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“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)

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BROKEN WINDOWS OF SIN

How we handle the small things is often an indication of how we handle the larger things. Jesus illustrates this as it comes to our effort in obtaining an eternal home in heaven with the parable of the dishonest steward in Luke 16:1-12. In this parable a rich man has a steward to manage his assets, but this steward was mismanaging in some form or fashion. The rich man threatens to fire the steward as a result. The steward is now worried that without other skills or being willing to beg for a fiscal living, he has no real job or housing security. The steward decides he needs to find a way to gain favor with those who are in debt to his master so they could potentially

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take him in once his current master fires him. To achieve this, he assesses what each debtor owes and then discounts their debt (e.g, pay 50 measures of oil instead of the 100 owed). The rich man commends his steward for his wisdom in regards to trying to secure a landing spot once he's fired:

And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. (Luke 16:8-9)

Here, Jesus means the people in their worldly pursuits display a certain dedication, desire, and tenacity. This can be towards their jobs or hobbies. We need to employ that same work ethic in our attempts to secure a home in heaven through our actions and deeds. Finally, Jesus then said,

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:10-12)

Small problems can shed light on larger, more pervasive issues underlying the “little things.” Many have realized just what you can learn from these small indicators. It's been reported that one large agency would ask job applicants if they could go see the applicant's garage. If the applicant tried to delay because they needed to clean it up or if the agency actually got to see the garage in person and saw it was messy, they would decide this was an indication this applicant wasn't diligently organized. There are stories of touring musicians that put in seemingly odd requests to the venues they played. In addition to requesting the venue supply certain furniture, equipment, and snacks, there's a famous tale where one group used to re-

quest a single bowl of multi-colored chocolate candy, specifying that all brown colored ones be removed. When the group arrived at the venue, the first thing they would check would be the bowl of candy. If they found brown colored candies in the bowl, they immediately begin double-checking the more important and larger requests that might affect safety. Missing this small specification served as an indicator that the venue wasn't very detailed. We do this in our lives fairly often. For instance, when we see people be rude to service staff at a restaurant, we usually count this as a "red flag."

By this principle, we can also begin to solve larger problems by cleaning up the small ones. There may be no better example than in the early 1980s when New York City began a new policing policy called "Broken Windows Theory." Currently when we think of New York City, we think of a busy city full of tourists and bright lights. However in the 1970s, New York City was an absolutely dirty and dangerous place where drugs, gangs, and crime ran rampant in places we currently consider safe tourist destinations. This Broken Windows policing policy was based on the idea that small things indicate big problems: Visible signs of crime create an environment that encourages further crime, including more serious crime. Here, the shards of broken window glass was bad for that locale with multiple downstream effects. The insurance would be more expensive, the law-abiding citizens would leave the area, and this would leave a neighborhood full of graffiti, broken windows, and dearth of good citizens. Such areas became safe havens for drug dealers and gangs. So, the police began aggressively prosecuting what was once seen as "little" crimes. It began to work. The communities began to see that if the police wouldn't put up with these "little" crimes, then you better believe they won't abide by the "big" ones.

Sin works much the same way. Picture our soul as a town. What does it say about our town if it's littered with broken windows and graffiti, or "little" sins? First, let's be clear that there is no delineation of little sins or big sins. For instance,

“little white lies” will not be prosecuted any less than outright “bold face lies;” ALL liars will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). There is no such thing as a little lust or “just looking;” it is the same as adultery (Mat. 5:27-28).

Ultimately how our soul, our town, looks will be determined by what kind of sin we’re willing to allow. Willful sin will destroy our town:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:26-31)

So how do these broken windows of sin begin to erode our soul? For one, as more broken windows begin to litter more and more outside the buildings of our town, we get so used to it that it becomes unnoticed and unaddressed; this broken glass and graffiti is now just part of the scenery. As such, now our soul’s growth is stunted. People will flee the area, buildings become abandoned, and grass becomes overgrown. Property values are now lower and it’s harder to bring people

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into this town; it creates a town that nobody wants to visit. Just as tourists will avoid visiting high crime areas, so too will people we need to reach avoid us when our lives are full of “little” crimes. As we’ve noted, the broken glass will lead to larger crimes. We’ve heard the phrase “gateway” as it relates to drugs. Becoming accepting of “little” sins and filling our soul with them will lead to larger and even more problematic ones. Finally, think about what it says about the character and quality of a community that has become tolerant of all this litter, overgrown grass, and broken windows. Either this town is outright accepting of these crimes, or they have stopped caring and resigned to “not my problem.” What does it say about the quality of our soul to accept the presence of “small” sins littering our lives?

