



C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

Reflections

March 2016 – *Called to Actively Serve in the Resistance*

C.S. Lewis's last sermon, *A Slip of the Tongue*, was preached at Magdalene College, Cambridge by candlelight. He delivered a powerful message that laid out what is required of the person who chooses to follow Jesus. Lewis says,

“[William] Law, in his terrible, cool voice, said,... ‘If you have not chosen the Kingdom of God, it will make in the end no difference what you have chosen instead.’ Those are hard words to take. Will it really make no difference whether it was women or patriotism, cocaine or art, whisky or a seat in the Cabinet, money or science? Well, surely no difference that matters. We shall have missed the end for which we are formed and rejected the only thing that satisfies. Does it matter to a man dying in a desert by which choice of route he missed the only well?”

It is a remarkable fact that on this subject Heaven and Hell speak with one voice. The tempter tells me, ‘Take care. Think how much this good resolve, the acceptance of the Grace, is going to cost.’ But Our Lord equally tells us to count the cost. Even in human affairs great importance is attached to the agreement of those whose testimony hardly ever agrees. Here, more. Between them it would seem to be pretty clear that paddling is of little consequence. What matters, what Heaven desires and Hell fears, is precisely that further step, out of our depth, out of our control.

And yet, I am not in despair. At this point I become what some would call very Evangelical; at any rate very un-Pelagian. I do not think any efforts of my own will end once and for all this craving for limited liabilities, this fatal reservation. Only God can. I have good faith and hope He will. Of course, I don't mean that I can therefore, as they say, ‘sit back.’ What God does for us, He does in us. The process of doing it will appear to me (and not falsely) to be the daily or hourly repeated exercises of my own will in renouncing this attitude, especially each morning, for it grows all over me like a new shell each night. Failures will be forgiven; it is acquiescence that is fatal, the permitted, regularised presence of an area in ourselves which we still claim for our own. We may never this side of death, drive the invader out of our territory, but we must be in the Resistance, not in the Vichy government.”¹

Our salvation is a gift by grace through faith and is not earned. However, the indication that we have truly received the gift of salvation is that we exert effort daily and choose by an act of our will to follow Jesus, even if imperfectly, regardless the cost.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

—PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 (ESV)



¹ Lewis, C.S. *A Slip of the Tongues*, from *The Weight of Glory*. New York: Harper One, 1980, pp. 189-90.