

Screwtape Letter #29 – Questions

Screwtape's logic now begins to reveal much
– about us.



My dear Wormwood,

Now that it is certain the German humans will bombard your patient's town and that his duties will keep him in the thick of the danger, we must consider our policy. ... Well, I am afraid it is no good trying to make him brave. ... A very unsatisfactory arrangement, but, I trust, we shall one day learn to do better.

Hatred we can manage. ... In other words let him consider himself sufficiently identified with the women and children to feel hatred on their behalf, but not sufficiently identified to regard their enemies as his own and therefore proper objects of forgiveness.

But hatred is best combined with Fear. ... And Hatred is also a great anodyne for shame. To make a deep wound in his charity, you should therefore first defeat his courage.

29.1) One analysis of The Merchant of Venice from the Law School at Samford University in Alabama says of the play –

Merchant of Venice is neither a simple tale of an unfounded prejudice, nor is it a tale that pits justice against mercy merely characterizing a puzzle without offering an, albeit tentative, resolution. Rather, the play offers a conception of justice that embraces both law and mercy. What one learns by the end of the play is not that vengeance overtakes mercy or that mercy trumps law. Instead, the play suggests that mercy, understood properly as an undeserved sacrifice, is a necessary condition to the fulfillment of law, understood as that which binds a community together in its bond.

How does this relate to what Screwtape is saying?

Although you may not know the full details of the play, can you see how it could parallel Christ's sacrifice to save us?

Now this is a ticklish business. We have made men proud of most vices, but not of cowardice. ... There is here a cruel dilemma before us. If we promoted justice and charity among men, we should be playing directly into the Enemy's hands; but if we guide them to the opposite behaviour, this sooner or later produces (for He permits it to produce) a war or a revolution, and the undisguisable issue of cowardice or courage awakes thousands of men from moral stupor.

29.2) Screwtape is revisiting an old topic – fear.

Screwtape has written about fear in previous letters. He returns to it again – but this time with some warnings about too much fear possibly driving people to “The Enemy”. Look at Jesus' message to His disciples before he sent them out to proclaim the good news in Matthew 10. Talk about some of the reasons why Screwtape would be afraid of generating too much fear in the patient.

Mt 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. 9 Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; 10 take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.

Mt 10:11 “Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. 14 If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. 15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. 16 I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Mt 10:17 “Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20 for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Mt 10:21 “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 23 When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

Mt 10:24 “A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!

Mt 10:26 “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. 28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny ? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Mt 10:32 “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. 33 But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

Mt 10:34 “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

“ ‘a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

Mt 10:36 a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

Mt 10:37 “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Mt 10:40 “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. 42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”

This, indeed, is probably one of the Enemy's motives for creating a dangerous world—a world in which moral issues really come to the point. ... Pilate was merciful till it became risky. It is therefore possible to lose as much as we gain by making your man a coward; he may learn too much about himself! ... But I fear you have already let him get too far in the Enemy's school, and he knows that Despair is a greater sin than any of the sins which provoke it.

29.3) Will fear lead to despair?

The word despair occurs in the NIV 12 times – only once in the New Testament. The once appearance is in Paul's 2 letter to the Corinthians – in the "Jars of Clay" section:

2Co 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

From this, where does Screwtape's own fear come from regarding crossing the line on despair – similar to the previous problem with too much fear?

As to the actual technique of temptations to cowardice, not much need be said. The main point is that precautions have a tendency to increase fear. ... Then, at the moment of real terror, rush it out into his nerves and muscles and you may get the fatal act done before he knows what you're about. For remember, the act of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

29.4) Will fear and despair lead to cowardice?

It sounds so easy –



Then, at the moment of real terror, rush it out into his nerves and muscles and you may get the fatal act done before he knows what you're about. For remember, the act of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good,

Does this mean that God won't forgive cowardice – since fear itself isn't a sin, but the act of cowardice is all that matters?

What happened to the lines Screwtape wrote in the first paragraph of this same letter?



