

***The Screwtape Letters Study Guide and Commentary
Letters 1-31***

All thirty-one letters are treated extensively, containing reproducible handouts, thorough analysis and commentary, study questions, Biblical and theological themes, and more!

***Perfect for College or High School Courses, Sunday School, Small Groups,
Home Schooling and Personal Study
Full Answer Key Included!***

By Mondo Gonzales

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To the beautiful ladies in my life:

Angela, Allie, Emily, & Sarah.

*Thank you for your sacrifice in allowing me the
time to work on “Screwtape”!*

Mondo Gonzales has been pastoring for over 15 years and in other ministry capacities for 25 years. He received his Bachelor’s degree from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL, his Master’s degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, and is working on his PhD from Liberty University. He is a member of the C.S. Lewis Society of California and currently lives in beautiful Lake Tahoe, Nevada.

Acknowledgements: Gratitude goes to the various churches where the Screwtape Letters were studied in a Sunday school class environment. The feedback and classroom use helped fine-tune this study guide in tremendous ways. Additional thanks go to those who spent time proofreading and editing the manuscript.

Jesus said, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5). If this study guide bears fruit in anyone’s spiritual life, our Savior is the one to give our thanks.

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The Screwtape Letters (hereafter *Letters*) were originally published weekly in an Anglican Church magazine (*The Guardian*) beginning May 2, 1941 and then in book form in 1942. They have enjoyed tremendous readership and of course have evoked many questions concerning the background and formulation of the book.

C.S. Lewis wrote a letter to his older brother Warnie on July 20, 1940 describing his first thoughts about the book:

“Before the [church] service was over – one could wish these things came more seasonably – I was struck by an idea for a book which I think might be both useful and entertaining. It would be called *As One Devil to Another* and would consist of letters from an elderly retired devil to a young devil who has just started work on his first “patient.” The idea would be to give all the psychology of temptation from the other point of view” (CL2, 426-27).

Almost twenty years after the first edition was published, Lewis wrote an enlarged new Preface which was included in the MacMillan edition (*The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast*, New York:1962) in which he gave more background to their writing and development. We may find it fascinating to know that C.S. Lewis didn’t purpose the *Letters* to be a speculation on devilish life, but instead to provide a framework where he could draw attention to the lives of people (p. xii). The abstract on the back cover of the Macmillan edition reminds us that the end result of the *Letters* was to “stimulate the ordinary person to godliness.” Therefore, the goal of this study guide is not to provide a commentary specifically for scholars or other experts, but to examine the *Letters* with the intent of seeing ordinary lives changed and strengthened. Lewis surely would not have wanted the readers of the *Letters* to be merely entertained or to just simply identify with his uncanny insights into the quirks of human behavior, but instead to help people be transformed. He accomplished this brilliantly through the creation of the fictitious, but genuinely cunning character Screwtape.

The new Preface further reveals that Lewis was particularly disgusted with most of the historic representations of devils in art and literature. He unapologetically stated his belief in real devils (or bad angels as he calls them) and that the writing of the *Letters* provided him opportunity to express his thinking through the symbol of a devilish administrative bureaucracy. Even though the letters are fictional, for Lewis, the foundation of the Christian truth of the temptations of mankind was true and powerful. Moreover, it was through this fictional medium that he sought to awaken us to the many ways in which we fall into temptation and interrupt our relationship with God.

One might ask if there is any benefit to someone taking the time to read through the *Letters* if they do not believe in God or a real devil. Based on Lewis’ intentions noted above, it still seems reasonable that it could be beneficial through interacting and understanding the foibles of human behavior. It might not fulfill the full intention of Lewis, but there is no doubt anyone can gain a deeper level of propriety and view into the mirror of the human psyche. Another of Lewis’ intentions in writing the book was to focus on the psychology of temptation. Interestingly, most of the temptations found in the *Letters* can be tied to strategies of devils as found in the Scripture. However, when we are tempted to treat others in ways that are not proper, we cannot be sure that a devil is behind every one of these. There are times when our own sinful desires lead us into temptation and sin (James 1:13-16; 1 John 2:16). We realize very quickly that Lewis’ efforts to highlight the nature of sinful enticements was quite successful.

Since its original publication there have been a few efforts at providing a concise commentary on the *Letters*. These undertakings were not comprehensive, but they were most likely not intended to be. However, the particular spiritual context of the *Letters* provides a springboard for a thorough Biblical and theological analysis of the diverse topics found in each letter with a personal emphasis towards application. This need and opportunity gave occasion to make this happen through this study guide.

