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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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ACCOUNTABILITY

There is an inherent balance of risk and reward that comes with freedom of choice. Freedom ultimately brings hope (Rom. 5:1-11). When it is not your ancestry, background, or some other characteristic out of your control that determines your outcomes, but rather the choices and decisions you make that do, you have hope. However, the ability to effectuate changes in your life based on your choices also means there are consequences, both good and bad, that you understand accompany your choices. Unfortunately, it seems there is an increasing desire and mindset in society to not be held re-

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sponsible in part or in whole for consequences that result from our decisions. For those of us in the United States, there seems to be a growing movement in society that does not want to be accountable for the negative or undesirable consequences of their choices while yet reaping rewards only - both those directly resulting from their choices and rewards they believe they should have *despite* their choices. For example, there are calls to cancel debt incurred from student loans. These complaints are interesting for a variety of reasons. For one, before the loan was taken out, it was understood that it meant money borrowed to use now on the condition that it be paid off later (typically with interest). Secondly, who forced these loans upon them? The answer is nobody; they chose to take the loan knowing the above arrangement. You could argue there was pressure from family, society, or some other external influence, but ultimately whose name was signed? Who consented? Who made the choice? In the most basic summary, someone made a choice knowing the possible consequences, didn't like the consequences, and then wanted someone else to remove the consequences.

Maybe this particular example doesn't apply to us or the majority of us, but the retreat from accountability appears in smaller or more personal examples. We'll complain about aspects of a job that nobody forced us into - we often knew the pros and cons of it, but again, who forced us into saying "I accept," or signing on the dotted line? It's coming in large scale from the coming generations. I once overheard a college student complaining that her parents weren't sending her enough money, and that it wasn't her fault that food, shopping, and especially her dogs cost so much. I asked her how the dogs came to be in her possession; were they sent to her by the same parents who in her opinion weren't financially supporting her enough? No, it turned out she went and got the dogs on her own after beginning college. Whose choice led to the dogs that cost more than the originally agreed upon financial

support? Her's. Whose fault is it the originally agreed upon financial support is not enough? In her mind, the fault was with her parents. Often we fail to see our role in these situations and how much control we actually have on the situations in which we find ourselves. Shirking accountability and passing the blame is one of our oldest weaknesses.

In our earliest recording of human sin in Genesis 3, when Adam was first confronted by God about eating of the tree, Adam immediately passes the blame to Eve:

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (Gen. 3:9-12)

In addition to Adam altogether ignoring his role in the situation, God reminded Adam that Adam was fully aware of the rule despite Adam's decision to eat of the fruit of the tree. We have quite a lot of control over the outcomes that we receive. Only one generation after Adam's reluctance to recognize his role in the situation above, God reminds us of the ability we have to make the decisions and take the actions to achieve a particular result. Cain, unhappy with how his offering was received, was effectively told "Want better? Do better." From Genesis 4:

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 art 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. 4:5-7)

God tells Cain that if Cain does the right things, he wouldn't need to fret. The ability to change the outcome rested with Cain and his actions. Instead of accepting this accountability, Cain took his ire out on Abel. Very early in our human history we see one more inclined to hold others responsible rather than recognize the control and responsibility within our own actions.

This is of great importance, because it's for our own actions that we answer:

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)

It seems convenient to blame others and do everything we can to, erroneously, justify how little-to-nothing is the fault of the choices we made on our own accord. However easily we seem to make ourselves right, ultimately God weighs our choices: *“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts”* (Pro. 21:2). We're responsible and held accountable for the things under our influence. Is this where we focus our energy, and do we recognize how much control we have over our actions? Who really “makes” us do things - good or bad? Sure, others can pressure us and influence us, and such peer pressure can often be hard to overcome. However, it's ultimately still our choice when we sin.

Many of us have long heard that two wrongs don't make a right, yet we'll still attempt to use the sins of others to justify our own. When someone else has wronged us, we still have the control to not seek revenge and/or to forgive them. Just because someone dresses indecently and in a tempting manner, it doesn't absolve us from having the control to look away. Someone else's original wrongdoing should not lead to

one of our own, and both would be in sin. In Genesis 9 we find an example of this with Noah and Ham.

And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. (Gen. 9:20-27)

Was Noah right for becoming drunk and passing out naked in his tent? No, but did this make it okay for Ham to publicize the incident? Also, no. Nothing forced Ham to spread word of what happened other than his own choice. The resulting curses detailed in verse 25-27 show the long lasting and far reaching ramifications of Ham's actions.

Just because an opportunity to sin presents itself, it doesn't mean it's a sign to give in to the sin. It's alarming to hear many attempt to justify what is clearly sinful with the notion that the opportunity would not have been placed in front of them if God had not deemed it to be okay for them to do. It's still our responsibility, our choice to make, to resist. Perhaps nobody had a more opportune situation to choose to sin than Joseph with Potiphar's wife in her infatuation with him (Gen. 39:7). Despite the opportunity and the influence of someone with a great amount of power over him, Joseph's next actions were ultimately his own. He chose wisely.

Beyond giving in to sin, we're also accountable for our growth as Christians. Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom won't come to us as we wait around for it; we must seek it. We're responsible for asking for help when we need it. If your car is broken down on the side of the road and you sit quietly inside, no other passing vehicle will pull over to assist you - how do they know you're in need of help? If you get out of your car and begin pushing, others are far more likely to begin helping you push. No matter how surrounding society and culture increasingly calls for the near abolition of being accountable for our own decisions, we must remember that God certainly holds us responsible (Rom. 14:12). We're held accountable for the choices we make, the actions we take, the words, things, and influences we apply towards others. With that same accountability, we have the great freedom to never be forced into sin.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Cor. 10:13)

BEN

FROM THE SCRIPTURES: ABOUT HOSPITALITY

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:9-10)

If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (Jas. 2:15-16)

For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41)

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (1 John 3:17)

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: (2 Cor. 8:13-14)

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (Rom. 12:13)

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Mat. 25:35-36, 40)

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. (Heb. 13:2)

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:

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
April 27 - 30	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How did Moses assure victory against the Amalekites?
2. What were the restrictions on marriage for the daughters of Zelophehad?
3. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream what happened to destroy the statue made from different metals?
4. In which city did King Herod live at the time of Jesus' birth?
5. What was the name of the man who requested Jesus' body for burial?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What was the name of Abraham's first wife?
SARAI/SARAH (Gen. 17:15)
2. What was the apparent source of Samson's strength?
LONG HAIR IN HIS NAZARITE VOW TO GOD
(Jdg. 16:17)
3. Who was Solomon's father? DAVID (1 Kings 2:12)
4. What job did Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, do?
CARPENTER (Mat. 13:55)
5. What miracle did Jesus do for Lazarus? RAISED HIM
FROM THE DEAD (John 11:43-44)

ALL SUNSHINE AND NO RAIN
MAKES A DESERT