

Don't Let Your Heart Be Hardened

Hebrews 3

- Rachel has to do the grocery shopping in our household. She has to. I cannot be trusted with this responsibility. Why? First off, because I never really know what all we need. And any time I go grocery shopping, I always end up over-buying because 9 times out of 10, I go grocery shopping hungry, everything looks good, so I buy it all.
- But the main problem with my over buying, is that I'll buy something, bring it home, put it in the cabinet and then forget all about it. It's a serious problem, when I was a single man I would leave any groceries I got out on the counter because I knew that as soon as they went in the cabinet they would be completely forgotten about.
- Out of sight, out of mind. That is until I get a hankerin' for some chips and queso, and I remember, "Oh I remember buying tortilla chips

the other day!" So I go to the fridge, the expiration date is till good on the queso! Jackpot! Go and grab the chips, take a dip, and then almost chip a tooth because it really wasn't the other day that I bought them, it was more like the other week, and I opened them one time and now they're hard as a rock.

- They got stale. Because they were neglected, not properly used at the right time. And as a result they got hard, dry, and tasteless.
 - And I think that is really good example of what happens whenever a heart is hardened
- A lot of times whenever we think of a hardened heart we think of someone that is a complete scrooge or grinch, or someone that is just mad at everyone and everything all the time and is incapable of compassion and empathy.
- We feel like *those* are the ones with hard hearts, they've always been that way and that would never happen to us!
- But the reality is, our hearts get hardened all of the time. And often it's a slow process, over

time, where we allow our faith, our spiritual gifts, various callings on our lives to be neglected, and enough time passes by where our Spiritual lives become more and more stale.

- And as a result you get a lot of dry, stagnant, tasteless Christians. And it can happen without us even realizing it.
- That's why the writer of Hebrews says in chapter 2,
“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.” -Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)
- That term “pay much closer attention” literally means, “To hold the mind, or apply oneself, more superabundantly.”
- You see, if we don't hold our minds on the faith, if we don't apply ourselves when the Spirit is leading...the result will be us drifting away

- And this isn't always just played out with someone leaving the faith all together. This is common among Christians, who still claim the faith, but have just become stagnant consumers of religion rather than active participants of the faith.
- *Sometimes God has placed a coworker on our hearts to share the Gospel with, but we drag our feet day by day and we drift away from that call.*
- *Sometimes we see this played out when we feel a certain call to serve in the church, but we're just gonna give it some time...and before we know it, we allow that call to grow stale*
- *Sometimes God is calling us to take a major step of faith, but it's scary and we use (Controversial Take): “praying about it” as an excuse to not step out in obedience and we keep it up long enough where we forget all about it*

- The writer of Hebrews says, “that’s not you guys!”
- He starts off chapter 3 by saying, **“Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling...” -Hebrews 3:1a (ESV)**
 - Holy brothers and sisters: He says we are a family that has been set apart for God!
 - You who share in a **“Heavenly Calling” (klēsis): The divine invitation to embrace salvation in the Kingdom of God**
- I love that the writer of Hebrews is setting the tone for his warnings by a reminder of their true Spiritual identities.
- Yes, there are things that they need to be called out about and encouraged in, but all of that has to be set up by a reminder of who they truly are.
 - *Their true identities were not found in their heritage or backgrounds.*
- *Their true identity was not found in occupations or successes*
- *Their true identity was not found in any form of talent or what they could bring to the table*
- *True identity is found solely in accepting the completed work of Jesus*
- Whenever you embrace the salvation in the Kingdom of God, you become a Holy, Set Apart, member of the Family of God
 - THAT is what needs to set the tone for all that you are and all that you do.
- Furthermore, what we need to understand is that once we accept and embrace the salvation of the Kingdom of God, that is the starting point.
- Paul actually deals with some that weren’t getting that in 1 Thessalonians, when he says, **“And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” -1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)**