Lewis lamented in the new Preface, “I had, moreover, a sort of grudge against my book for not being a different book which no one could write. Ideally, Screwtape's advice to Wormwood should have been balanced by archangelical advice to the patient's guardian angel. Without this, the picture of human life is lopsided. But who could supply the deficiency?” (MacMillan edition, xiv). This study guide hopes to accomplish this; not by being an archangelical fictional narrative, but by scouring the Bible for godly wisdom and advice. The guide will provide the reader with relevant Biblical references and theology to help discern Screwtape’s strategies as well as giving the Biblical truth needed to successfully counteract his schemes in our daily lives. As we study both Satan’s temptations and our own weaknesses, it is my hope that the reader will be equipped with truth and strengthened to resist these temptations while growing closer to the Lord.

We are not left guessing at the proper way to be equipped against spiritual attacks. After Jesus fasted for forty days and nights in the wilderness, it is recorded that Satan continued his series of temptations against Him (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Jesus’ response to these three recorded temptations was always, “it is written,” followed by a quote from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16). In the same way, the goal in this guide will be to provide a scriptural answer to the various temptations or human frailties we face each day.

What is amazing about these letters is the way in which they stimulate a desire to read and reread them personally and/or to study them in a group setting. This study guide has been written to help the reader better understand and, if desired, to teach through these letters. As a pastor, I personally spent many years researching and teaching letter by letter for three adult Sunday School classes at different churches. When I first began preparing to teach through all of them, I realized how difficult it was to find anything comprehensive that I could pass on to the students. Pondering my frustration, and after even further research, I ended up creating my own thorough set of comments, questions, and notes which has developed into this study guide. I have since adapted and modified the layout to be of greater benefit for additional formats such as education classes, small groups, home school, and personal study. The handouts are intended to provide flexibility for the teacher and student to go as deep or shallow into the letters as they desire. Indeed, answering all questions is not necessary and the teacher/facilitator can assign some or all of them depending on the desired goals. One of the benefits is that I have provided detailed answers to all the questions. It is recommended that the teacher spend time becoming familiar with the answers before class. This also would be true for someone who wants to study the letters on their own. It is in the Answer Key where most of the detail, explanation, and commentary of the letters occur.

In an effort to make these available as reproducible handouts I have designed the material to fit on two sides of a regular sheet of paper (8 ½ X 11) for easy copying and distribution. Each handout will be divided into five sections (see below). My suggestion is for the student to be introduced to each letter by reading the first four sections of the handout, followed by reading Screwtape’s letter itself, and then to interact with the fifth section (study questions).

Themes- What’s great about the *Letters* is that every dispatch has its own set of strategic themes that Screwtape is intent on using to trip up humanity. Sometimes there might be one or two prominent themes while at other times the letter focuses on a breadth of topics. For example, the themes of Letter 29 revolve around fear, cowardice, hatred, and the role of a dangerous world in advancing virtue or vice.

Synopsis- This section will include a brief summary of the specific letter under study. Furthermore, there are times when Screwtape makes references to other writers or events in history with which the reader may not be familiar. These will be highlighted and referenced if possible as some are quite difficult to track down. This is an important part of understanding the *Letters*. Lewis was extremely well read in ancient and medieval literature and many of his themes can only be fully grasped if the background literature is read in its context.

Theological Themes- There is no doubt that Screwtape has had satisfactory theological training, but, as Lewis himself reminds us in the original Preface, there are times when the reader may question and/or disagree with what Screwtape is advancing as true. It is in this section where one or more of these themes or theological challenges will be introduced and explained.

Vocabulary- Screwtape is not a dim-witted devil. He occasionally uses some language that was prevalent in 1940's England or words so advanced that some may need help to understand it. This section will provide these words in order to help the reader avoid having to find a dictionary each time they read a different letter. There is a certain level of subjectivity to the lists, but I have attempted to include what I felt were the most obviously challenging or unfamiliar words. The definitions are mostly from the *Collins English Dictionary Pro for Windows* and are in order of their appearance in the respective letter.

