

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)*

---

September 2021

No. 429

---

## SIN’S BATTLEFIELD: INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATION

Temptation and sin have always been a very personal battle. Our conflict with “the devil’s old tricks” has remained unchanged, but the battlefield upon which we face it has changed. The proliferation of technologies, services, and opportunities making sin easier to access than ever before is an uphill fight on its own. But, it is further complicated when we’re without a population who can act as a safeguard and bastion resisting immorality seeping its way into our homes. Last month we detailed that when the circles of society sur-

---

THE HARVESTER  
141 County Road 474  
Woodland, AL 36280  
**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

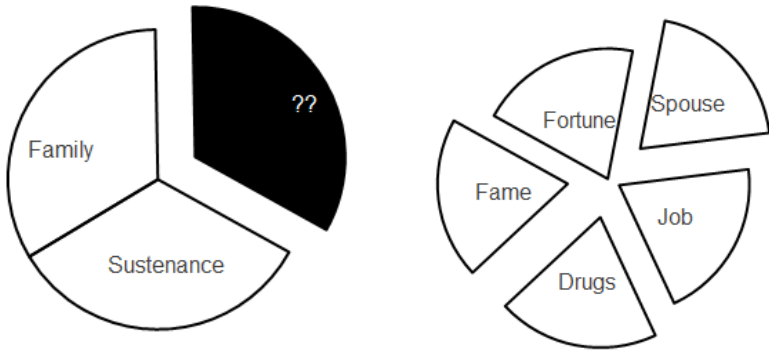


rounding us stray further from a basic set of morals that are rooted in God's Word, the battle against sin can feel more isolated. Without people around us willing to take an absolute stand as Joshua did ("*...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Josh. 24:15)), it may feel as if we're in this fight alone. Although a Godly community is no absolute protection against temptation and sin, it provides a safety net. Further, no matter what those around us believe, there is a responsibility of self-control within ourselves. Now, we look at how that changing battlefield in the communities around us translates down to changes we see as individuals. First, we must consider that as the layers of society - the country, the regions, the communities, the neighborhoods, and even the families - drifted further away from what once unified us (God's Word), our motivations as individuals have also changed. As James detailed, our actions reflect where our intentions and motivations are directed:

*Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. (Jas. 2:18)*

Many people today, especially the young, feel as if there's something "missing" and some void in their life that keeps them dissatisfied. Whatever this something is, they will spend their lives searching for it with the belief that once they find it, they will fill the emptiness and complete their life. This search takes many forms: a career, a spouse, a house, substances, etc. We picture our lives as a pie, and the slices of this pie represent our needs ranging from basic food and shelter needs to people and jobs. We think that once we accumulate all of the right slices, we will be satisfied; satisfied, because now we're receiving all the love, materials, or even recognition that we need to feel whole. Ultimately, none of these slices will bring satisfaction. Yet, we spend our lives fooling ourselves into thinking that "one last piece" for which we're searching is the perfect fit. Indeed, there is something missing in our lives.

There is a void, and we should devote enormous effort to fill this void. However, the only way to fill this void is with God's grace.



We brought this void into our lives when we fell in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-15). As Paul describes in Romans 8, in doing so we fell from our original purpose of being “whole:”

*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. (Rom. 8:20-23)*

Here, the creature (us) being made subject to vanity, does not necessarily mean vanity only in the context of being prideful as we often interpret it. It also means we became empty - a shell of what we were purposed to be: sinless and serving God. As we've studied with the fall in the Garden of Eden, our great evil wasn't bringing in new sin and temptation; the lust of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life were already there and in use to convince Eve to take of the fruit. Rather, the great evil was

Adam and Eve now coming up with their own desires to suit their purposes over God's purposes. This is the condition we find so many of us in today: a shell of what we should be, serving our own desires over God's.

Sin brought this void into our lives. It would seem that the obvious solution is the opposite of sin would help fill the emptiness. Instead, so many of us, especially our youth, are searching everywhere else for the slice that we think will complete us. The problem is that these slices for which people search are fooling us. At first, they seem as if they fit that void, but the fit is false; they will not complete us. They feel good, but in truth, it's only temporary and dissatisfaction sets in soon thereafter. This is why as individuals, so many feel transient jumping from one desire to the next, "happy" for a moment, but never satisfied. At its worst it can lead to lives of addiction.

