

I. Introduction

- A. If you were an enemy agent and wanted to capture the hearts and minds of America's young people to turn them to a path of self-destruction, would you operate by announcing your intentions or would you operate undercover?
- B. In 1942, C.S. Lewis published his classic book, *The Screwtape Letters*. The book is a series of letters between a senior demon, Screwtape, and his nephew, Wormwood. Screwtape advises Wormwood on how to secure the damnation of a human known only as, "The Patient."
- C. In one exchange, Wormwood asks Uncle Screwtape about whether or not to reveal himself to The Patient. Here's how Screwtape responds:
 1. My Dear Wormwood, I wonder you should ask me whether it is essential to keep the patient in ignorance of your own existence. That question, at least for the present phase of the struggle, has been answered for us by the High Command. Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and skeptics. At least, not yet.
 2. I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that "devils" are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that (it is an old textbook method of confusing them) he therefore cannot believe in you.
- D. We are witnessing, right now, what Lewis described 68 years ago. We're living through it. The powers of darkness have convinced our culture to accept their lies even as our culture denies their existence. A very nice trick.
- E. We are continuing our series called *War of the Worlds*, going patiently through the Bible book of Colossians. The more I watch the news and the more I talk to different people, the more I realize how incredibly important this book of the Bible is for our day.
- F. Our society is being sucked down a giant drain and we don't even see it coming. The greatest revolution in American history wasn't the Revolutionary War in 1776; it was a war that lasted exactly one generation. It was rooted in the hippy movement of the 1960's, with its radical rejection of authority, of historic and of biblical norms. In our generation it has fruited a radical commitment to the Earth Goddess, a rejection of any concept of a nuclear family, a reinvented Jesus and a redefined God.
- G. Screwtape, Wormwood and their High Commander, Satan, are laughing all the way to the world's damnation.
- H. The title of my sermon today is HEARTBURN. Let's get into Colossians 2 and you'll see why.

II. Heartburn

- A. *"For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh."* Colossians 2:1
 1. The writer is named Paul. He has written this letter to Christians in a deteriorating city called Colosse. Laodicea was a sister church only a few miles away.
 2. Paul had never visited this part of the world. He had never met these Christians.
 3. He felt great conflict for them. Why? Because those Christians were caught in a tremendous war of the worlds, a tremendous spiritual struggle.
 4. Paul had heartburn over these Christians. He would have heartburn over us today. It's hard not to. I think the American church should be at DEFCON 1: Highest Alert.
 5. Why the heartburn? What does he want to see?
- B. *"That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Colossians 2:2-3
 1. Here are young people who grew up with no certainty, no clarity, no absolutes. For them, life was confusing. They had no anchor for their lives. no ultimate reality. They were offered a massive menu of gods, from every nation and every language. They had no way of telling the true from the false, the real from the unreal.
 2. Then, they heard of Jesus and found, in Jesus, the one God they'd been groping for all their lives. They believed Him and trusted Him. Jesus revolutionized their lives.
 3. But, there's another step they needed to take. It wasn't just enough to be saved, as wonderful as that moment was.
 4. They needed to fulfill their post-salvation mandate. They needed to grow deep and strong in the Lord.
 5. That was Paul's heartburn.
 6. He writes, "That their hearts might be encouraged." The Greek word doesn't just mean "encouraged" in our normal sense of the word. It actually means to make strong, to arouse people to acts of courage, endurance and action. It doesn't mean he wants them to feel good; it means he wants them to dig in their heels for Jesus, to be strong, brave and ready for war.
 7. That kind of strength results in us "being knit together in love."
 8. It is super important that we, as individuals in the church, are glued together by a mutual love, respect and concern for each other. That's important. But I don't think that's the point here.