Study Questions- It would be easy enough to simply avoid this section and greatly expand the theme sections, but some of the greatest means of learning are in wrestling with the material in order to sort out the various arguments and strategies put forth by Screwtape. To encourage this type of learning, this study guide is meant to provide enough material to help anyone understand the letter; whether in a course, Sunday School class, a home study group, a parent or teacher of students, or even for personal study. This section involves questions that have three different objectives: 1) Questions that ask the reader to summarize the flow of reasoning by Screwtape; 2) Questions that stimulate the reader to compare this argument with what the Bible teaches about the same topic; 3) Questions that encourage the reader to see the tactics of Screwtape and help him/her find Biblical answers in order to apply these personally and thwart the attacks of the spiritual enemy (2 Corinthians 2:11).

The study questions are labeled according to a specific paragraph in each letter in order to help guide the reader to the section containing the material for which the question is asked. Another practical note that should be helpful is the explanation of the abbreviation "cf." which occurs in many of the questions. This is used as a shortened form of the Latin word *confer* which directs the reader to simply "compare" one thing with another.

An important comment concerning the study questions and the paragraph numbers is that they are based off the Harper Collins 2001 edition of the *Letters*. There are a variety of other editions that have been published since 1942 and, interestingly, there is at least one that has modified the text of the *Letters* (the American edition published by Lord and King Associates in 1976). Nevertheless, this is a helpful edition to own as it contains a short introduction and a concise study guide by Walter Hooper and Owen Barfield. They have written in the foreword that they allowed the publishers to make slight alterations to the text to accommodate the intended American audience. Therefore, this American edition contains various modifications, additions and also portions completely removed (e.g., compare Letters # 1, 6, 11, 16, 17, 27, and 29).

As I began seeking to teach through the *Letters*, I found Michael Poteet's introductory study guide helpful. It also provided the inspiration for me to create a more comprehensive study guide of my own which would help others benefit from the *Letters*. Additionally, I would like to give credit to Devin Brown's short commentary article, "The Screwtape Letters: Telling the Truth Upside Down," which provided a great starting point for comparing the *Letters* with other works by Lewis. Finally, Arend Smilde's website was helpful in beginning to track down various references that Lewis makes to other historical writers <lewisiana.nl>.

I am including here a short bibliography of other important C.S. Lewis works. There are instances in the Answer Key where I refer to these other works by Lewis. In these works, Lewis expands on various topics or themes that he just briefly mentions in the *Letters*. To understand better what he meant, I will recommend the reader (or teacher) to consult these other works. However, it will not be necessary, just helpful. The bibliographic list below contains specific publishers and dates which will help alleviate

problems in looking up references. This can be problematic because, for example, *Mere Christianity* has been distributed in various years, formats, and publishers. This definitely comes into focus when looking for a specific page number. Finally, attention should be given to the abbreviations in **bold** of the works as found in this bibliography as these are used repeatedly in the answer key. These abbreviations are modeled after those in Walter Hooper's book, *C.S. Lewis: A Complete Guide to His Life & Works*.

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In providing the Biblical references throughout the Study Guide, I consulted the original Hebrew and Greek languages directly, but where appropriate I felt these versions listed below were helpful in providing a more exact sense in English. Noted here are the abbreviations for the various English Bible versions referenced:

- NASB- New American Standard Bible
- NET- New English Translation
- NIV- New International Version
- NKJ- New King James Version
- NLT- New Living Translation

A WHIMSICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF SCREWTAPE

The Screwtape Letters, according to the viewpoint of devils, are actually an unfortunate, published record of a series of “interoffice” letters written by a senior devil (Screwtape) to a junior tempter (Wormwood). The publisher of this correspondence, C.S. Lewis, makes no effort at explaining in his original Preface at how he came to possess these letters; the speculation concerning their provenance continues to this very day. Nevertheless, we can be assured that hell was not thrilled when these actually arrived in published form. From that point forward, humans had direct access to classified strategies and tactics of the underworld in their temptation efforts. One thing you will notice when reading them is that the correspondence is all one sided. There is no doubt that Wormwood also wrote letters due to the fact that Screwtape references them constantly. However, there is no evidence, at least not yet, that any of Wormwood’s letters have been discovered.

Screwtape has written these letters to Wormwood on a weekly basis (see Letter #8) in order to give him instruction and insights at how to best tempt his human patient. The patient is left unnamed throughout, but we do know that he lived in Great Britain (see Letter #7) around the time of Europe’s War (WWII). It could be said that the anonymity of the patient serves a good purpose because the temptation strategies advocated by Screwtape are universal to humanity. This is why it is important for these letters to be broadly disseminated as well as approached in a spirit of meditation and humility. As we are challenged with each temptation, we should evaluate them in light of how they affect us personally.