With the loss of Godly values in the surrounding layers of society, communities and influences have sent individuals down the wrong path on this search. Today's society tells you that if you want to do something, then anything coming between you and your desire (no matter the desire) is wrong. You are told it's intolerant, it's offensive, and it's old-fashioned if anyone dare suggest your search for fulfillment is misguided. In generations past, our communities held to shared values of what is right and what is wrong, and as we noted last month, for the most part this was rooted in God's Word. When individuals strayed, the surrounding layers of society would make clear what is right and what is wrong; the individual would shape and adhere to these values. Now, having strayed from God, our societies have lost an agreeable sense of right and wrong. Instead, society caters to the individual's whims, thinking it must be right. So slowly, in the nation in which I write, we're developing nearly 330 million versions of right and wrong. An unfortunate unintended consequence of the great blessings we have in modern society

is that we've run out of "real" problems, so we have to manufacture new ones. Where we're largely fed, clothed, medicated, and educated, society now tells us we have to fight such "oppressive" ideologies as there being a right and wrong defined by God rather than each individual's personal opinion.

People have a natural inclination to serve some higher power. All around the Israelites were people who created idols of their own, and it is the same today. As religion has been lost in modern society, it has been replaced with worshipping movements, politics, and perhaps above all else, worshipping ourselves. Sin is within arm's reach, and our communities seem more likely to celebrate it than to condemn it.

With the rise of smartphones and social media, our motivations have turned to match this mindset. We've become more self-centered than ever before, because "my truth" and "my opinion" carry such power. Unfortunately, it leads many of us to define our happiness by how much attention we're getting, how recognized we are, who likes us, and who is talking to us. None of these slices alone or combined can fill the void created by our fall from God's original purpose for us. If you follow society's lead on this search to fill what seems missing from your life, you will never find what you need: *"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing: but righteousness delivereth from death"* (Pro. 10:2).

The technological developments and luxuries that have put both a wealth of knowledge and access to temptation at our fingertips have perhaps done the most damage to us by providing one thing above all else: time. When the Church was

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

The Harvester

141 County Road 474 \* Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221\* Email: [theharvesteronline@gmail.com](mailto:theharvesteronline@gmail.com)

Web Page: [www.churches-of-christ.org](http://www.churches-of-christ.org)

stronger and the surrounding communities were rooted in Godly values, we simply didn't have time to search for these slices of temporary happiness that send us down paths of only more emptiness. Now, with more time on our hands than ever, we use it to search in all of the wrong places to fill this void. This is how we find our battlefield in our individual conflict against sin changed. We have all of the time in the world to set our idle hands searching for love and happiness in the wrong places, and society cheers us on as we send ourselves to more emptiness. How do we fill this void giving us the motivation to avoid falling to the "devil's old tricks" on this new battlefield?

God has promised to make us whole again, filling any void in our lives. It's been there all along, but we've overlooked God's gift already provided as we instead look for the social circle, significant other, career, money, status, and family in a vain attempt to complete us. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus told us to seek to please God first and foremost; everything else is secondary:

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

Paul further emphasizes this point, because there's no finding satisfaction by our own attempts; it requires God's grace:

*But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For*

*by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (Eph. 2:4-8)*

*Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:12-17)*

God’s adoption supports us upon sin’s battlefield and its changing nature. It provides the incorruptible hope of receiving the same inheritance which Christ did - being whole, sinless and reconciled with God to our original purpose (1 Pet. 1:4). The magnitude of God’s grace is realized when we consider that we - humans with faults to stumble and sin - can receive the same inheritance as Jesus, the only perfect sinless life to be lived. However, we can only receive this inheritance if we die the same death Jesus did through baptism, rising in newness of spirit to serve God instead of the flesh (Rom. 6:4). So, our first step in fighting sin upon its most recent battlefield is to stop trying to find happiness through the world; it is what put the hole there, making us a shell of our original purpose. We must recognize that God’s grace and love overflows any “pie of satisfaction” we can imagine. Once we stop seeking to fill this void with the wrong things, then can we realize the benefits and tools God has provided to us to help our self-control in combating sin. Lord willing, next month we will talk of what these tools are and how we must employ them on sin’s changing battlefield.

## GOSPEL MEETINGS

---

<b>DATES</b>	<b>PLACE</b>	<b>SPEAKER</b>
September 3 - 5	Junction City Junction City, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
September 17 - 19	Estesburg Eubank, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

---

\*Masks are recommended at these meetings. Information may be subject to change. Please check the website calendar for the latest updates.\*

---

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who was Noah's father?
2. Which tribe of Israel received no inheritance of land?
3. Which woman was a seller of purple goods?
4. What nationality was Timothy's father?
5. Who did Paul write a letter to concerning his slave Onesimus?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH...

And remember last month's questions?

1. Whose mother found him a wife from Egypt?  
ISHMAEL (Gen. 21:12-21; 16:16)
2. Which prophet of God told Naaman to wash in the river Jordan to cure his leprosy? ELISHA (2 Kings 5:10)
3. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, who was the second man to pass by the robbed man? LEVITE (Luke 10:30-32)
4. What did Jesus eat to convince the disciples that he was indeed raised from the dead?  
FISH AND HONEYCOMB (Luke 24:42)
5. What relation was Lois to Timothy?  
GRANDMOTHER (2 Tim. 1:5)