- This phrase, “Admonish the idle,” can also be translated, “Warn the lazy.”
 - You see there were some who got so caught up in the idea of Jesus coming back that they fell into thinking that they could just sit back and not do anything because they were saved and Jesus was going to come back soon it doesn’t matter what we do on this earth.
- Which Paul would heavily push back on, he said to work hard and do everything for the glory of God. Towards the end of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul talks about the 2nd coming of Christ and he talks about how it’s going to come in the blink of an eye, and he concludes this teaching by saying, **“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” - 1 Corinthians 15:58 (ESV)**
- What we need to understand is that once we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, once we believe and are sealed with the Holy Spirit, once we are a part of the Kingdom of God:
 - *Our job is not to merely get to heaven one day, our job is to bring Heaven here.*
 - Pastor Tony Evans says it this way: **“The author reminds Christians that God didn’t save us just so we could go to Heaven. He saved us to partner with Him in His Kingdom agenda on earth, to share in a Heavenly calling.” -Dr. Tony Evans¹**
 - The Love and Acceptance that God in Christ Jesus has shown us, we are to show on this earth
 - We are to bring the same Joy that causes Heaven to erupt when one sinner repents
 - Paul says, **“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” -Philippians 3:20 (ESV)**

¹ The Tony Evans Study Bible: Advancing God’s Kingdom Agenda. pg. 1455

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- We are to walk through this life with the Power and Authority as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

- *There's a story in Act's 22 when Paul's preaching causes a bit of a riot.*

- *He ends up getting taken into custody by the local Roman Commander, and they decide to interrogate Paul to find out why people are so upset with him.*

- *But before they question him, they're going to give him a good beating first, to let him know that they were serious.*

- *But when they tie Paul down to lash him, Paul said to the officer standing there, "Is it legal for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried?"*

 - *They said, "You're a Roman citizen?"*

 - *Paul says, "I was born a Roman Citizen"*

- *And that's when the guy dropped their whips, and left as quickly as possible and the commanding officer got scared because they*

messed with someone who had the Rights of a Citizen of Rome.

- There are few things as threatening to the enemies of hell than a believer who understands the power and authority of their heavenly citizenship

- But how many times do we let the enemy just tie us up and beat us down, without claiming the Citizenship we have in the Kingdom of God?

- Because the reality is, the enemy does not have any authority over your life

- Satan does not have any authority over your life

- Other people, politicians, and pastors do not have authority over your life

- The only One who has ultimate authority over your life is God Himself!

- But the enemy doesn't want you to know that.

- And once you become a child of God and citizen of heaven, the enemy's primary objective isn't necessarily to get you to dramatically leave the faith and become an atheist, but rather it's to get you to become complacent in your faith which is arguably just as dangerous.
 - They know they have already lost the battle for your soul, so all they can do is try to get you to buy into just enough lies to limit your influence
 - They want you to grow stale in your faith, so your heart will become hardened without you even realizing it.
- This is what the writer of Hebrews is warning about, and he shares a couple of different ways and examples of how to keep this from happening.
- He says, ***"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession," -Hebrews 3:1 (ESV)***
- First point: **OUR HEARTS BECOME HARDENED WHEN WE LOSE SIGHT OF WHO JESUS IS**
 - So, the writer starts off by reminding them of their identity, but quickly reverts to the source of their identity.
 - By referring to Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest, he is clarifying that Jesus was the One sent from God AND our representation before God
- And this was very important for the audience that he was writing to, to understand. Because remember, a lot of these readers were considering abandoning their current walk of faith to go back to the old covenant Jewish ways
 - But there was no value for them back there because Jesus already fulfilled everything that the old covenant was pointing towards
 - He was sent from God specifically to cover the payments and penalties for our sin, and

now they don't need to go back to a priest because He is their High Priest now.

- This will all get fleshed out more throughout our study of this book, but to further this point, the writer wants to take them back to one of the ultimate heroes of their heritage. And that is Moses.
- He says, ***“[Jesus] was faithful to Him who appointed Him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the Builder of all things is God.)”***
-Hebrews 3:2-4 (ESV)
- So the writer assumes that everyone he's writing to has a solid working knowledge of Moses' story.
 - Moses was born in the midst of a mass genocide of Hebrew children in Egypt, and his life was saved when his mother put him in

a basket and floated it down a stream where the King's daughter found him and decided to raise him as her own.