Wormwood was assigned to be the patient’s lifelong tempter in order to keep him from God and ultimately secure his soul for their “father below.” These temptations come in different ways as the patient progresses through various stages of life. The patient is not a Christian when Wormwood is first assigned to him. However, by the second letter, it is revealed that the patient has become a Christian at the great displeasure of Screwtape. The strategy of temptations starts with keeping the patient away from embracing Jesus, shift to the purpose of removing spirituality from his life, and finally to corrupting his spiritual life (Letter #23). These efforts begin by Wormwood encouraging conflict between the patient and his mother whom he lives with. They continue to range between areas of purity, love, and chastity, to humility, intellectualism and pride.

There are further glimpses into how the patient is maturing in his walk with God and the specific attacks that Wormwood chooses. The attacks on his purity are hindered as the patient eventually falls in love with a solid Christian woman. Even more to Screwtape’s frustration is that the patient is now spending time enjoying the fellowship of her spiritually minded family. As World War II progresses it is revealed that the patient grows in fear and anxiety concerning being drafted. We can imagine that Wormwood grows fearful himself as the letters end not long after the patient dies in an air raid. It is at this time that both the patient and Wormwood are in for a surprise that neither of them fully anticipated concerning their future. I can guess that Wormwood might have longed to switch places with the patient as he has constantly been under the threat of failing his “uncle” Screwtape.

The life of the patient is not the only topic that is covered in the letters. As one progresses it is possible to garner quite a bit of information about the bureaucracy of the underworld. Even though Screwtape most likely did not intend the letters to go public, it is highly doubtful that he was not reprimanded in some way for the numerous times in which he betrayed seemingly top-secret information. No doubt it is wise to compare all the advice spoken by Screwtape with the Bible and this we will do as we examine the letters.

It must be remembered that as we probe these letters the world seems to be turned upside down. It is imperative for us to never forget that Screwtape is a devil and his frame of reference in writing these letters is the opposite of what we are accustomed. When he speaks of “our father” it is a reference to his father the devil and when he speaks of the “Enemy” (with capital “E”) it is a reference to God. If

something is good for Screwtape, then it is negative for God's people. If Screwtape says go left, most likely we want to go right. One of the best ways to understand many complex things that Screwtape encourages is to put it in the context of good or bad from his perspective. This will definitely help unravel many of his strategies and provide a clearer understanding.

At this point, I think it will be informative and entertaining to learn what Screwtape reveals of the organization and administration of the infernal region of Hades. Just as there is a kingdom of God where He rules as Father, we learn that hell has a throne and a kingdom with Satan ruling as its father (Letters #1, #2, #31, and too many more to list). Due to the sensitivity of this information, I feel it is responsible to encourage one not to read too much into any of these comparisons. It seems quite evident by prophets and devils that both Satan and his Creator (God) rule in completely contrary ways. Only under fear of judgment (and maybe not even then) will the devils actually acknowledge that God's rule extends over the echelons of the underworld (cf. Philippians 2:10; Matt 8:29-32). As it relates to the hierarchy of this malevolent kingdom, Screwtape discloses that there exists a variety of ranks and departments working together in their goal of securing humans for their "father below." We learn from Screwtape's secretary, Toadpipe, that Screwtape's official title is "Abysmal Sublimity Under-Secretary" (#22). Screwtape also reminds the junior tempter Wormwood that he should be careful to remember that when he writes his letters, he should not engage in disrespect due to Screwtape being an "under-secretary of a department" (#4).

There has been some discussion as to whether Wormwood is really the nephew of Uncle Screwtape, but as one will soon find out, these titles are meant only to continue the façade of devilish banter which is the epitome of what we humans call *satire* (for more info consult "**Theological Themes**" in Letter #4).

Even though Screwtape enjoys a senior position, he himself is not without superiors. At one point in the letters, he makes reference of having to give an account to the Secret Police for some comments he allegedly made about Slubgob (#22). One other agency that requires his absolute submission is known as the High Command; they have determined and required that no tempters are allowed to reveal themselves to their humans at any time in the present age in Europe (#7). In addition, the High Command is responsible for determining what will be the end purpose in using the European War as it pertains to securing souls for the underworld (#24). Even Screwtape must submit to orders from those of a higher rank. On a more secretive note, it can now be confirmed that there exists a group of spirits deep in the Lowerarchy that are responsible in every age to provide misdirection of what may be called sexual "taste" (#20). Presently, we can provide no further details about what exactly this means.

