The Screwtape Letters (28-29)

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Date: 05 April 2023

[0:00] All right. Let's look into what we have going on. So we'll try to do letters 28 and 29 tonight.

We can do it. I just have to be, I just have to keep moving. Yeah. All right. Suzanne, am I refreshed? We're good now? So here's letter 28.
And this is the title that I'm going to assign to this one. Come, join us.
Come, join us. Move over here. Come and join us. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Sit where y'all can sit where you can see.
Sit where you can see. I encourage you to come over here, Derek. Yeah, you'll be able to see better because I'm going to be blocking this side. Hi, y'all. All right.
[1:05] Here's here's the title. Now, notice the time. We're getting started late. So when it gets around to then, I still have more time. Preservation and a persevering faith.

Don't get the words mixed up. They're important. Preservation and a persevering faith. That's what we're going to be talking about. So let's look at the quick summary of what we're going to try to unpack tonight.
This is a quote. It is so hard for these creatures to persevere. Screwtape doesn't want the patient to die in hopes that Wormwood can yet exploit him by wearing him down with the long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity.
A long life gives the demons opportunities for unraveling their souls from heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth.
The goal is to make the patient as worldly as possible while keeping him convinced that he can and should turn earth into heaven.
[2:17] That's what we're looking at in chapter 28. Those are the primary themes that I want to explore tonight because I had to pick and choose. We may not cover all of the questions or issues that you might have zeroed in on for 28, but this is what we have to look forward to.

All right, let's turn in the book then and read in the letter. Again, I'm being judicious here about where we jump in.
So if you'll turn to page 154. I think it is. Is it 154? Yeah. Letter 28, page 154.
And about three-fourths of the way down the page, you'll see where he says, I know it seems strange. Is everybody there that wants to be there?
Did you find where I am? Okay, here's what he says. I know it seems strange that your chief aim at the moment should be the very same thing for which the patient's lover and his mother are praying, namely his bodily safety.
[3:32] But so it is. You should be guarding him like the apple of your eye. If he dies now, you lose him.

All right, stop right there just for a second. What's the context that's going on around him that makes his death a probability? Or there's a spoking of bombing.
Yes. The Nazis are bombing Britain. And so the bombing that's taking place during World War II is very real. It killed thousands and thousands of British civilians.
So that's what he's referring to. You don't want him to die. If he dies, we lose him. And we'll come back to that. If he survives the war, there is always hope on the demon side.
So what are they hoping for? What do you think he means if he dies now, you lose him? Well, because of how close he is with God.
[4:34] Okay, he's close to God. So if we die, we don't have an opportunity to do what? Corrupt him. Corrupt him. Do you think it's possible that he's saying that we could rob him of his salvation?

You think? So Lewis had a problem with this his entire life. And he was criticized about this. He would respond with, look, I'm not a professional theologian.
I'm a quote-unquote layman. And so this was actually a weakness in his theology. I don't know for sure if Lewis thought that a person could really lose their salvation.

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But the scripture makes it clear you can't. And we're going to see that tonight. So I think he's alluding to the possibility that the demons really could rob a human being of their salvation.
Which is wrong. All right. The enemy has guarded him from you through the first great wave of temptations. But if only he can be kept alive, you have time itself for your ally.
[5:51] The long, dull, monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather.

Now, for those of you who've read military history or read about battles, armies typically go to war, go to offensives during better weather.
They realize this. It's very, very hard to move cavalry or mechanized armies through terrain where it's muddy and there's been a lot of rain or whatever.
So he's saying this is an excellent, excellent time. Middle-aged life is an excellent time for you to campaign against the humans.
You see, it is so hard for these creatures to persevere. There's the quote from earlier. Now, look at what he says. The routine of adversity.
[6:53] The gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes. The quiet despair. Hardly felt as pain.

Of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them.
The drabness which we create in their lives.
And the inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to that drabness. All this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition.
If, on the other hand, the middle years prove prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the world.
He feels that he is finding his place in it while really it is finding its place in him. His increasing reputation. His widening circle of acquaintances.
[8:01] His sense of importance. The growing pressure of absorbing an agreeable work. Build him up or build up in him a sense of being really at home in earth.

Which is just what we want. So this is an issue of the patient putting his mind on earthly things. It's not an issue of the man faithfully being a steward and going about his life to the glory of God.
This is an example of a man who has his focus taken off of Christ and the things of heaven. And put on the things of earth. That's what the demons want.
And they want to use this time of middle-agedness to bring it about. Okay. Now, if you look on page 155, within the last five or six lines or so of what we just read, where we just closed it out, we can discern a two-pronged plan of attack in this section from the demons.
And both of these prongs of attack concern the demons' attempts to affect the man's soul. Can you identify what those two are?
[9:15] They have two aims in this attack. This is on 155, right in the middle of the page. What is it?

Yes, that's number one. That's the first pronged attack. We want to wear out a soul by attrition.
What's the other one? Prosperity.
Okay. Yes, he's going to use prosperity. But what does he want to do with it? Okay. Yes.
All right. How does he put it? Look right below where it says, wearing out a soul by attrition. How does he put it? How does he use prosperity? To do what? That's it.
To knit his soul to the world. So he has, they have two pronged ideas of assault here in their attack against the patient, against us.
[10:18] The first is wearing out a soul by attrition. What does attrition mean? No.