- So he grew up in the palace of Pharaoh in Egypt, until he grew to have an affinity for his Hebrew heritage, fought back against the oppression of his people, ended up killing an Egyptian guard and then fled the country.
- One day, while he was out working as a shepherd, God spoke to him through a burning bush and called him to lead the charge of setting His people free.
 - After a little bit of a back and forth and an initial period of doubt, he finally obeyed the Lord's call and became very faithful in leading God's people out of Egypt, establishing them as a national once again, and administering God's laws among the people.
- Moses was one of the most well respected and heralded Hebrews of all time.

- But the writer of this epistle is saying that Moses and Jesus aren't even really in the same class.
 - *Jesus is the Great Architect, and Moses was just a part of His design plans*
 - *Simply, Moses was a part of creation, and Jesus is the Creator*
 - Moses was at most a sermon illustration of what Jesus was going to do on a much greater scale.
- The writer says in verse 5, ***“Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a Son.”-Hebrews 3:5-6b (ESV)***
 - Do you see the difference? Moses was faithful IN God's house, Jesus is faithful OVER God's house.
 - Whenever we lose sight of the preeminence of Jesus, we will lose sight of all that this life is supposed to be.
- We will lose sight of who we are supposed to be. Because we as creation, will never understand who we are and our purpose on this earth until we first understand our Creator.
- I love Paul's description of Jesus in Colossians chapter 1 when he writes, ***“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. “For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the Head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in***

heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” -Colossians 1:15-19 (ESV)

- Paul says THIS is the Jesus that we serve and follow!
 - THIS is the Jesus that we give our lives to!
 - THIS is the Jesus that is worth everything!
- And the writer of Hebrews says that THIS Jesus, is the builder of all things and in verse 6, ***“And we are His house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” -Hebrews 3:6b (ESV)***
- Now the language of this verse seems very strong, and it is.
- But some of us will read this verse and think, *“Oh man, if I ever doubt to waiver in my faith, then God will abandon me! If I’m not 100% on fire for God all of the time, He’s going to kick me out of His house!”*
- However, that would be inconsistent with the rest of scripture.

- You see, there will be times in our lives whenever we become stagnant and stale in our faith, (we have all had those seasons and will all have those seasons)
 - In those times, our level of standing with God doesn’t change, but our level of blessing from God does.
 - There are times when God is ready to bless us with things, spiritual gifts, and opportunities, but we can’t receive them because we have not been intentional with the relationship
- You see the word, “*house*” in verse 6, is actually a more intimate term. It has more family connotations. It’s the greek word Oikos, which in this context literally means, “a household, or a home.”
- And there is a big difference between living in a house and a home.
- I know many people that grew up in a house, but never really experienced a home.

- And there are times when our family relationships get off, we aren't being as intentional as we need to be with our spouse, our kids, or our parents and we're just coexisting in a house rather than experiencing the blessings of a home
- Now, you're still family, you're standing with each other hasn't changed, but you're not experiencing the fullness of the relationship that the home is supposed to provide
- And so many Christians let Jesus in initially, but then we just give Him the silent treatment.
 - We get too "busy" to really spend time with Him, talk with Him, be with Him.
 - And He hasn't left us! He's still there! And He wants to share so much wisdom, insight, love, and blessings to us, but we can't receive it because we're not paying Him any attention
- And the writer of Hebrews gives another historical illustration of this when talking about the people that had followed Moses out of Egypt.
 - In verses 7-11, the writer quotes Psalm 95 where the Psalmist is speaking about the rebellion that the people of Israel went through in Numbers 14.
 - After they had been led out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they were making their way to the promised land
 - They sent 12 spies ahead to scout out the land. 2 of them came back and said, "This land is awesome it's incredible, God's given it to us, let's go get it!"
 - But the other 10 said, "Whoa! No way! That place is filled with giants! They'll squash us like bugs!"
 - Then all of the people freak out! They say, "We would be better off if we would have just stayed back in Egypt!" Then they talk about just killing Moses and those two other spies and just going back to captivity in Egypt!