As you can imagine, there are an assortment of departments that are responsible for unique assignments. It is not surprising that any effective diabolical organization will need to be able to provide up to date information to its tempters at all times. This wealth of private information, which presumably only *seems* to be unlimited, can be found in the Record Office (#11, a.k.a. *office*, #16, #24). Undoubtedly, one of the most advanced bureaus is that of the Philological Arm (#15, #26). This department is charged with providing precise, but cunningly nuanced definitions of *words*. Their entire focus is on finding ways to twist the meaning of words to beguile humans. Unfortunately, this departmental arm is currently succeeding quite too much for my taste. Another department employed by devils and fiends is the Research Department (#29). Screwtape comments, in his hopelessly optimistic tone, that the Research Department has been unsuccessful in ever producing even a single virtue; but of course, they are on the "verge of discovery at any moment." This definitely should encourage us in that we presently have the advantage due to this department's failures. A department worth acknowledgement, but also deficient in their mission, is the Intelligence Department (#31). According to a very frustrated Screwtape, this agency has fruitlessly attempted to find the true motive and plan of the Enemy. Their outright obstinate and stubborn refusal to accept the plain and clear teaching of God's motives in the Scripture might well doom them to eternal vexation. I daresay that none of us would complain about that!

It most surely would be insulting to accuse Screwtape of being humble, but for puzzling reasons, he does confess that he is not alone in providing assistance in the training of Wormwood. We are thus introduced to Slubgob who is the head of the Training College and also of whom Screwtape does not think too highly (#8, #18, #19). The devil Scabtree receives contemptuous remarks and, according to Screwtape, he unwisely exaggerates the role of war in the attacks on faith (#5). Concerning the patient and those close to him, we are acquainted with: Glucose who is in charge of the patient's mother (#3, #17), Slimtrimpet who oversees the patient's girlfriend (#24, #26), and Triptweeze who is a devil that provides updates to Screwtape about Wormwood's patient, but also seems to be a tempter connected to the patient's new group of worldly friends (#10).

Lastly, there are two additional departments that warrant mentioning. The first is that of the Infernal Police (#30) who, unfortunately for Wormwood, were asked to provide further information on the patient due to his poor reporting. It is this sort of lackluster performance that Screwtape tells Wormwood is going to earn him a stay at the House of Correction for Incompetent Tempters (#22). Thankfully, and to spare us from potentially horrific images, the profusely illustrated booklet originally attached to Letter #22 portraying the House of Correction, was never discovered.

Now that we have finished a somewhat playful survey of the fictional world of Screwtape, it is important to remind ourselves of the actuality to which his world points. This realm is one in which real battles take place affecting the souls of mankind. The Bible teaches us that there were an innumerable number of angels created (Hebrews 12:22; Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11). We do know that there are two types of angels. One is labeled as holy and elect (Mark 8:38; Revelation 14:10; 1 Timothy 5:21). It is from this original creation of holy angels that some rebelled against God and began to follow after Satan. Jesus makes reference to the fact that Satan is the head of these fallen angels and that they will all end up in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; cf. Revelation 20:10). Scholars will often recognize a distinction between fallen angels and demons (sometimes called 'spirits'). These same theologians note that during the 1st century people believed that angels were distinct from demonic spirits (cf. Acts 23:7-9) and that other extra-Biblical writings of the time taught that demons were disembodied spirits of the offspring of the fallen angels and human women (1 Enoch 15-16). Additionally, it is clear that the demon spirits acknowledge Jesus' authority over them. They fear Him and recognize that judgment and torment are in their future (Matt 8:29; Luke 4:34; cf. 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6). There are some Bible teachers who suggest that Revelation 12:4 speaks of a third of the angels revolting through the persuasion of Satan sometime in the ancient past, but not all scholars are convinced this is conclusive.

Even though most of this information will be explored in the study questions, I mention it here to help provide some background before embarking on this study. We do know that there is a real, but hidden war happening in a spiritual realm beyond the limits of our physical eyesight (Revelation 12:7; Daniel 10:13, 21; 2 Kings 6:14-17). It is important that we understand our enemy, his accomplices, and his mission. As we delve into the *Letters*, we see the devils engaging in a variety of detailed schemes. Yet it is important to understand the overarching mission of Screwtape and Wormwood. Screwtape discloses some of these primary aims throughout the letters. He explains: 1) Wormwood is to not be distracted from the "real business of undermining faith and preventing the formation of virtues" (#5); 2) "Our war aim is a world in which Our Father Below has drawn all other beings into himself" (#8); 3) "Our business is to get them away from the eternal" (#15); 4) "The only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy" (#12, #19).