Actually, that's a good guess, Michelle. But it actually has an opposite meaning because of what the effect that it has on you.
What did you say, Mitch? Attrition? Like atrophy? Okay.
Let's build on that. So attrition means constant wearing down to weaken or destroy. So attrition, over time, attrition.
You're being worn down. There's a subtraction. There's an emptying that's going on in you.
[11:27] So over time, they're hoping to wear out your soul by attrition. Demons want to drain your soul of its joy and sense of purpose in Christ.

That's what they want to do. Over time, they want to wear you down and rob you of that joy.
Through all these things that he talks about. The routine of adversity.

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The gradual decay of youthful loves and hopes. You had all these ideas, aspirations, and desires when you were youthful. And the way your love would be and how it would be to get married to the person.
And then real life sets in. The gradual despair. The quiet despair you feel in having to face temptation after temptation.
Only to find yourself falling and struggling and stumbling. And you think, would I ever get over this? Will I ever learn to deal with this? That's the kind of stuff they want to use to wear you down.
[12:28] The second one, to knit his soul to the world. Through, Derek said, prosperity. That's to build up in him a sense of being really at home on earth.

Now, here's some questions for you. Do demons have the power to reclaim a soul that once belonged to God? You say no.
You're right. And do you know that the scripture teaches that? Okay. Right. That's right. Do demons have the power to wear out a Christian soul by attrition?
That's a little bit tougher. What do you think? Can demons wear out a soul? All right. We're going to see. Hold on to that, too. Does the Bible speak to these terrifying threats of either being reclaimed by the devils or being worn out by the devils?
Does the Bible speak to these? And, of course, the answer is yes, or I would just close in prayer and we'd go home. So let's look at 1 Peter.
[13:41] I'm going to try to move steadily and not get us bogged down.

We'll see how I do. 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1. This is verses 3 through 5.
If someone has that, you're welcome to just read it right out. 1 Peter 1.
Let's look at these questions again. Do the demons have the power to reclaim a soul? Do the demons have the power to wear out a soul? Now, let's look at this again. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has caused us to be born again. So if God causes us to be born again, that suggests to us that if God's doing this work, it can't be undone. Not by any power greater than him.
[15:11] There is no such power, right? He's caused us to be born again. He's caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

2 Peter 1. 2. 2. 2. 2. 2. 2. 3. 2. 2. 2. 2.
2. 2. 2. 2. 2. 3. 3.
3. 2. 3. 4. 4. 4. 5. 5. Who does it answer the same ?
Who does it answer both ? Do you think ? Nobody wants to try it. I think it answers both in the affirmative ?
[16:10] Do demons have the power to reclaim ? Do the demons have the power to wear out ? Okay. Mike says no.■d. good do a number on you this is an excellent point in that thank you all right so that we're gonna we're gonna poke around on that very point so we need to understand what we're talking about when he's saying that we can wear them down we can actually get them to a point where we can reclaim them and in that process we can wear them down and wear them down and wear them down and wear them down now where that's headed is despair all right christians don't despair despair is the loss of hope so we need to be really careful of that all right so hold on to that passage now in your mind or if you've written it down that's a critical passage for us to understand all right now that that brings us to what we want to talk about now in terms of the doctrine so look at this the doctrine of god's preservation of the saints preservation if you preserve something what do you do to it keep it what was the other make it everlasting great bring those together that's what we're going to talk about all right what does god's preservation mean in one sense this doctrine concerns god's care and sustaining of all he has created everything in creation god holds it all together in christ it concerns his providential care his providence you've heard that that's what we're talking about his provision for all of his creation whenever you hear about the doctrine of god's providence you're hearing of the doctrine of god providing god making provision he provides for all he's made he cares for it he sustains it he gives his creation all it needs to maintain itself as he looks over it that's god's provision and he does that with us now in our context we are applying preservation to god's work of god's work of keeping derrick said it keeping believers secure in salvation so god safeguards believers against apostasy and guarantees their glorification what is apostasy what does it mean to apostatize yes turn away from the faith deny the faith leave the faith that's apostasy it is impossible for a christian to apostatize to apostatize would mean that you lose your faith you lose your salvation christians can't do that thank god god keeps

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whom he saves he keeps us and there is no power in heaven and earth that can unkeep us from god thank god so apostasy is something that happens to unbelievers who've made a profession of faith but they have never confessed and truly owned salvation through faith in jesus christ they've made a profession maybe they went to church maybe they read their bible

maybe they went through the motions and then in some point in their life they turned completely away and walked away from the faith that's the evidence they were never saved in the first place yes camille yes camille I can't get it.
I can't get it. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom. Mom.
Okay. Okay. Okay.
Yeah. Right. Right. So we'll and we're going to to clear all that up.
[21:46] I hope as we move forward. And talk about perseverance as well. So these are good points. Mitch. Right.

No. So I'm using that terminology because that's that's what he they would say he or she would say I'm leaving the faith.
I mean I've heard this. Yes. But only for a small time.
And there's reasons for that too. Absolutely. Christians get into these funks where they'll send and it will it will maybe even seem like they've turned away.
Can that can you can you get to that point. I think so. But there are several things in well I'll keep going and we'll we'll see examples of that actually.
[23:02] I think I've got those verses in here. These are great questions you guys. You're. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I mean it can look different ways. But when we get to the next doctrine you'll see how that how the doctrine of preservation and the doctrine of perseverance come together.