- And this is what they are talking about when it says, ***“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,”***
-Hebrews 3:7-8 (ESV)
- Which leads to our next point:
- **OUR HEARTS BECOME HARDENED WHEN WE FORGET WHAT GOD HAS DONE**
- *Christmas Bonuses...Oil Leak...*
 - *Instead of seeing the blessing that God has given me, I’m just seeing the bill in front of me. And I got so frustrated in that moment because I wasn’t appreciating God’s provision, I was just seeing it as something being taken away again.*
 - *How often am I prone to act like these Israelites...*
- It seems crazy to us, because these people literally just saw God put the whole world on notice with His power through the 10 plagues of Egypt
 - Then if that wasn’t enough, they saw Him part the Red Sea as they walked on dry ground across, and then closed the sea on the most powerful army in the known world
 - Then they see the Power of God acting as a supernatural GPS, by leading them through a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, through the wilderness to this exact point.
 - And after all of that, they get so caught up by what’s in front of them, they forget all that God had already done for them.
- We’re so quick to call them ludicrous but the whole reason we still have these accounts, Paul says, ***“Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction” - 1 Cor 10:11 (ESV)***
- We need these biblical accounts, we have this instruction, because we are prone to do the same exact things!

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- How often do we get all bent out of shape because God isn't acting the way we expect Him to act?
 - And instead of taking a moment and thinking about all the times He's been faithful in the past, we just get mad and try to move forward in our own power instead.
 - We allow what we see in front of us, and the way we think we want things to be.... to guide our steps
 - And many times, we are unintentionally led to think this way.
- We've sat through so many church services where we here "God's gonna do *this*, and God's gonna do *that*! Your breakthrough is just around the corner!"
 - *It's a very dangerous theological slope whenever we talk more about what God will do, or what He might do, rather than what He's already done.*
- Now, does God have great things for you in this life? Absolutely
 - Will He bless you in ways that are beyond what you could ever ask or imagine? Of course He will!
- But this life will also give us trouble.
 - And whenever we are solely focused on "God's gonna do this and God is gonna do that"..as soon as we hit a roadblock, we say, "Where are you God?!?" "Are you Kidding ME!?"
 - And we get so flustered and confused because we're focused on our idea of what we thought was going to happen, instead of drawing strength from what God has already done.
- There's a reason why Paul said, "***For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.***"- 1 Cor. 2:2 (NIV)

- Because whenever I consider the lengths that Jesus went to, to save my soul then, I will never question His heart for me now.
- The cross always puts my troubles into perspective
- Jesus said, ***“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” -John 16:33 (NIV)***
 - He didn’t say He’s *overcoming*....the world
 - He didn’t say He *will*.... overcome the world
 - He has **overcome**. He’s done it.
- The word literally means: **“Overcome” (nikaō): to prevail, to get the victory.**
 - Jesus is saying that He has deprived that trouble from the power to harm you, the trouble and the world has no power to influence you because He’s already prevailed! He’s GOT the Victory!
- The author in Hebrews is warning us and encouraging us to not let our attention divert to anything other than that!
- Because as soon as we do, we’ll focus more on the Giants than we do God and we’ll start to drift, our hearts will be hardened, and we’ll become just as rebellious as those Israelites in the wilderness.
- God is quoted in verse 10 when it says: ***“Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’”- Hebrews 3:10 (ESV)***
- I’ve heard it said that there are three stages to God’s ways:
 - *Deliverance, Development, and Destiny*
- God had *delivered* them from Egypt, He was *developing* them in the wilderness, and their *destiny* was the promised land.

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- Now, I cringe using the word destiny a bit because of the ways I've heard it over used and out of context
- But keep in mind, the word means a "predetermined purpose"
- God has a predetermined purpose for each of our lives. But not all of us will actually walk in it.
 - God's predetermined purpose for these Israelites was to conquer the promised land
 - However, because of their lack of focus and hardness of hearts, they did not get to live out that purpose and it was passed off to the next generation.
- Why? Because they only wanted 2 of the 3 of God's ways
 - They were fine with the deliverance and the destiny. They weren't so thrilled however with the development.
- So many people just want to skip over that part. And Christianity is sold without that part sometimes.
- But the reality is, we were delivered at the moment of salvation, our destiny is heaven, and the rest of our lives here on earth is really the developmental period.
 - So we have a choice: We can keep our eyes on Jesus, endure, rejoice, persevere, determine to not grow weary of doing good in all circumstances
 - OR: we can freak out over the giants and try to revert back to the ways we used to do things before Christ.
- Now the choice seems easy on paper, but it's much harder to live out. I know that!
 - And that's exactly why we can't do it alone, we need each other. The writer goes on to say:
- ***"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you***

to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.”
-Hebrews 3:12-14 (ESV)