There is here a cruel dilemma before us. If we promoted justice and charity among men, we should be playing directly into the Enemy's hands; but if we guide them to the opposite behaviour, this sooner or later produces (for He permits it to produce) a war or a revolution, and the undisguisable issue of cowardice or courage awakes thousands of men from moral stupor.

Can you think of an act of cowardice in the Bible where the person was not only forgiven, but drawn that much closer to God afterwards?

Screwtape Letter #30 – Questions

Wormwood is in trouble
– again.



My dear Wormwood,
I sometimes wonder whether you think you have been sent into the world for your own amusement. ... At any rate, you will soon find that the justice of Hell is purely realistic, and concerned only with results. Bring us back food, or be food yourself.

30.1) Ouch!!

Compare this to what Jesus said to His disciples in Luke 21:12-19 –

Lk 21:12 “But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 This will result in your being witnesses to them. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 All men will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By standing firm you will gain life.

Talk about the contrast between two things:

How Satan treats his devils versus how God treats His disciples (including us).

Who ultimately has the responsibility for taking care of their “disciples”?

The only constructive passage in your letter is where you say that you still expect good results from the patient's fatigue. That is well enough. But it won't fall into your hands. ... Whatever he says, let his inner resolution be not to bear whatever comes to him, but to bear it 'for a reasonable period'—and let the reasonable period be shorter than the trial is likely to last. It need not be much shorter; in attacks on patience, chastity, and fortitude, the fun is to make the man yield just when (had he but known it) relief was almost in sight.

I do not know whether he is likely to meet the girl under conditions of strain or not. If he does, make full use of the fact that up to a certain point, fatigue makes women talk more and men talk less. Much secret resentment, even between lovers, can be raised from this.

30.2) When things get tough – who will the patient rely on?

All of these things that Screwtape is proposing to Wormwood depend on the patient not relying on God – but instead being influenced by Wormwood.

Talk about this in relation to the story below –

THE ROPE

The story tells about a mountain climber, who wanted to climb the highest mountain. He began his adventure after many years of preparation, but since he wanted the glory just for himself, he decided to climb the mountain alone.

The night felt heavy in the heights of the mountain, and the man could not see anything. All was black. Zero visibility, and the moon and the stars were covered by the clouds.

As he was climbing, only a few feet away from the top of the mountain, he slipped and fell into the air, falling at a great speed. The climber could only see black spots as he went down, and the terrible sensation of being sucked by gravity. He kept falling... and in those moments of great fear, it came to his mind all the good and bad episodes of his life.

He was thinking now about how close death was getting, when all of a sudden he felt the rope tied to his waist pull him very hard.

His body was still hanging in the air...Only the rope was holding him, and in that moment of stillness he had no other choice but to scream:

HELP ME GOD!

All of a sudden, a deep voice coming from the sky answered:

What do you want me to do?

-Save me God!

Do you really think I can save you?

– Of course I believe you can.

above?

THEN CUT THE ROPE TIED TO YOUR WAIST...

There was a moment of silence: the man decided to hold on to the rope with all his strength.

The rescue team tells, that the next day a climber was found dead and frozen... his body hanging from a rope. His hands holding tight to it...

ONLY TEN FEET FROM THE GROUND.

and you? how attached are you to your rope?

Will you let go?

Don't ever doubt things from God. You never should say that He has forgotten or abandoned you. Don't ever think that he does not take care of you. Remember that He is always holding you with His right hand. Is 41:13

Isa 41:13 For I am the LORD, your God,
who takes hold of your right hand
and says to you, Do not fear;
I will help you.



Probably the scenes he is now witnessing will not provide material for an intellectual attack on his faith—your previous failures have put that out of your power. But there is a sort of attack on the emotions which can still be tried. ... You will notice that we have got them completely fogged about the meaning of the word 'real'. ... Either application of the word could be defended; but our business is to keep the two going at once so that the emotional value of the word 'real' can be placed now on one side of the account, now on the other, as it happens to suit us.