These are great. You're you guys are grabbing on and thinking about this. All right. Let me go a little bit further. Believers are kept.
This is a quote. Believers are quit kept safe through the means God uses such as the inner work of the Holy Spirit. That's the spirit working in you to convict you to guide you.
Prayer. God uses prayer. He uses scriptural warnings admonitions and encouragements. The fellowship of other believers. I think Annette mentioned that the discipline of the church.
The church. And even at times here's hitting on what what Mitch was getting or getting at even at times the discipline of his child by God. The wise and loving father.
[24:11] God will never allow them to stray permanently away from the love of Christ. He will not allow it. Will not allow it. You cannot leave God.

If God has saved you. If you're truly born again through faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You cannot be unsaved. You cannot leave God.
He will not allow it. Even if it comes to the point where God disciplines you. You. And takes your life. And that can happen.
Even to Christians. Where they get stubborn and they sin. And they're rebuked. And they they don't fully repent. That God can actually get them to the place where they're sick or whatever.
And they die. That's in scripture. That's why Paul said some of you are sick. Because you're unrepentant. What you need to do is call your pastors together.
[25:12] And have your pastors come over and deal with you. And you need to repent before them as they pray for you. And then they can turn to God and pray on your behalf. And see that God would make you well again.

Paul also said some of you have are are asleep. Some of you have gone asleep. Because of unrepentant sin in your life. And that's a euphemism for being killed.
Death. So God can discipline us. And when God spanks us it's not fun. And the ultimate form of that discipline could be God takes you out.
You see God doesn't play with this. He disciplines his kids. Because he loves us. That's throughout scripture isn't it? He disciplines as a as a father who loves us.
He loves us. So the quote is just telling us there are different means that God uses. In this ministry of preserving us in the faith. Let's look at a scripture that is encouraging to us about this.
[26:15] It's in Romans. Some of you may have even thought of this verse while I was talking about it with you. Romans 8 28. And I'll just read this for the sake of time and move through it.

And we know. This is so important. And we know. That God causes. Here he is again causing just like in first Peter.

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All things to work together for good. To those who love God. To those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom God foreknew.
He also predestined. To become conformed to the image of his son. That's a guarantee. God predetermined that you in your salvation.
Would be conformed to the image of his son in your life. So that he would be the firstborn among many brethren. And these whom God predestined. He also called.
[27:17] That's the effectual call. And these whom he called. He also justified. Declared righteous. And these whom he justified. He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us. Who is against us? He who had not. Did not spare his own son. But delivered him over for us.
All. How will he not also with him. Freely give us all things. Who will bring a charge against God's elect. God is the one who justifies.
Who is the one who condemns. Christ Jesus is he who died. Yes. Rather who was raised. Who is at the right hand of God. Who also intercedes for us.
Question. Who will separate us from the love of Christ. Will tribulation. Distress. Persecution. Famine. Nakedness. Peril. Sword.
[28:17] Just as it is written. For your sake. We are being put to death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. All these things. We. Overwhelmingly conquer. Through him who loved us.

I am convinced. That neither death. Nor life. Angels. Principalities. Things present. Things to come. Powers. Height. Depth.
Other. Created. Thing. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. Which is in Christ Jesus. Our Lord. Folks. Put that in the bank. There is no power in heaven.
Or earth. More powerful than God's ability to keep you. In salvation. Your sin is not greater. Than God's grace in your life.
So nothing can overcome God's work in your life. Now I want to look at several other passages. And we are going to do this real quickly. Just to kind of. Man. I hope.
[29:18] Flood your soul. With the good news of God's commitment to you. And I want to go to 1st Corinthians. First. We are going to go to 1st Corinthians chapter 1.

Verses 7 through 9. So that you are not lacking in any gift. Awaiting eagerly. The revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Who will also confirm you. To the end. You see that. He will confirm you to the end. What blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful. Through whom. You were called. Into fellowship with his son. Jesus Christ our Lord. Do you see that. There is nothing.
God is going to confirm that. He is going to keep you blameless. Period. How about 2nd Corinthians. Chapter 4. Verse 14.
[30:22] I will read. 13 first. 2nd Corinthians 4. 13 and 14. 2nd Corinthians 4. 13 and 14. But having the same spirit of faith. According to what is written. I believe. Therefore I spoke. We also believe.

Therefore we speak. Knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus. Will raise us also with Jesus. And will present us with you.
Just as God raised Jesus from the dead. The Lord Jesus. And will present us with you. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead.
We have the guarantee. Through faith in him. That he will also raise us. That is. That is a spiritual reality. Look at verse 17. This is so important to tie with this. For momentary light affliction. Is producing for us.
An eternal weight of glory. Far beyond all comprehension. There is nothing in this world. That can tear us. Out of the hand of God. Or deny us. Our inheritance.
[31:18] The light affliction. That we are experiencing. In this world. Is only serving. To produce an eternal weight of glory. For us. For us.