- Now again, I do not believe this passage to be saying that God will cast you out based on your performance
 - When he says “*share in Christ*” that word “Share” means to be an active participant
 - It goes with the quote I’ve told before, “There’s a lot of saved folks but very few Christians”
 - The term “*fall away*” means to withdraw oneself
 - You can withdraw yourself from Him, but He will never withdraw Himself from you
 - He will *never* leave you or forsake you.

- Even when we are faithless, He remains faithful.
- We can be saved and on our way to heaven, and be completely missing out on the Kingdom work that God has for us here on earth.
 - And in those seasons, we’ll never be fulfilled because we’re missing out on our predetermined purpose.
- That’s why we’ve got to do everything we possibly can to make sure our hearts don’t become hardened
- We have to make sure we’re recognizing who Jesus is and remembering all that He has done
 - And we have to do this together
 - Because for our last point:
- **OUR HEARTS ARE HARDENED IN ISOLATION**
- He says, “*exhort one another*”: Means to encourage and strengthen each other

- It gives the word picture of calling someone to their side.
 - The writer emphasizes this again in chapter 10 when he tells us to not forsake the gathering together, and we'll talk more about that when we get there
- But he's saying, right now! As long as you have today, make sure you are standing shoulder to shoulder with each other
 - Make sure you're bearing each other's burdens
 - Make sure you're holding each other accountable
 - Make sure you are encouraging each other and building each other up, because if Christians are not presenting a united front in the midst of the spiritual battle that we are in, we'll be like fish in a barrel
 - The enemy will pick us off one by one.
- We need each other, so that when sin starts chirping at us, we have those around us that can remind us of the truth
 - He tells us we need each other so we don't become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin
 - It is much easier for sin to become appetizing to us whenever we are cut off from community
 - Because no one can talk you into something like *you* can talk you into something
 - And we all have that evil, unbelieving, deceitful heart and sin nature within us that needs to be died to daily.
 - And it is much easier to do so whenever we do it together!
- Which is exactly why church is so vitally important to the life of a believer, and is exactly why the enemy wants to keep us apart.
 - *Screwtape Letters (full letter at pg. 19)*

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- There's not a person in this room that has not fallen for one of these tactics before....
- But we are here to be reminded that the reality is, we are a part of a Holy Brother and Sisterhood!
 - We have a Heavenly Citizenship that causes the enemy to fill with fear
 - We have a Heavenly Calling to carry out in this life, and the only reason why the enemy doesn't want you to know it, is because you are a threat.
 - You are a threat to darkness all around, because the Light of God lives within you
- We become dangerous whenever we actively participate in God's Kingdom Agenda
- We cannot afford to be stale and stagnant Christians, because eternity hangs in the balance.
 - The Heavenly Calling that we are called to actively participate in, involves the souls of other people
 - And we get a chance, to be a part of people experiencing salvation in Christ and Receiving Eternal life
 - Do not let that calling get stale.
- And we the best way to combat that staleness- and hardness of heart, is to stay close to each other, Constantly remind each other Who Jesus really is, and All He has Already Done for us!

Reflection Questions

READ ALL OF HEBREWS CHAPTER 3

PRAY

DISCUSS

1. Is there any particular part of the passage that sticks out to you?
2. In what ways have you seen yourself prone to becoming stale in your faith before?
3. Read the account in Numbers 14:1-10. How can we see some of our natural tendencies in these rebellious Israelites?
4. How can our church community help us not be hardened by the “deceitfulness of sin?”
5. Think about the Screwtape Letters reference. In what ways was the cunning tactics of the enemy eye-opening to you? How can we combat those tactics?

