



September 2015 – *Small Sins?*

One of the themes C.S. Lewis explored in *The Screwtape Letters* is the subtlety of the methods used by Satan and his angels in seeking to recapture Christians in their snare.

In one letter, senior devil Screwtape advises his nephew Wormwood to avoid anything that would hurry a man he has been tempting to awaken to a sense of his real position. Screwtape explains that while they know they have “introduced a change of direction in his course which is already carrying him out of his orbit around the Enemy,”¹ the man “must be made to imagine that all the choices which have effected this change of course are trivial and revocable.” He adds that he is almost glad to hear that the man is still a churchgoer since “(a)s long as he retains externally the habits of a Christian he can still be made to think of himself as one who has adopted a few new friends and amusements but whose spiritual state is much the same as it was [before].”²



Screwtape concludes his letter:

You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.³

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis reminds us that, whether we realize it or not, we live on a spiritual battlefield. Is there anything in your life that is edging you out of the orbit around God and onto the gentle slope? In fighting this battle, we need on a daily basis to keep our focus on God, who is infinitely more powerful than Satan. And, as the Apostle Paul exhorted the believers in Ephesus, we need to “put on the whole armor of God” to “be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”⁴

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith

1 PETER 5:8-9 (ESV)

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1996, p. 57.

²Ibid., pp. 57-58.

³Ibid., pp. 60-61

⁴Ephesians 6:11 (ESV)