The light of God. Our inheritance. To us. The light affliction. That we are experiencing. In this world. Is only serving. To produce an eternal weight. Of glory for us.
us. You see how this is a win-win across the board? This is glorious. 1 Thessalonians 5. And we'll look at 23 and 24. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely. Sanctify means set you

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apart, make you holy entirely. And may your spirit and soul and body be, what does your word say? Preserved, complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he who calls you and he also will bring it to pass. Amen, right? That'll preach, won't it? That's just blessed. This is a glory hallelujah moment, folks. Praise God. 2 Timothy 4.18.
Let me get to 2 Timothy. I'm in 1 Timothy. 2 Timothy 4.18. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.
To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. He will rescue me from every evil deed. I think it would be both, Mitch, in the context of 2 Timothy. Let me go back up in the context.
[33:33] Verse 16. At my first defense, no one supported me, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

The Lord then will rescue me from every evil deed and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. How do you understand the context there?
Is this a threat from within or from without? Without. Right. So there is no plan of man or demon that can threaten the apostle Paul's salvation or closeness to God.
The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and he will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. Nothing man or demon can do can undo that.
How about one more? Jude. Jude. The book of Jude. This is an interesting little book that we're going to deal with.
[34:47] Right before Revelation. It's just one chapter. Right before Revelation. It's Jude 24 and 25.

This is how the book ends. The letter ends. Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling, falling. And to make you stand in the presence of his glory, blameless with great joy.
To the only God, our Savior. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.
Amen. Boy, that's packed, isn't it? Now to him who is able to keep you. Notice the next statement. And to make you.
That is the work. Of preservation. Preservation. Now. Just hastening on. There's another side of this doctrine that deals with our perseverance.
[35:54] While being preserved. By the grace of God. So we've established the preservation. Now we need to look at the other side of the coin, which is perseverance.

And the first place I'm going to take you is very familiar to you because I've been hammering it for about three Sundays now. It's in 2nd Peter. 2nd Peter chapter 1.
Verses 5 through 11. And now we're going to see this in another context of how God helps us persevere in the faith. So that we can be certain of our calling and our election.
That God has indeed called us to salvation in Jesus. What does it say? Verse 5. Now for this very reason also. Applying all diligence.
In your faith. Supply also. Moral excellence. And in your moral excellence. Knowledge. And in your knowledge.
[36:59] Self-control. In your self-control. Perseverance. And in your perseverance. Godliness. And in your godliness. Brotherly kindness. In your brotherly kindness.

Love. Now why are those spiritual characteristics so important for Peter to outline that way? Notice what he says in verse 8.
For if these qualities are yours. And are increasing. They render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
You want to know for sure that you have the true saving knowledge of Jesus. And you're living by it. Take a hard deep look at your life. And see if these qualities are there.
Are these qualities existing. Discernable. Provable. In your life. Are they abounding. Increasing.
[37:58] Overflowing. In your life. Look at your lifestyle. Look at your track record. And Peter goes on to say this in verse 9. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted.

Having forgotten his purification from his former sins. So these qualities can be absent because you're an unbeliever. Or what Peter's dealing with here. If you remember. He's saying these qualities can be dulled.

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If not truncated from your life. Because. Because. You're not looking hard enough. Focusing enough. On your purification.
Your salvation. Your deliverance from sin. You've strayed. You've gotten off track. You've taken your eye off the ball. As it were. Therefore brethren.
Verse 10. Be all the more diligent then. To make certain. About God's calling and choosing you. For as long as you practice these things.
[38:58] Verses 5 through 7. You will never stumble. He's not saying you'll never sin. You will not fall away from God. For in this way.

The entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Will be abundantly supplied to you. In what way? In the way of you coming to understand.
That God has done this work in you. And it cannot be undone. So this is not work salvation. This is salvation working. Abounding.
Overflowing. Yeah. Yeah. Right.
That's right.
[40:09] That's an excellent point Mitch. There is no neutral. In the Christian life. You don't take the gear shift. And put it in neutral. And just let it kind of wobble there. And sit there. And you take your foot off the gas.

And the clutch. And you just kind of coast for a little while. That's not the Christian life. It's either in gear moving you forward. Or it's in reverse. And you're going backward. That's the Christian life.
So he's saying in this. These qualities. You are either putting in a diligent. Remember the words I used. It's energetic. Enthusiastic. You are either putting forward.
An energetic. Invested. Enthusiastic effort. That's diligent. To see these qualities. Growing in your life. And we're going to see more of this.
In just a second. Or you're not. If you're not. And you're a Christian. Then what's going to happen. Is you're going to feel yourself. Moving back. Things that you used to hold dear.
[41:07] Things that you used to know. Things that used to be. Familiar to you. In the way of fighting temptation. You'll start finding yourself. Succumbing to things. And you're going.

Oh man. You take your eye off the ball. And that's what happens. Because you cannot do this. On your own. This is all a Holy Spirit gig. All of it. In your life.
Knitted to the world. Derek said. It's one or the other. Isn't it? Don't let the demons. Knit you to the world. Let me show you this. And see if this helps a little more. There is the other side.
Of this doctrine. That deals with our. Perseverance. While being preserved. By the grace of God.
And here's the quote. Do I confess. That I am being preserved. By God's keeping power.
Then his. Preserving. Must be coming to light. In my persevering. The only proof. I have.
[42:07] That he preserves me. Is that by his grace. I am enabled. To. Persevere. So here's. Here's. We're cleaning up.