9. The point here is deeper. It is not that the different people in the church need to be knit together—though that’s true and it’s important.
 10. The point is the different parts of YOU need to be knit together.
 11. Once you take away objective truth, once you take away the truths that we can be certain of, once you take away morality—and there’s nothing in its place—what do you get? You get inner fragmentation.
 12. You are pulled in many different directions and can’t tell which way is real. It’s like being a very creepy house of mirrors at a carnival and not knowing the way out.
 13. Scripture outlines three objectives for you:
 - a) That your heart would be knit together—that instead of being pulled in a million directions, instead of being double minded, instead of doubting everything in Scripture about God—you would have a unified, simplified inner life, with a childlike faith in God.
 - b) That your heart would be knit together in love—a mature, whole inner life that can connect on a deep level. You can connect with God. You can connect with yourself and your truest identity. You can connect with your spouse, your kids, your family, the church and the world that so desperately needs Jesus. His love would be formed in you. The only power to mend a broken heart is the inflowing love of Christ.
 - c) That you would attain full assurance. Confident, not doubting your riches in Christ. Confident of the Father’s affection toward you. Full assurance that you’re saved, you’re going to heaven and in Christ you are rich.
 14. Are you searching for answers to the puzzle of your life? Stop searching today. In Christ, ALL of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. You are complete in Him. Your search is over. You don’t need to stay open to other possibilities; there are no other possibilities.
- C. “Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.” Colossians 2:4
1. Examples:
 - a) *Persuasive words:* All roads lead to God. God wouldn’t condemn anybody forever. *But the Bible says:* “He who has the son, has [eternal] life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” 1 John 5:10
 - b) *Persuasive words:* There is truth in every religion. Nobody has a corner on truth. *But the Bible says:* “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” 2Peter 2:1
 - c) *Persuasive words:* The Jesus that is described in the Bible didn’t really exist. There are other books that describe Him differently. *But the Bible says:* “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14
 - d) *Persuasive words:* There are so many interpretations of the Bible, how can you be sure that yours is the right one? *But the Bible says:* “But there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” Galatians 1:7-8
 - e) *Persuasive words:* You get to design your own truth, your own reality, your own definitions. Truth is what whatever you want it to be. *But the Bible says:* “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2Timothy 4:3-4
 - f) *Persuasive words:* The Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus of history. *But the Bible says:* “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” 2Peter 1:16
 - g) *Persuasive words:* Sexuality is a personal thing and as long as consenting adults agree, nobody gets hurt. *But the Bible says:* “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.” Ephesians 5:3 NIV
 2. So Scripture warns: Do not be deceived with persuasive words.
 3. But it is so hard to be deceived with persuasive words, isn’t it. Why is that? Because God designed your inner spirit to be full, specifically, full of God and His truth. Full of Scripture, doctrine, God’s Word. The church should be a gigantic fuel stop for the people of God where, week after week and day after day, we gather in groups, big and small, to receive God’s truth, taught and applied.
 4. But when that doesn’t happen, then what?
 5. When your spirit isn’t full of God’s truth, that empty space inside you acts like a vacuum. The Bible calls this condition vanity or futility of mind. It means an emptiness that acts like a vacuum. What should be filled with God’s truth sucks in other stuff. Like what?
 6. Listen to this verse: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith [doctrine], giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.” 1Timothy 4:1.
 7. Deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. The vacuum in your soul draws in the doctrines of demons.

- Think about that. That doesn't mean your head will spin around or that you're an evil, demonic person.
8. It means that you've been seduced by the devil's lies and probably don't even realize it. Because, when Screwtape and Wormwood whisper their lies into your mind they don't start by saying, "Attention! Here comes the doctrine of Demons!"
 9. Instead, they present their lies as plausible, reasonable, tolerant, charitable and loving. And you, because you want to be plausible, reasonable, tolerant, charitable and loving, nod your head and say, "Yes, that makes sense." You bite the bait and only much later will you find the hook inside.
 - a) Screwtape counseled Wormwood: "The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."
 10. Christian, we need to be really solid on the basics. You don't need advanced Bible degrees or Ph.D.s in theology. You just need the basics, over and over until you're solid, until you're strong enough to not be deceived by persuasive words, until you can tell the difference between good and evil, true and false, biblical and not biblical. That is part of maturity.
- D. *"For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."* Colossians 2:5-7
1. This is a military verse. The terms are ancient military terms. The words "good order" refer to a military unit, placed at strategic points so the enemy can't break through. A solid, military front in a battle.
 2. We've stated the mission of our church in military terms. We've had a few who don't like it or think it turns people off. But here it is:
 - a) Our mission is to mobilize an army to fulfill the Great Commission.
 3. A well-mobilized church is beautiful to God and it cures a pastor's heartburn. A lot of you don't get that we're in a war of ideas, a truth war. Every public school teacher is in this war. Every student is in this war. Anybody who listens to music is in this war. Do you know that right now, the number one downloaded song on iTunes, today, is about young girls experimenting with lesbianism? I feel so anxious for the world our kids will grow up in. What was unthinkable yesterday is happening today.
 4. What will it take to turn the tide? It will take Christians who get their act together spiritually and grow deep and strong in the Lord. Grow mature.
 5. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."*
 6. Where are the men and women who will stay steady with God and His word (especially you guys at the Well, you young adults)? Will you stay steady with God? Steady with the Bible? Will you keep learning and discovering God's truth? When will you quit sitting on the fence? The Bible asks how long will you limp between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him. If any other god is God, follow him.
 7. James says that a double-minded person is unstable in all his ways. We have way too many unstable Christians because you haven't decided for Christ. You're a warrior who hasn't chosen sides. What are you waiting for?
 8. One more section:
- E. *"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."* Colossians 2:8-10
1. Just some trends in American Christianity:
 - a) The percentage of American adults who identify themselves as Christians dropped from 86% in 1990 to 77% in 2001. This is an unprecedented drop of almost 1 percentage point per year.
 - b) The percentage of American adults who identify themselves as Protestants dropped below 50% about the year 2005.
 - c) There appears to be a major increase in interest in spirituality among North Americans. However, this has not translated into greater church involvement.
 - d) At the present rate of change, Islam will become the dominant religion in the world before 2050.
 - e) At the present rate of change, most Americans would identify themselves as non-religious or non-Christian by the year 2035.
 - f) If all the unchurched people in America were a nation, that nation would be the 5th largest nation in the world. We live in a mission field.
 2. The statistics among young people are in a state of emergency: 16-29 year olds routinely report:
 - a) Today's young people have a higher degree of criticism toward Christianity than the previous generation at their stage of life. In other words, it's getting worse.
 - b) Only 16% of non-Christians in their teens and twenties have a favorable impression of Christianity.
 3. I have an opinion why. It is because very few Christians crack the maturity barrier. So, instead of the muscular, loving, courageous church that turned the ancient world upside down, we have a consumeristic church. We have an aging church that has sheltered itself from a crazy world. We have an immature church in search of an experience or a zap from God, instead of a deeply rooted faith in the

