

## **A letter from the future from a surprising author**

2 February 2021

My dear Cresilson

Your report caused me great distress. It appears that you continue to under-estimate the power of the enemy in Port Elizabeth. I remember my uncle, the renowned Screwtape, rebuking me 12 years ago for failing to distract one of my patients from joining the community of the enemy in that very same city ! The enemy has made great strides there and has frustrated our plans, news that I do not look forward to conveying at the quarterly meeting of the Great Council next week.

I need not remind you of the setbacks we have suffered across the world in the past decade as the enemy's people have recommitted themselves to the lordship of the one whose name we are forbidden to mention. This has been accompanied by a new commitment to the study and application of their "book", to living as family in close relationship with each other, reaching out to people in need outside of their community and sharing what they understand as the "Good News" with them. I need to suppress my gagging reflex when I speak of them like this, but for reasons you and I will never understand, they have a deep sense of purpose and joy that drives them on to be more and more sacrificial and courageous.

Port Elizabeth is no exception to what is happening elsewhere in the world. After years of living lives that were no great threat to our goals and purpose (indeed we won some of their members over to our side and preventing many others from joining their community back in the "good old days"), the enemy's people in Port Elizabeth have also changed for the worse. In hindsight, the celebration of their 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary a decade ago seemed to galvanise them in ways that took us by surprise. Its difficult for us to understand exactly why and how that happened, but in line with what transpired elsewhere in the world, it was associated with what their book refers to as "repentance". That process seems to unlock power that we sadly cannot match even with the best weaponry at our disposal.

They claim to be motivated to "repent" by the sacrifice of him whose name we are forbidden to mention. I still find it interesting that what we celebrated as a great victory more than 2 000 years ago is also celebrated as a great victory by the enemy's people, and galvanises them to levels of sacrificial service and "love" that are inconceivable and even abhorrent to us. But let me not be distracted from the crisis at hand ...

I am particularly disappointed in your failure to live up to your name and reputation. As a relative of our high esteemed arch demon of laziness and lust, you were hand-picked to appeal to these most basic of human frailties. The team that we provided to work with you was also carefully put together to provide temptations of the kind that the enemy's people in Port Elizabeth are susceptible to. Some of your patients had become accustomed to living lives that had a semblance of obedience to the enemy but which, as you and I could clearly see, fell far short of doing what their book calls his "good, pleasing and perfect will". As long as there was a sizeable part of that community living what their book refers to as "lukewarm" lives, they were no real threat to our objectives and plans.

What happened that allowed them to "repent" ? Did you tire from tempting them with worldliness, selfishness, complacency and lust ? Did you forget to sow selfish thoughts in their minds ? What happened to our specific (and at the time I thought quite brilliant ...) plans to sow doubts in their minds about the value of close relationships built on principles of mutual accountability ? The strategy to sow doubt about the need to be the light of the world and the resistance you so cleverly nurtured to terms like "evangelism" and "sharing your faith" also worked well for us.

While this review is uncomfortable for both of us, it is important to learn from our past successes and failures as we plot the way forward. It is also important to face up to the facts, as uncomfortable as that is for us.

**The facts are indeed no cause for us to celebrate : the community of the enemy in Port Elizabeth has grown by an average of 20 % per year and now number over 200 people, they have one of the most effective outreach programmes to the poor and needy in the city, they give generously of their money and time, and they support other churches in South Africa financially as well as with what appears to be special teaching and counselling abilities. They also employ six full time people who are role models of humility and servant hood and have numerous others in leadership roles with these same qualities. Their impact has even extended beyond Port Elizabeth and they have helped create new communities committed to doing the will of the enemy in East London and Queenstown. They are even attracting teenagers and young adults to their meetings in increasing numbers, a rare phenomenon in age groups that we have almost entirely won over to our cause. Of particular concern to me is the fact that each and every member of this community seems committed to living lives that please the enemy. Even when individuals go through challenging life situations (which as you know have yielded great victories for us over the years with our partners in the prosperity gospel), they find comfort and strength in their relationships with one another. To top it all, they are greatly encouraged and unified through their times of communal praise and worship. This strengthens their dependence on the enemy and greatly pleases him.**

This is a very sorry state of affairs and I anticipate your excuse that you are hard pressed to distract and tempt so many people with such a small team. I need not remind you that our resources are stretched thin. What is happening in Port Elizabeth is happening all over the world – the enemy has opened up new battle grounds and has a strategy that has not changed since the beginning of time. We have seen what happens when the enemy's people partner whole-heartedly with him in attracting others into their fold using love as their main weapon – there is a power and momentum unleashed that is difficult to contain. I share with you in confidence that even our Father below is said to be very distressed by what is going on, and has drawn parallels with the great defeats we suffered soon after the death and resurrection of the one whose name we are forbidden to mention.

In case I sound like I am admiring these advances and successes of the enemy, let me remind you that similar waves have been successfully repressed in the past. Even as I write this I know that the Great Council is plotting ways to strike back, and I expect these plans to be shared next week. Until then I encourage you to continue in the ways that we have agreed upon – look for the weakest in the enemy's community and put doubts and discouragement in their minds. Frustrate the efforts of others in their community to encourage and support them. Also continue with the tried and tested strategy of appealing to worldliness, selfishness, complacency and lust – the main gateways into our world. Look also for differences to exploit, especially those arising from the multi-cultural nature of their community and exploit these. Finally, appeal to the pride that rears its pretty head when the enemy's people are challenged to change attitudes and behaviour that are not aligned with the will of the enemy. Persevere with these temptations - If you can get one or two to fall, others will follow.

I expect you to share these words of insight and advice with your team and I look forward to receiving a much more satisfying report from you next month.

Your supervisor,  
Wormwood