Camille's. Question now. In terms of an answer. For her. The fact. That you persevere. In the faith. Is evidence. That God's preserving you. You won't persevere.
Without. Preservation. You can't. You will give up. You will throw it in. We have.
A privilege. And responsibility. To strive. After. Holiness. And I want to show you. Just a few passages. Before we move on. To the next letter. I'm sorry. I've got to close it out.
But. I wanted to make sure. I helped us with this. This to me. In my mind. Was a huge issue. From this letter. Here. So let me show you. We have a responsibility.
[43:03] And a privilege. To strive after holiness. Colossians. Chapter one. Here's the verse. That. Tags on. To the one.

We have. On our website. And that we use. To help people understand. How we understand. Our responsibility. In the Lord. As a church family.
Colossians. Chapter one. Verse twenty. Twenty. Nine. For this purpose. Also. I labor. Paul says.
I. There is a labor. That I do. In the ministry. I'm performing it. I'm doing it. But now. Notice how he ties it. To the Lord. I strive. According.
To his power. Which mightily. Works within me. This is another place. Where you can see. This idea. Of I am working out. What he is working in.
[43:57] So it's this. Remember this word. This synergistic. Effort. Synergism. We are saved. Monergistically. Mono.

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One. God does the work. In saving us. He causes. But then. After we are saved. It becomes a work. Of synergism. There is this.
Cooperative. Coming together. Of the spirit. Living in us. In us. Exercising. Our will. Toward the right. Something that we. Couldn't do.
To please God. Before salvation. Why? Because our will. Was just as corrupt. As any other part. Of us. Depraved. Just as much. As any other part. With me.
So now. We are aiming. Our will. We are aiming. Our choice. We are aiming. Our desires. Toward what. Glorifies God. Before salvation. It didn't. We didn't give two hoots.
[44:52] About God being glorified. Now that's the whole reason. We get up and breathe. Am I glorifying God. Or not. That's why I'm left here. To bring that testimony.

To bear on the world. Let's look at another one. Oh. Let me. Don't let me skip these. Look at verses 21. Through 23.
In Colossians 1. And although you. Were. Formally alienated. And hostile in mind. Engaged in evil deeds. Yet. God has now reconciled you.
In his fleshly body. Through death. In order to present you. Before him. Holy. And blameless. And beyond reproach. If. Now this is huge.
Your Bible should say this. If. Indeed. You do what. That's right. Continue. In the faith.
[45:50] Firmly established. And steadfast. And not moved away. From the hope. Of the gospel. That you have heard. Which was proclaimed. In all creation. Under heaven. And of which I. Paul was made a minister.

If you continue. In the faith. Faith. That's. That's akin. To Peter's statement. If these qualities. Are in you. And overflowing. Abounding. Increasing.
Don't. Don't. Stake your. Eternal destiny. On a false. Profession. Or on a profession. That you've made. That doesn't match up. With the life.
That you live. If you live. Like the devil. Your profession. Is false. You got that. If you live. Like the devil.
Your profession. Is false. If your life. Is not showing. The quality. And character. Of Jesus. In an increasing way. You need to. Be concerned. About whether or not.
[46:45] You're saved. All right. Let's look at one more. James. Chapter one. I'm sorry. That I'm hastening. Forward here.

Folks. But. I really do want to get. To the next letter. To. And close it out. Where's. Where's the. One. I want. James one. James chapter one. Consider it all joy. This is verse two. Consider it all joy. My brethren.
When you encounter. Various trials. Knowing that. The testing of your faith. Produces endurance. Does your Bible. Have a different word. Patience.
Okay. And let patience. Or endurance. Have its perfect result. So that you may be. Perfect. And complete.
[47:41] Lacking. In nothing. That's mature. Perfect. And complete. Mature. Spiritually mature. And then look at verse 12.

With me. James one. 12. Blessed is a man. Who. Perseveres. Under trial. For once he has been approved. He will receive the crown of life.
Which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Is that a good verse for you? Let's read it again. Blessed is a man. Who. Perseveres under trial.
For once he has been approved. He will receive the crown of life. Which the Lord has promised to those who love him. Here's. Here's the backside of that. People who are making a profession of faith.
But it is not genuine. Will not be able to persevere in a way. That takes them through these trials. That really burn off the chaff.
[48:40] And separate as it were. The believers from the unbelievers. They can't. They don't have the Holy Spirit. To help them persevere. This is a work of God in you.

That you work out. You can't work out. What's not in. So they won't persevere. Perseverance is something that God. Enables us to do.
Because he is preserving us in his son. Now will we be tempted? Yes. Will we face trials? Yes. Will we stumble? Yes. Well what about that?

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What does that have to do with perseverance? First Corinthians. Ten. Thirteen. See if this answers the issue. What about trials?
What about challenges? What about the times when I'm tempted and I stumble? First Corinthians. Ten. Thirteen. No temptation has overtaken you.
[49:38] But such as is common to man. And God is faithful. Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.

But with the temptation will provide the way of escape also. So that you will be able to endure it. This is a promise from God. There is no sin. There is no sin.
Temptation or trial. That will overwhelm your soul. And make you run away from God. As in. I am out of here. I don't want any more of this God thing.
I've had enough. God will not allow that to happen. What he will do. Is the very thing that is threatening you. Threatening to overwhelm you.
That's proving so difficult for you. What does it say? Beyond what you are able. But with the temptation. God will provide the way of escape also.
[50:37] He will take the very thing threatening to overwhelm you. And show you his power to overwhelm it. That's why you've heard me say before as your pastor. The way out is the way through.