- unchanging word of God.
4. The great heartburn is that once young people turn away from the church, what do they turn to? They turn to revived paganism. They turn to doctrines of demons. They turn to the dark side of the force.
 5. Here's why we care: All these alternatives, every last one of them, will only cheat you out of the real life Jesus wants to create in you. Cheat you. Deceive you.
 6. Look at Jesus.
 7. Where else will you find anything like Him? No other religion has a basis in reality and history like Jesus. No other religion approaches sin and forgiveness like Christianity. If it weren't for Christians, there would be no hospitals in the world. There would be no orphanages in the world. Take away Christ, and there would be no free speech, because it was a biblical world view that recognized free speech as an inalienable, God-given right.
 8. How will you alleviate guilt without Jesus? How will you atone for sin without His shed blood? How will you have hope for tomorrow without the resurrection? What other system honors human life and makes God both so majestic and so near?
 9. To my mind, there is no other system ever conceived that is a system of grace. In every religion, mankind must reach up to God—works. In Christianity, God reached down to us, through Jesus. Grace sets Christianity in a class by itself. No other faith makes grace its centerpiece. There's an old poem that says, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy Cross I cling." It means we don't add anything to our salvation—Christ at His Cross accomplished it in full.
 10. So, nothing in my hand I bring. I contribute nothing; it's all grace, all a gift, all mine to receive.
 11. There really are only two religions:
 - a) One says, "Nothing in my hand I bring."
 - b) The other says, "Something in my hand I bring," and sends you on a quest to be better, learn some hidden occult secrets, change this or change that, fill your hand with good works, or religious rituals, or sexual power, or a roster of religious deeds—self-sacrifice or sacrifice someone else—pay some price, some offering you give, some duty you fulfill.
 - c) But only Jesus says, come to Me. Come, just as you are. Come, without money and without price. I will make you whole.
 12. God cleansed our sins and gave us a Savior. A sinner is forgiven. An orphan is adopted. The guilty receive pardon. Death is defeated. No other religion has anything like it.
 13. To substitute any other savior or god for Jesus is to ask for a life that feels cheated, a life that feels deceived. It is human invention. All other religion springs up from the earth, from demons, from emanations, from imaginations.
 14. No other aligns with Christ. In Christ you have forgiveness and an exalted status before God. You have an inheritance in heaven. You have a true purpose. You have meaning, strength, a friend in need, a help in trouble, a lover for your soul, a comforter, a strengthener. You have wisdom for living and confidence for dying. You have hope in your worst moments and gratitude in your best moments. You have guidance and power from His spirit. You have authority to pray and courage to approach the throne of grace. You have God's own word, God's own power, God's own presence. You have God's own promise that he will take you home.
 15. In Christ you have the complete package. He is the head of all principality and power. Every angel, demon, idol, other god of every other culture of all of space and time bow to Jesus. All bend the knee to Jesus.
 16. Who can compare with Jesus? No one. Not now, not ever. Buddah, Mohammed, Confucius, Sophia, the Earth Goddess, Satan, Lucifer, Mithras, Baal, no one, NO other god like Jesus. No other man like Jesus. NO other God-man like Jesus.
 17. He alone is worthy. You are complete in Him. All you need is Christ. You don't need Christ and _____. You need Christ. Stop looking. Get off the fence. Climb on Jesus' side. You are in a war. The Revolution has started. What you don't realize is that by not deciding whose side you're on, you've already decided.
 18. If you decide against Jesus, guess who's going to have the heartburn for a really, really long time?