The Bible agrees and teaches that there is a supernatural conspiracy with Satan and his angels incessantly seeking to instigate false thinking and doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-3), pervert the Word of God (Matthew 4:6), hinder God's kingdom work done through His saints (1 Thessalonians 2:18), blind people to the truth of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4), steal the Word from human hearts lest they be saved (Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 8:12), deceive (Revelation 12:9; 20:8-10), tempt (Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), lay traps for people (2 Timothy 2:26; 1 Timothy 3:7), afflict and oppress (Job 2:7;

2 Cor. 12:7; Acts 10:38), bring temptations specific to marriage (1 Corinthians 7:5), and many more tactics which will be addressed in the study questions.

Paul warns us not to be ignorant of the devil's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) and the reading of the *Letters* will surely provide some insight into how we can better understand these stratagems. Our goal is not just to be made aware, but to wage the war as Paul instructs us in Ephesians 6:10-13 (NIV), "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." It is my hope that by the time we are done studying and learning the *Letters*, we will understand ourselves better and also be more equipped to resist our enemy. Paul instructs us that we are in a struggle and we can be confident that the enemy will never relent (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). The promise we have is that as we grow in wisdom and strength in the Word to resist temptation, our joy and blessings will increase as well.

There is one last concept that needs to be addressed in order for this introduction to be complete. When reading through the *Letters* it becomes obvious that Screwtape instructs Wormwood that there is an ongoing struggle between his enticing of the patient and the Enemy's counterattacks. Unfortunately, this could potentially lead some people to conclude that Satan and God are on equal ground in this battle. Fortunately, in the new Preface of 1961, Lewis comments that if there was an opposite of Satan, it would not be God, but Michael the archangel. There is evidence that confirms this conclusion as the Bible gives separate accounts where these two squared off against one another (Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7). Nevertheless, the supreme power of God versus the relatively trivial power of Satan unquestionably has ramifications for our spiritual lives and most specifically when we encounter trials and temptations. It is without a doubt that Scripture affirms God is sovereign (or rules) over all creation including Satan and his angels (Psalm 103:19; Ephesians 1:19-21; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 19:16).

While it is inevitable that we will encounter trials and temptations (John 16:33), we must realize that we are not stuck in the middle between two equal, but opposing forces. In fact, God's power over our circumstances is demonstrated by Jesus commanding us to ask the Father to keep us out of temptation (Matthew 6:13). Why would He encourage us to pray this if God had no genuine power to actually keep us from being overcome by every struggle? Nevertheless, if God allows us to come into temptation (or a trial) for His purposes (1 Peter 4:19), we can rejoice as James 1:2 commands us. We are comforted in God's sovereignty over the schemes of the enemy in that "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, Paul affirms God's ability and determination to place limits on the extent of each and every temptation, not allowing us to be overburdened. This affords us great confidence as Satan and his minions are limited due to the power of God. The account of Job demonstrates clearly that Satan actually needed permission before he could test Job's faith (Job 1-2). Peter also experienced God's protection when Jesus informed him that Satan had asked permission to sift him and the other disciples like wheat (Luke 22:31-32). As we read these letters and glean some tremendous insight into the lives of mankind and temptation, we can be assured that God is able to deliver us out of temptation and guide as He sees fit (2 Peter 2:9)!

The most important protection in all of spiritual warfare is not simply to be an expert in Satan's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), but to recognize that we are powerless without a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. God created us in His image (Gen 1:26-27) and passionately desires for us to be His children who reflect His character and glory (Matt 5:16). Yet sin marred this image (Gen 3:1-7) and through it we became by nature children of disobedience (Eph 2:1-3; 5:6; Col 3:6). Are you fully protected by having made that conscious decision to truly follow Jesus as Savior and Lord? An easy way

to understand the essential Biblical message of the gospel is through what is commonly called the *Romans Road*. Even better is to take it a step further and include the same truths as found in the Old Testament, calling it the *Isaiah Road*. To understand the basic message of the Bible to be believed, we can label it under the four S's.

