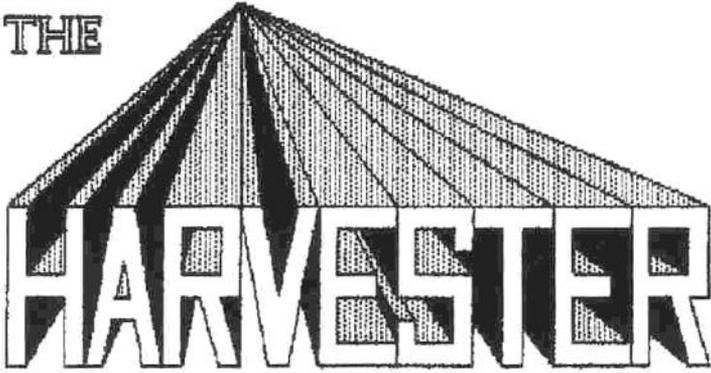


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

December 2019

No. 408

CONTROL

(Part II)

What's on the test? If you have ever been near a classroom, you have either heard this question or asked it yourself. If you're studying for an exam, you want to know where you need to focus your effort and, basically, what you can ignore. Last month, we talked about what's not on the test: the future we cannot see, the prayers we cannot answer, and God's judgment and mercy we cannot understand. God has all of this under His control. Yet, we often find ourselves letting these things keep us up at night, full of worry - studying for things that aren't on the test. So, what is on our test? Let's examine

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what we should concern ourselves with in our daily lives.

A good place to start is focusing on today. This is essentially what Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:34:

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

We've established that what tomorrow holds for us is not on the test, and it is out of our control. Jesus tells us worrying about tomorrow only worsens our present burdens, which are plentiful. We have the daily battles right in front of us. How we handle temptations, opportunities, and spend our time is completely in our control, and it's where we need to focus. Much of the depression and anxiety we see results from living in the past or the future instead of focusing on today.

Having narrowed our focus, what can we worry about within the day at hand? Often, we probably find our struggles involving other people. When are we most frustrated with other people? We struggle the most when these other people aren't saying, thinking, or doing exactly what we think they should. We may have some influence on how other people treat us (we know when we "poke the bear"), but in addition to the things out of our control we discussed last month, other people are one of them. Although we cannot make an exhaustive list of what is under our control in dealing with people, let's look at a couple of particular areas where we should focus our "worry."

Nobody enjoys mistreatment - keeping in mind that "mistreatment" is sometimes based on our perception that we deserve better (more on that later). We cannot control what people do and say to us, but we can control how we respond. It's easy to know how to respond to people who treat us well, as Jesus points out in Matthew 5:46: "*For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*" This is why Jesus earlier emphasized the need to control our responses to those who don't treat us well.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Mat. 5:38-39)

Peter echoes this, pointing out that this should be our first instinct. *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing”* (1 Pet. 3:9). Peter is saying that as a Christ-like, God-respecting, blessed people, retaliation should be far, far away from our response. However, getting “even” and revenge are too often what seems to flare inside us. Making matters worse, society around us today seems to promote and support this attitude. We think we will feel better to hurt others as much as they have hurt us. There’s that perceived idea of fairness, again. Now we’re both equally hurt. Is everything better now? Are things fair and just? *“Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins”* (Pro. 10:12). We have control over our response to mistreatment, but we often fail to exercise this control. We must suppress this idea of getting even, and instead elevate the instinct of forgiveness.

This is nothing new. We should be familiar with the idea of forgiveness. We sure do need it, and if we want forgiveness from God, we need to also give forgiveness (Mark 11:25-26). However, do we give the kind of forgiveness that we need from God? Imagine our lists of sins and transgressions were a receipt book. There’s an original top copy and a carbon copy underneath. When we want our debts erased, we want both copies torn, shredded, burned, and gone. Imagine leaving this life and God pulling out a big book of all the carbon copies and requesting payment. “Wait a minute. I thought those were forgiven; I’ve repented from that sin!” we might plea. Fortunately for us, Jesus paid off the debt we will never be able to. If we, as Christians, ask for forgiveness and repent, we can receive forgiveness and both receipt copies are destroyed. Does that sound like how we treat others when they have wronged us, or do we keep the carbon copy? We’re not going to simply erase