As such an approach of prosecuting small crimes worked to reduce the big crimes in a humongous metropolitan city, so too can it work for our souls. This means actively eliminating the “little” sins from our lives; sweep the broken glass away and clean off the graffiti. As Paul referred to our bodies as the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17, 6:19), we must keep its property values up. We must police our soul for sins’ broken windows, graffiti, litter, and overgrown grass. That means keeping routine the things which can help us. Although we should never “go through the motions” for the sake of checking off boxes, even when we find ourselves lacking motivation or “not feeling it,” going through the motions can remind us why we’re doing it and bring us back to focus. Just as a police officer would rather not go patrolling through an area, going through that motion and patrolling it anyway can help keep the graffiti off the walls. As with all temptation, removing the means, motive, and/or opportunity will keep us from giving in to them. If we keep breaking windows because we’re throwing rocks, remove the rocks just as Jesus recommended to just get rid of the eye or hand (Mat. 5:29-30).

Finally, we need to have an image of our ideal town. Sometimes we don’t notice problems or imperfections until we look

at them side-by-side with what our ideal or golden standard would be. If we know how we want our soul to look, we will be able to recognize when something is amiss: when a window is broken or when the grass has grown too tall. Our ideal town is found in Jesus. We've been instructed to keep a pristine soul, free from sin (Mat. 5:48, Jas. 3:12, Heb. 12:14). Jesus' life on this earth was free from any broken windows or abandoned rundown buildings. To keep our soul's value up and free from larger problems, we must strive to keep our town clean from all sin, including the broken windows.

BEN

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: PSALM 22

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

- (1) My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
*why art thou so far from helping me,
and from the words of my roaring?*
- (2) O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.
- (3) But thou *art* holy,
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- (4) Our fathers trusted in thee:
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- (5) They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
- (6) But I *am* a worm, and no man;
a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- (7) All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
- (8) He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him:
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- (9) But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb:
thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's
breasts.

- (10) I was cast upon thee from the womb:
thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.
- (11) Be not far from me; for trouble is near;
for *there is* none to help.
- (12) Many bulls have compassed me:
strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
- (13) They gaped upon me *with* their mouths,
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
- (14) I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax;
it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- (15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- (16) For dogs have compassed me:
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:
they pierced my hands and my feet.
- (17) I may tell all my bones:
they look *and* stare upon me.
- (18) They part my garments among them,
and cast lots upon my vesture.
- (19) But be not thou far from me, O LORD:
O my strength, haste thee to help me.
- (20) Deliver my soul from the sword;
my darling from the power of the dog.
- (21) Save me from the lion's mouth:
for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
- (22) I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- (23) Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- (24) For he hath not despised nor abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted;
neither hath he hid his face from him;
but when he cried unto him, he heard.

- (25) My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- (26) The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
they shall praise the LORD that seek him:
your heart shall live for ever.
- (27) All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the
LORD:
and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- (28) For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S:
and he *is* the governor among the nations.
- (29) All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship:
all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
and none can keep alive his own soul.
- (30) A seed shall serve him;
it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- (31) They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.
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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. On what day of creation were dry land and seas created?
2. Who was the father of Saul?
3. Which Psalm is entitled "A Prayer of Moses"?
4. Wisdom is "more precious" than which gems?
5. How did Paul escape from Damascus?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the first child born? CAIN (Gen. 4:1)
2. Which of David's sons rebelled against him?
 ABSALOM (2 Sam. 15)
3. What happened to Daniel after he gave thanks to God by his
 open window?
 HE WAS THROWN INTO THE LIONS' DEN (Dan. 6:10, 16)
4. What job did the Prodigal Son end up taking after he had
 spent his inheritance? PIG FEEDER (Luke 15:15)
5. What type of coin did Judas accept as payment for betraying
 Jesus? SILVER (Mat. 26:15)