things do come and will come to rob you of your scheduled life, but what is your heart attitude and reaction to it? That's what Jesus is looking at. Are you dead to self today?

As a Christian, these scriptures below are the marker of truth and example of attitude in times when your time is getting stolen from you, when the devil wants to get your intellect so darkened with irritations that he can set you up just perfectly with that sexual temptation that you think will satisfy. But it won't, it's temporal and you'll end up back where you were, fighting with more irritations, more schedule interruptions or whatever other attack the devil wants to irritate you with over the things you idolize and worship. Why? Because you're not dead to self yet.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 says; *“4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not [a]puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, [b]thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;”*

Galatians 5:22-23 says; *“22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 [a]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

Colossians 3:12-14 says; *“12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”*

Screwtape says; *“You must therefore zealously guard in his mind the curious assumption "My time is my own". Let him have the feeling that he starts each day as the lawful possessor of twenty-four hours.”*

How often have you woken up thinking about the number of hours you have at your disposal for that day between work, family, reading a book, watching a movie, and to have personal time alone where you don't have anyone who is going to talk to you? Have you thought of it that it's all 'yours'?

This is the exact opposite of what Jesus teaches Christians to live like, and it's not about being a poor steward of our time, but rather it is no longer our time but His time that we are spending, either on the things of this world or on that which advances the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus says in **Luke 9:23**; *“23 Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross [a]daily, and follow Me.”*

He says also in **John 12:24-26**; *“24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much [a]grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he*

who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

So when you wake up in the morning and you have 16 hours for all that you want to accomplish, you need to remember that the time isn't your own, but it's Jesus'. You need to ask the Holy Spirit what He wants you to do, regardless of the schedule you have. Yes, there are work schedules you need to stay on, but how about the days you're not working, or lunch time, break time, evening time or weekends?

James 4:13-17 says; "*13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow [a]we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; 14 whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*"

Again, when you're planning your day, are you asking the Holy Spirit about His work and what the Father wants you to do? Are you asking if what you're planning on doing, is it the Lord's will? Really then, you're not to boast about your plans, but always have the humble attitude of, 'if the Lord wills', you'll do this or that. James says it is sin to boast about what you're going to do if it is not God's will.

Again, we read in **Galatians 2:20** where it says; "*20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*"

Screwtape says; "*Even in the nursery a child can be taught to mean by "my Teddy-bear" not the old imagined recipient of affection to whom it stands in a special relation (for that is what the Enemy will teach them to mean if we are not careful) but "the bear I can pull to pieces if I like". And at the other end of the scale, we have taught men to say "My God" in a sense not really very different from "My boots", meaning "The God on whom I have a claim for my distinguished services and whom I exploit from the pulpit--the God I have done a corner in".*

Even as a child, the fallen nature manifests itself with the mentality that it's all, 'mine'. The sinful nature says, 'I can do what I like because it's mine.' Growing up, you can see that people have this same attitude toward some or many possessions they've acquired in life. This selfish nature will even put God in a corner because they see their time as their own, 'it's mine'. As a Christian, even what you own isn't technically yours, neither is your body because you are Christ's, you've been bought by the blood of Jesus and you have to honour Christ with your body. That's why sexual immorality is unacceptable, as every other sin is outside the body, but sexual sin is against the body.

In all of God's judgements, it seems like the same theme comes up; man becomes independent of God and ends up in self worship, he then becomes irritable and peeved because something got in the way of his self worship or what he idolized, which then leads down a road of destruction to become open prey for sexual sin. If not repented of, these are then judged by God. It then becomes a continual 'mouse on a tread mill' life.

The Bible says that perilous times and perilous men will come in **2 Timothy 3:1-5**; "*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 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!"*

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As a Christian, you have to turn away from people like are described here. We are now living in a time that this scripture is being played out to the fullest, and it is not going to get better, but worse. However, the Christian's life can be the opposite, by living a sanctified life that is dead to self will and alive to obeying God's will for their lives. Freedom, peace and joy is when self worship gets off the throne of your heart.

Romans 8:1-6 says; “*8 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who [a] do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 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 [b] carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.*”

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 says; “*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;*”

Here shows the difference between the true Christian and the ungodly; it's normal for the ungodly to be irritable and peeved when something gets in the way of their self worship and the idols in their lives, but the Christian is commanded to be different.

Christians need to stand up now and live lives as though Jesus could be coming back at any moment to rapture them away, which by the way, could happen any time now. This is why it's so important to live a crucified life that is sanctified in obeying what the Bible says about living a holy life that is dedicated unto the service of the Lord Jesus. Living a life that is full of self worship will only lead to being irritable and peeved with everything that gets in the way of it, and ultimately will set up a Christian to fall into temptations of sexual sin for some temporary relief that never satisfies.

Screwtape says; “*The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell and we must keep them doing so. Much of the modern resistance to chastity comes from men's belief that they "own" their bodies—*”

This is touching a big idol today, only due to the fact that media has made it way bigger. It's all about the rights that you think you have to your body and this mentality has slipped into the church. The rights that you have to determine your sexual orientation, the rights you have to abort or not to abort the child in the womb, and the list of rights goes on and on. As a Christian though, Jesus commands something different of us.

The Apostle Paul clarifies this in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**; “*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 [a] and in your spirit, which are God's.”*

When you became a Christian, you gave up your rights to your own body. Jesus came to live inside your body by the Holy Spirit. The way you used to behave as an ungodly person, you don't behave that way any more. You now conform yourself to His image.

When a Christian buys into the lie that he or she own their own body, it opens a up a door for the devil rob, kill and destroy their relationship with God, through various means of self worship. This is why that we should not be so surprized that there is such a great falling away in the body of Christ, the Church today, and it is only going to increase and get worse. All the more reason to obey the words of Jesus and reject the worship of self as the day of His return is near.

In **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**, the Apostle Paul says; “*16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*”

The rapture of the bride Christ is at hand, and if you have become a worshipper of self, and have not laid down your life for Christ, you will be left behind to face seven years of tribulation, God’s wrath being poured out on lawlessness and unrighteousness, such as which the world has never seen before.

Jesus says this in **Matthew 24:36-44**; “*36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of [a]heaven, but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what [b]hour your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what [c]hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

We are in the very last days, and just like it was for Noah, everyone is eating, drinking and being merry, worshiping idols and themselves, busy about secular affairs having dropped the affairs of God, having given up the worship of one true God for the worship of many gods, including themselves. The devil’s goal is to get the Christian to believe that their body is their own. ‘It’s mine’, as Screwtape says, that they can do whatever they want with it, and if successful cause them to fall into self worship, which if not repented of, opens the door for sexual sins. Sexual sins are different from all other sins because you sin against your own body, which as a Christian, is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The devil wants you to defile the temple of the Holy Spirit which is your body.

Jesus is coming for His bride, the church, and as a bride is to be a virgin before marriage, so as Christians we need to be pure, holy and set apart for Jesus as a chaste virgin. Don’t allow sexual sins and infidelity to Christ thwart you from being caught up with Jesus when He raptures His Church or if you die to thwart you from going to heaven.