the hurtful words said to us from our memory, but we can stop bringing up the transgression and mistreatment. Have we forgiven if we've held on to that carbon copy and keep waving it in their face? We have scars on our physical bodies. We remember the pain and how those scars got there, and many scars never fade. However, for most physical scars we don't spend the rest of our life on this earth bringing up the pain from years ago when we got them; we move on. We cannot choose if, when, and how we're wronged by others, but we can choose to move on.

At some time or another, we're guilty of focusing too much on those things out of our control at the expense of focusing on what is under our control. This is one of the oldest problems to humans, and we see it as early as Cain.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why are thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (Gen. 4:3-7)

Cain was focusing on what he perceived as unfair treatment; it wasn't fair, and he was mistreated. God tells Cain that if Cain wanted better, he should have done better. Our thoughts and actions have a direct influence on many things, and it is up to us to ensure we're thinking and doing as we should. In focusing on comparing ourselves to others and perceived unfairness and injustice, we forget what is under our control. We can achieve, overcome daily battles, and walk uprightly. If we want better, we need to do better. That is fully under our control.

What's on the test?

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

Our words and actions, fully under our control, are on our test.

BEN

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How old was Abraham when his son Isaac was born?
2. Who did Samuel anoint as the first King of Israel?
3. In which city in Judah did Cyrus tell the Israelites to build the temple?
4. What affliction did Paul strike Elymas the sorcerer down with?
5. Which church did Jesus accuse of being lukewarm?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...

BE HOLY

God is a holy God. He is unlike any other. He is pure and without any evilness or sin. He cannot lie but is always true. He is love. He has great mercy. He is almighty – none come close to His power and might. He is all knowing. He has always existed and will always be. He is everywhere. Words seem inadequate to describe our God. But one word seems to sum it all up – holy.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Al-

mighty, which was, and is, and is to come. (Rev. 4:8)

God chose the Israelite nation to be His people. He asked the Israelites to consecrate or set themselves apart from all other peoples and the practices of the other nations and dedicate themselves to Him.

For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Lev. 11:44-45)

The Israelites were to be holy – separate or set apart to God. As God gave instructions to the Israelites, He told them that certain things were to be holy – separated and set apart for Him and His worship. Garments in His worship were to be holy. There was holy oil used in His service. The altar was holy. Specific places were to be holy. The Sabbath was to be holy. And as previously stated, the whole Israelite nation was to be holy. Many things were declared to be holy because they were set apart and consecrated to God.

Just as the Israelites of old were to be a holy people, the church today is holy.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5:25-27)

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Christians are to be a holy nation.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

As the Israelites were told not to intermix with the peoples of the land of Canaan, so Christians are to separate themselves from the world.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. 6:14-18)

You, as a believer in Jesus Christ, cannot be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. You, as a righteous child of God, cannot have fellowship with lawlessness. You, who walk in the light, cannot have communion with darkness. You, who are in Christ, cannot have agreement with false worship, idolatry, witchcraft, sorcery or other such false religions. Separate yourself from the ways of the world; do not touch the unclean things the world craves, and be a holy child of God. Be set apart and consecrated to God.

Since you are holy and set apart for God, your actions must be different from the world's actions.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
Nov. 29 - Dec. 1	Willow Oaks Russell Springs, KY	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN) & Tim Lewis (Eubank, KY)
Dec. 27 - 29	Verona Verona, KY	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

(cont. from pg. 7)

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1:13-16)

Let your actions reflect your obedience to God and rejection of your former lusts and sinful actions. Be holy, for God is holy.

Unless you are holy, you will not see the Lord. *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Heb. 12:14). One day Jesus will return; the heavens will pass away and the earth will be burned up.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? (2 Pet. 3:10-11)

My encouragement to you is to be holy and demonstrate your holiness in your daily conduct.

ED ANDERSON
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