30.3) Can "real life" be a problem for the patient?

Talk about this in light of Matthew 4:1-11

and Hebrews 2:14-18 (part of a section in the NIV titles Jesus Made Like His Brothers)

Mt 4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Mt 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Mt 4:5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

" 'He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Mt 4:7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Mt 4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Mt 4:10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Mt 4:11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Heb 2:13 ...

And again he says,

"Here am I, and the children God has given me."

Heb 2:14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted

The general rule which we have now pretty well established among them is that in all experiences which can make them happier or better only the physical facts are 'real' while the spiritual elements are 'subjective'; ... Your patient, properly handled, will have no difficulty in regarding his emotion at the sight of human entrails as a revelation of Reality and his emotion at the sight of happy children or fair weather as mere sentiment,

Your affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

30.4) Screwtape wants the patient to pay for the cake, but not eat it.
Eating the cake and having it too. A little background on the saying –

The phrase's earliest recording is from 1546 as "wolde you bothe eate your cake, and have your cake?" (John Heywood's "A dialogue Conteynyng the Nomber in Effect of All the Prouerbes in the Englishe Tongue").[1] This phrase alludes to the impossibility of eating your cake and still having it afterwards.

Question – is it really impossible to eat your cake and have it too?

What if the item under consideration is not a cake – but the body and blood of Jesus?

What does that do to Screwtape's logic in the paragraph

Screwtape Letter #31 – Questions

Uh oh

– Wormwood is in really big trouble



My dear, my very dear, Wormwood, my poppet, my pignie,
How mistakenly now that all is lost you come whimpering to ask me
whether the terms of affection in which I address you meant nothing from the beginning.
... Love you? Why, yes. As dainty a morsel as ever I grew fat on.

31.1) We always knew that Screwtape didn't get the concept of love.

Those in Satan's lowerarchy never got the concept of who is food for who right either.

Talk about this view of "life" for those who think they are tough in this world – and what they'll encounter in the next.



You have let a soul slip through your fingers. ... What, then, of this final stripping, this complete cleansing?

The more one thinks about it, the worse it becomes. He got through so easily! ... The extraction hurt more and more and then the tooth was out. The dream became a nightmare and then you woke. You die and die and then you are beyond death. How could I ever have doubted it?

31.2) Reality sets in – but for who?

No doubt – Wormwood knows he has failed.

But – was it – as Screwtape says – really a case of

One moment it seemed to be all our world; the scream of bombs, the fall of houses, the stink and taste of high explosive on the lips and in the lungs, the feet burning with weariness, the heart cold with horrors, the brain reeling, the legs aching; next moment all this was gone, gone like a bad dream, never again to be of any account.

And – did Screwtape realize just how true this statement was –

Did you mark how naturally—as if he'd been born for it—the earth-born vermin entered the new life?



As he saw you, he also saw Them. I know how it was. You reeled back dizzy and blinded, more hurt by them than he had ever been by bombs. The degradation of it!... Recognition made him free of their company almost before the limbs of his corpse became quiet. Only you were left outside.

31.3) The light has come on.

Talk about this realization the patient had in relation to the story below –

Footprints

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed He was walking along the beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from His life. For each scene He noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonging to Him and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of His life flashed before Him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of His life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of His life.

This really bothered Him and He questioned the LORD about it. LORD you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.

The LORD replied, my precious, precious child, I Love you and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.



He saw not only Them; he saw Him. This animal, this thing begotten in a bed, could look on Him. ... Sometimes I am almost in despair. All that sustains me is the conviction that our Realism, our rejection (in the face of all temptations) of all silly nonsense and claptrap, must win in the end. Meanwhile, I have you to settle with. Most truly do I sign myself

Your increasingly and ravenously
affectionate uncle

SCREWTAPE

31.4) The End.

"If only we could find out what He is really up to!"

Like so many people – Screwtape knows, but doesn't know –
What is He up to?

Is the Intelligence Department really to blame – or is it something else?