That's God's way. Not under or around or over. Through. And God will teach you. And grow you. And help you to develop.
More and more of a persevering faith. A faith that knows how to look up. We want to look at our shoes. We want to get down. We want to. We're beaten down. That's what the demons want to do. Jesus is continually. Continually doing this. Look up. Take your eyes off of the earth. And look up into the heavens. Colossians. That's Colossians 3.
1 through 4. Alright. How about that? Alright.
[51:36] Well. Well. That's a thumbnail. Of those doctrines. I mean a thumbnail. You turn to any good. Theology book. And you're going to get.

A stack of pages. That thick. On all this. So trying to narrow. All that down for you. But that. That gives you some look at the scripture. And how God does this. So we have.
God preserving us. And we have us. Persevering. The persevering. That we're doing. As we strive in holiness. Or to use Peter's words.
As we add these qualities. Diligently. To our walk with God. As we strive in them. We are working out. What God has worked in. And is working in.
Okay. That's the Christian life. It's okay to. Strive. It's even okay to stumble. Now I'm not saying. It's okay to sin.
[52:35] But you and I get tripped up. And we stumble. And we get tempted. Maybe even we deal with doubt. We deal with fear. That's.

That's what he wants to do. With us next. Alright. So let's look at this one. Real quick. Letter 29. It's the courage of conviction. The courage of conviction.
Is what I'm titling it anyway. Screwtape wants to use. A time tested tool. In the arsenal. Of demonic temptation. What is it? Fear.
With the bombings. That are going on. In Britain at the time. Personal safety. Is a genuine concern. And personal injury. Or even death. Is a constant threat.
Screwtape wants to turn the patient's eyes. Inward and off of Christ. So that he loses sight of who he is. What he's about. Most importantly.
[53:32] Who God is. And what he has promised. Uncertainty. Will give way to fear. Fear. Will give way to acts of cowardice.

As the patient is drawn. Into a series. Of imaginary expedience. To prevent the worst. Coming to the worst. Now what's he talking about?
Let's. Let's see if we can decipher. Some of this. And then please feel free. After we're finished. You want to come up and ask. Or talk about any of this. We'll be happy to do that. I just don't want to keep people.
That have to leave. Later than what we promised. Let's look at. Page 162. And.
It's that. Paragraph break. Toward. The latter third. The bottom third. Of 162. As to the actual. Technique. Of temptations.

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[54:31] To cowardice. Not much need. Be said. The main point. Is that precautions. Have a tendency. To increase. Fear. The precautions.

Publicly enjoined. On your patient. However. Soon become a matter. Of routine. And this effect. Disappears. So. Here's what he must do. You must.
Keep running. In his mind. Side by side. With the conscious. Intention. Of doing his duty. The vague. Idea. Of all.
All sorts. Of things. He can do. Or not do. And do that. Inside. The framework. Of the duty. So while he's at. The duty. Whatever it is.
In front of him. You're filling. His mind. With all sorts. Of things. That are distracting. Him. And. Confusing him. Things that. He can do. Or not do.
[55:26] Which seem. To make him. A little safer. So they're. They're wanting. To really. Work on a preoccupation. An inner. Preoccupation. In his head.

With all this. Get his mind. Off the simple. Rule. I've got to say. Here. And do. I've got to stay. Here. And do so and so. And get his mind.
Into a series. Of imaginary. Lifelines. What is he talking. About. If a. Happened. Though I very much. Hope it won't. I could do B.
Oh wait a minute. And if the worst. Came to the worst. I could always do C. And then if C. Doesn't work. I need to have a D. And an E. And an F. You see what he's doing. Superstitions.
If not recognized. As such. Can be weakened. Awakened. The point. Is to keep. The patient. Feeling. That he has. Something. Something.
[56:22] Other than. God. And courage. The enemy. Supplies. To fall back on. So that what was intended. To be a total commitment. To duty.

Becomes honeycombed. All through. With little unconscious. Reservations. By building up. A series. Of imaginary. Expedience. To prevent the worst. Coming to the worst.
You may produce. At that level. Of his will. Which he is not aware of. A determination. That the worst. Shall not. Come. To the worst.
All right. Let's go back up. To where we started reading. And ask this. And we'll. We'll kind of see. If we can decipher this. What is the overall. Aim. Or goal. Towards the patient.
If you go back over. To 162. Where we started reading. What's the aim. What's the goal. To increase fear.
[57:20] You hear that. To increase fear. To tempt him. Toward acts. Of cowardice. From fear. What is the overall.

Strategy. They want to use. To accomplish this. Okay. Self-reliance. Would absolutely. Be a critical. Component. Of it. For sure. Self-preoccupation. Self-reliance. That's a critical. Component. Of what they're trying. To spin. But their overall. Strategy.
To accomplish it. Is this. To keep the man. Focused. On dangers. Real. Potential. Or imagined. They want him.
To focus his heart. On what could happen. What might happen. On what he can do. To control. What will happen. All of that.
[58:25] That's going on. On. On those. Threats. To him. Whether they're real. Or imagined. Or whatever. They want him. On how he can. Control.