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Screwtape Letters: Chapter 2 (Modern Revision)

My Dear Wormwood,

I take no pleasure in informing you that your patient has become a Christian. Don't think for a second that because you are related to me that you will escape the usual penalties for allowing such a thing to happen. I trust your devotion to our cause would prove to be so strong that you wouldn't even wish such a thing. However, in the meantime we must make the best of the situation at hand.

There is no need to despair; hundreds of these adults who have "converted" to Christianity have been reclaimed by us after a brief experiment of the Heaven's side are now back with us. All of the habits of your human patient, both mentally and bodily, are still very much in our favor.

One of our advantages at the moment is the very Church itself. Don't get me wrong, I do loath the Church and all

that it represents as we see her spread across the world throughout all time and space that takes root in eternity. It can be as frightening as a military force on the warpath. That, I must confess, is the unfortunate truth that makes even the mightiest of our Tempters uneasy. But fortunately, the Church's true Spiritual Power is invisible to these humans at this point. All your patient is going to see, at first, is the half finished renovations of a new building project. Whenever he goes inside for a service, he sees the local grocery store worker with an awkward expression on his face hurrying up to offer him a freshly printed pamphlet containing the order of service that is confusing to both of them. He hears a collection of songs, in a genre that's not his taste, that he doesn't fully understand what he is singing or why they are singing. The lyrics of those songs are an abomination to us and we never want him to understand them.

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Whenever he gets to his seat and looks around, he just sees a group of people from around town that he normally tries to avoid. You want to lean pretty heavily on those people. Make his mind go back and forth between an expression like “The Body of Christ,” and the actual faces that he sees around him. Of course, it doesn’t really matter who the people around him actually are. You may know one of them to be a great warrior for Heaven’s cause. But no matter. Your patient, thanks to our father satan, is a fool. Have him focus on the person that sings out of tune, another’s squeaky shoes, the out of shape people, or the way everyone dresses. Keep his attention on things like these and your patient will begin to think that this religion must be somehow ridiculous. You see, at this stage he has an idea of what “Christians” are supposed to look like. He sees pictures of robes and religious clothing, and the fact that other people are wearing modern clothing is an unconscious difficulty to him. Never let him think too hard

about it. Never let him work through what his unrealistic expectations were. Keep every hazy in his mind and you will have all of eternity to amuse yourself by how you lead him to the “realizations about the church” and “clarity of mind” that only Hell can produce in such patients.

Work very hard on highlighting the anticlimactic ways of the church that are certainly going to come within his first few weeks of attending. The Enemy of Heaven actually allows such disappointments to occur when the patient must take a next step in their faith. It occurs whenever the child graduates from simple bible stories to learning greek words. It occurs whenever two people in love get married and begin the real task of learning to live together. In every aspect and season of life there is always a transition of fun and excitement to actual work. Our Enemy takes this risk because He has this love of taking these disgusting little human rats and turning them into what He calls “Free” lovers and servants. His stubborn love and unnatural

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relationships with these two legged animals degrades the entire spiritual realm. Because He desires them to be free, He refuses to carry them to the goals that he places before them. He leaves them to walk on their own two feet and work for it themselves. That is where we find our greatest opportunity and our greatest danger. If they so happen to get through those periods of dryness successfully, they become much less dependent on wants, feelings, and desires and therefore become much harder to tempt.

Now, I have been writing to you assuming that the other people within the church have no real rational reason to disappoint the patient. However, if they do, your job just got much easier. If the patient realizes that there is a woman there with a gambling problem or if the grocer has ripped someone off before, take advantage of this. All you have to do is keep him from thinking, "If I, with all of my faults, can become a Christian, why can't they?" You may be thinking it would be difficult to keep your patient from

thinking such an obvious question, but it's really not. If you handle him the right way, the thought won't even pop into his head! He hasn't walked on Heaven's side long enough yet to have any real humility. What he says, even in his prayers, about his own sinfulness is nothing but parroting at this point. Deep down, he still thinks that he has run up a very favorable credit balance with "The Man Upstairs," just because he decided to convert. He feels as if he's done God a favor just by being at church with these undesirable people. Keep his mind in that state as long as you possibly can.

Your Affectionate Uncle,

Screwtape