S- Sinful (Rom 3:23; Isaiah 53:6). We are all sinners in need of a savior.

S- Separated (Rom 6:23; Isaiah 59:2). Our sin separates us from a holy God.

S- Substitute (Rom 5:8; Isaiah 53:5). Jesus loves us and died as our substitute to pay for our sin.

S- Salvation (Rom 10:9; Isaiah 49:6). Salvation is found when we trust in the Messiah Jesus.

Once we understand what the message of salvation entails, we must respond! We are saved from the consequence of eternal separation from God and have protection from our spiritual enemy when we:

Recognize our need for a savior because we are sinners (1 John 1:10); **Repent** of our sin and obtain forgiveness (Luke 24:47) as we **Receive** Jesus into our life (John 1:12); The privilege we have as His sons and daughters is to **Reside** in His word and show ourselves to be true disciples (John 8:31) who will be equipped to thwart the enemy's attacks (Matthew 4:4; Ephesians 6:10-18)!

THEMES IN EACH LETTER

Letter #1- complacent and smug thinking; evaluation of truth, reality, and materialism; temptations which draw the patient away from universal (eternal) issues

Letter #2- reality versus expectations; disappointment & disillusionment with church; genuine humility

Letter #3- sanctification; relationships as a Christian; humility, judgmental attitudes; personal blind spots; danger of speech; the focus of true prayer; pride and self-righteousness

Letter #4- the subtle attacks against prayer life; the implications of not seeing God directly in prayer

Letter #5- fear, anguish, despair; war, suffering; contented worldliness; growth through suffering; faith

Letter #6- fear, anxiety, worry, suspense about the future; faith, trust; prayer; revenge, anger; apathy

Letter #7- materialism (evolutionary thinking), skepticism, belief in demons; factions and cliques; spiritual distraction through social causes, movements, or policies

Letter #8- ups and downs of spiritual life; growing during the dry times; the walk of faith and obedience

Letter #9- spiritually dry times; sensual temptations during these times; the enticements and exploitations of pleasures; Law of Undulation; various phases of life and how they relate to our spiritual life

Letter #10- spiritual significance of friendships and acquaintances; social, sexual, and intellectual vanity; pride; friendship and love of the world; avoiding being two-faced or duplicitous; hypocrisy

Letter #11- understanding human laughter and the risk of sinning through joking; danger of flippancy

Letter #12- backsliding; dry times; loss of enthusiasm for spiritual things; slowly drifting away

Letter #13- genuine repentance; pains & pleasures; individualism; increased apathy towards goodness

Letter #14- genuine humility; pride; false modesty; self-forgetfulness; anguishing too much over sin

Letter #15- anxiety about future, living in the “real” present with eternity in mind; exaggerated optimism

Letter #16- church shopping and criticism; being teachable; humility and love on secondary doctrinal issues

Letter #17- different facets of gluttony; greed related to sensuality (sins of the senses); selfishness; fasting

Letter #18- nature and role of love, physical intimacy and oneness in marriage; feelings of being “in love”

Letter #19- God’s love, competition, being-in-love, marriage, exploitation of anything for sinister purposes

Letter #20- attacks on chastity; unequally yoked marriages; sexual “tastes” of males and females; idealism

Letter #21- irritability (peevishness); sense of entitlement; value of time; ownership versus stewardship

Letter #22- spiritual dossiers; hedonism; pleasures of God; power of Christian influence; music and silence

Letter #23- value of intelligent Christian community; corrupted spirituality; “historical Jesus”; social justice

Letter #24- spiritual ignorance & pride; need for social validation; humility; arrogance; the inner ring

Letter #25- mere Christianity; novelty; pleasure; fads; discontentment of the Same Old Thing; jargon

Letter #26- unselfishness (self-denial); charity (*agape* love); erotic enchantment (*eros* love) in courtship

Letter #27- spiritual distraction; petitionary prayer; the nature of time and prayer; Historical Point of View

Letter #28- fear of and blessings of death; spiritual perseverance; middle aged prosperity and adversity; worldly attachments; spiritual attrition; earthly utopia

Letter #29- cowardice; pride; hatred; fear; courage; despair; God's motive for creating a dangerous world; superstitions involving hypotheticals; relying on God alone

Letter #30- duty, purpose, pride, cowardice, fatigue, peevishness, disappointment, total commitment

Letter #31- death and transition from this life to the next, guardian angels, redemption, liberation, heaven