All of that. That's going on. How he can manipulate it. And aim it. Okay. If I do this. And a happens. B might happen. And if B happens. I can bring C in. And then that can take care of that.
And then I'm good. Okay. Okay. Okay. You ever met people like this? Yeah. Absolutely. And they get. They get themselves. So full of worry.
So full of anxiety. So full of fear. Bingo. That's where we're headed.
Don't you get ahead of me. That's right, Bob. That's exactly what they want to do, brother. They want you not to trust the Lord. All right. Here's another way that we can say this.
[59:22] The demons want to keep him dealing in hypotheticals. What ifs. Trying to cover all the contingencies, the bases, all possible outcomes.

So that they can deceptively encourage him to try and deal with his fear in ways that discourage. Here it is, Bob. Trusting in God. All this is designed to reframe his thinking about the nature of suffering, the dangers of the world, and the purposes of God in our trials.
Don't think biblically about those kinds of things. You think about them however you want to think about them. There's, look, there's nothing wrong with us.

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I'm living in a city. There are planes that are coming over at night. You can hear them, but you don't know where they are. Are they over me?
Are they half a mile away over there? You can hear them. You can hear them. And then without any warning, bombs are dropped. And the terrifying aspect was you never knew where they were going to land.
[60:39] You didn't know. They could land on your house, on your neighborhood, on your block, on your school, on your church. And it was terrifying. Now, is there anything unnatural about being terrified about something like that?

I would be terrified, wouldn't you? But it's what we do with it. And it's what we let it do to us. That's the issue, isn't it? So can we trust God in those contexts?
Absolutely. Boy, I tell you, being a pastor in that situation for a congregation, what a challenge to help people work through this.
But that's what the demons are trying to do. All right, all of this is designed to reframe his thinking and pull him away from the purposes of God in our trials. Let's look at a few passages of Scripture to bring some biblical perspective on this.
Let's look at 1 Corinthians 4. 1 Corinthians 4, 11 through 13.
[61:48] To this present hour, we are both hungry and thirsty and poorly clothed and are roughly treated and are homeless.

We toil, working with our own hands. When we are reviled, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure. When we are slandered, we try to conciliate.
We have become, as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. Who's writing this and saying that?
Who is it? Paul. The Apostle Paul. How about 2 Corinthians 6?
We're just going to use the Bible to help put this in perspective for us. 2 Corinthians 6, verses 1 through 10. And working together with him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
[62:51] For he says, At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you. Behold, now is the acceptable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation, giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited.

But in everything, commending ourselves as servants of God, now notice, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God, by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report, regarded as deceivers and yet true, as unknown yet well known, as dying yet behold we live, as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.
That's quite a list, isn't it? You think that covers it? Do you think the Apostle Paul, if he had been in Britain, and he was writing scripture at the time, might have said, in bombings, in lack of food, under the threat of German invasion?
That's quite a list. But we're not done yet. How about 2 Corinthians chapter 11? Look at this one. We're going to start in verse, I think 23 will do it. Are they servants of Christ? He was just talking about servants before. I speak as if I'm insane.
[64:52] I more so in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews, 39 lashes.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I've spent in the deep. I've been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among the false brethren.
I have been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food and cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.
Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? You think that's a guy who understands burdens, trials, sufferings?
Absolutely. Let's just look at one more. It's in Hebrews 12. Verse 1.

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[66:16] Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider him who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
Look at verse 7, if you would. It is for discipline that you endure. God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?
God deals with you as with sons. Several times throughout this passage, Paul mentions the theme of enduring. Endurance. Endure as Jesus endured. Even in willingness to go to the cross for us. This is the point of what we're talking about when we mention courage from conviction. Courage from conviction. Let me ask you this.
[67:34] What kept Paul focused and courageous? What helped him persevere through all the difficulties and challenges we just read?

It was the courage of his convictions. It was what he knew and believed was true about God. Were there times when Paul was fearful?
Yes, he said in fear and much trembling. He ministered the gospel. It wasn't that the apostle Paul was never afraid. Well, what caused him to endure and persevere through those things?
What gave him the courage that he needed to move through those things and continue to serve the Lord in them and not look at those things and give up? Conviction.
It was the courage of his convictions that moved him forward. It was as if Paul was saying, I can do no other. This is what God's given me to do.
[68:37] This is who I am. I'm going to serve him. Living or dead. Right? Let me give you one more passage.

And then if there's a question or two, we'll shoot those out. It's in the Old Testament. The men will be familiar with this from some months ago when I took him into this passage and I talked about the courage of convictions.
Do you all remember, guys? You guess which book it is? That's right. Joshua. The book of Joshua. Chapter one. Verses five through nine. You guys know that the context.
Moses has died. Joshua has been given charge of the Israelites. They've been wandering in the desert for 40 years. Now it's time for Joshua as the new leader.
[69:39] Upon the death of Moses to lead the children of Israel across the Jordan River into the promised land, the territory inhabited by all the giants, quote unquote, that they were so afraid of 40 years prior.

Now it's time to go take the land. And Joshua was the man to lead him in it. So we pick it up with God talking to him right before he's supposed to lead them across the river.
Verse five. No God speaking. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.
I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous. For you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.
Only be strong and very courageous. Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses, my servant, commanded you.
[70:41] Do not turn from it to the right or the left so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.

For then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.
Do not tremble or be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Why does he want him to meditate on this law day and night and have it in his mouth and not let it depart from his mouth?
Because that is where he's going to draw and understand and develop his convictions. From the word of God, from truth. Now another question.
What is the repeated promise God makes to Joshua that God says will sustain him in the coming hardships? What is the promise that he repeats over and over in that?

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[71:56] What is it? I will be with you. That's the promise. That's what pushed Paul forward. The promise.

The conviction that God promised. I can I can trust God or back to what Bob said. I can trust God. That's it. That's what we stand on because you're not going to have all the answers. As the demons tempt you and attack you, there are going to be times you're not going to have all the answers that you want in the moment that you want them.
But there's one answer that you can count on, hold on to, and it won't change. You can trust your God. He is always working his good work and purpose in your life, even if you don't see it and even if you can't understand it.
That doesn't mean that he's confused. That doesn't mean he doesn't get it. He does get it and he gets you. I will be with you.
[72:58] So here it is. The demonic strategy is to use fear and worry to build anger, hatred, and a sense of self-righteousness. It's a ploy to keep you from trusting God.

And that's exactly what will happen. When we are forecasting and trying to cover all the contingencies and the hypotheticals, when we're allowing fear or worry or anxiety to grip us, I promise you what's going to happen is you're going to get angry.
And that anger is going to turn into hatred. It may be directed at God or people or yourself. And then you will develop a sense of self-righteousness, righteousness in it.
You'll start to justify and rationalize the way you're looking at it all. You'll start to say, well, I guess it's up to me. If this is going to be taken care of, I guess I'm going to have to do it.
And boom, off you go. Maybe what the Lord wants from you then is for you to wait. I don't know. But getting afraid about it, being filled with fear, and then turning inward toward yourself, and getting self-protective and hypervigilant.
[74:19] There's no way to live, is it? Lots and lots of people do. They live angry. They live controlling. They live manipulatively. All of us are tempted in this.

All right. Are there any questions or comments or insights? You'll have to please forgive me and give me grace for being so pointed in this one. I know I hear me going on and on and on. Anything? Camille? Camille? Yes. Okay.
What is a presumptuous sin? Willful. So keep me from willful sins. I don't want to presume on you. I don't want to plan for sin.
Keep me from sinning in willful ways against you. That would be the most straightforward way I know to answer it in terms of the prayer that he's praying there.
[75:25] Yes. Being stubborn, prideful, scared. So this is something that you know is wrong or know that it's not God's best for you and you move through it anyway.

And that we do that. Pedro. That's true, Pedro.
Suzanne and I were just talking about this last night, I think. And we were rejoicing about we had both just gone to the doctor and we didn't have to wear masks.
And she was she went to the same office I did, but she went a day after me, I think it was. And we were both commenting about how different all the ladies up in the reception area were.
They were smiling. They were happy. They were engaging. It was night and day from what we had experienced during COVID with them. And we both talked about how incredible it is.
[76:35] If if we don't take stop and look back on this and analyze it and learn from it, we're going to miss. We're going to miss some incredible lessons for our society.

And one of them is how much our society, our culture was willing to forfeit, to just lay down and walk away from from fear.
How many of our rights and privileges we were ready to just jettison because we were afraid. And anybody who came down the pike to help salve that fear, it's like we were just little birds.
We opened our mouths and just let them put whatever they wanted into it. Folks, I'm telling you, if we don't stop long enough to look back on that, because it's going to come again, it's going to happen again.
It may not be Corona. It may be something else. It's just amazing who and what we turn to when we're really afraid. Yeah, Mitch.
[77:34] I think the worst thing that happened is the seeds of a year that we said in the first. It's just a bit of a year. It's just a bit of a year. It's just a bit of a year that we're split right down the middle.

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And talk and be afraid of each other. And be afraid of each other. And I think in that hate, but nevertheless, it's not a strength. It can force us out of faith.
Absolutely. Absolutely. Even Christians. Even professing Christians in churches. You remember me telling you churches split over Corona.
And protocols and stuff. Well, look, I see the clock ticking down. I've used up my minutes that I had to take back because we started a little late. But it's all good.
Thank you all for letting me try to get these two in. I hope it's helpful to you. Next week, God willing. Next week, we'll do the last two chapters.
[78:32] That's it. Two more and that's we're done. Then we'll come back, Lord willing, on the 19th. And have a prayer time together.

We might, I'll do a little devotion. We'll have a little prayer time together probably. And then Suzanne and I go out of town for a couple of weeks. We go on that mission trip. And then in May, at some point in May, we'll start back up with our Wednesday nights.
And hopefully, Greg and I will have had time to pull together what I had talked to you about in the way of these theology questions. We'll be putting those out and working through answering those together.
Yeah, we'll do some kind of handout, I'm sure. I'm not, I don't, we're still working on the formatting. Yeah. Yeah. And yeah, I don't know. I don't know how we're going to, we've never done this before. So we'll, this, it took me four years to do this. When I did it in school, you know, in the program of study that I was in.
[79:40] Now, I could have done it shorter if I could have stayed at it. But there were 50,000 other things to do. So this is, it's a chunk of stuff.

But it's good. It's really good. It's stuff like what we just did. Only we ask the question, what does this have to do with living life?
What is this doctrine? What does it have to do with anything? All right. All right, let's pray. And do we have any goodies for tonight?
We do.

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