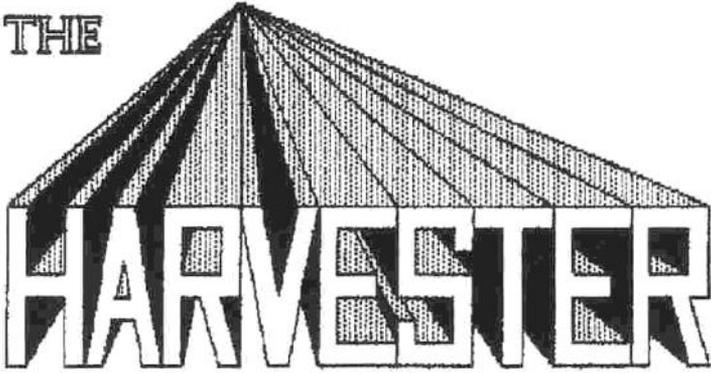


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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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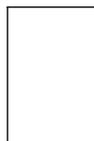
IDENTIFYING JESUS' COMMANDMENTS (On Dealing with Distractions - Part II)

In the previous issue, we began a discussion on distractions with examples from the scriptures that show us the threat that is posed by them.

Practical Steps for Dealing with Distractions

First, we can more easily avoid a distraction if we are not in its presence. But if in its presence we must deal with it. So abstain: *“Abstain from all appearance of evil”* (1 The. 5:22).

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This is practical wisdom. Don't put yourself where the distraction is if you can help it. If social media is a distraction, don't have the app on your phone. If certain TV shows suck hours out of your life, don't have cable. If certain places or people consistently pull you off mission, don't go there, don't spend time with them.

But sometimes we can't avoid the distraction. Sometimes it's right there in front of us. Then we must deal with it deliberately. We must abstain. We must resist. We must maintain our focus despite its presence.

Second, we all need study time. Most of us need more study time.

Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night. (Psa. 1:2)

You can't stay focused on God's purpose if you don't know God's Word. You can't resist distraction if you haven't filled your mind with truth. Study time isn't optional. It's essential. And for most of us, we need more of it. Not just reading the Bible, but studying it. Meditating on it. Letting it shape how we think about everything else.

Third, we must recognize the "attraction of the distraction" and then count it as dung.

Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excel-

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lency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ... (Php. 3:8)

Paul's language is strong here for a reason. Dung. Garbage. Worthless refuse. That's how we need to view the things that distract us from Christ. Yes, they might be attractive. Yes, they might be enjoyable. Yes, they might even seem valuable. But compared to knowing Christ and fulfilling His purpose? They're dung.

Distracted To Jesus, Not From Jesus

Here's the key distinction: We need to be distracted TO Jesus, not FROM Jesus.

And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

Not all pulling of our attention is bad. Sometimes God allows hardship, weakness, difficulty--not as distractions but as redirections. They pull us away from our self-sufficiency and toward dependence on Him. They interrupt our plans to show us His purpose. They distract us from what we thought was important to show us what actually matters.

The question isn't whether our attention gets pulled. The question is: what's it getting pulled toward? Is it being pulled away from God and toward lesser things? Or is it being pulled away from lesser things and toward God?

Jesus faced constant demands on His attention. Crowds wanted healing. Disciples had questions. Religious leaders challenged Him. Political pressures mounted. Family had concerns. But every time His attention was pulled, it was either

directly toward the Father's business or it was resisted so He could stay on the Father's business.

Answering the Three Questions

Are you distracted to or from Jesus? Look at your time budget. Where do the hours go? What gets your best energy? What occupies your thoughts when nothing demands your attention? The answers tell you whether your distractions are pulling you toward Jesus or away from Him.

If you fulfilled your distractions, what would you have left to do? If you answered every email, watched every show, scrolled through every feed, finished every project that seems urgent--what would remain? Hopefully you would be left with the most important things. Hopefully the essential work of attending upon the Lord without distraction would still be there, waiting for you. But for many of us, if we fulfilled all our distractions, we'd have nothing left. We'd be empty. Exhausted. Spent on things that don't matter eternally.

Do you look for an escape in your distractions? This is the hardest question. Be honest. When life gets hard, when God's calling feels heavy, when obedience costs something--do you reach for distractions as an escape? Do you numb yourself with entertainment, with busyness, with novelty? Very likely, if you need an escape. And that's the danger. Distractions can become our escape route from the very purpose God has called us to fulfill.

The Transformation This Commandment Brings

This is why Jesus commands us--by His example--to deal with distractions deliberately. Not because distraction-free living is easy, but because staying on purpose is what makes us worthy as children of God. Every time we choose to attend upon the Lord despite the pull toward lesser things, we become more like Christ. Every time we recognize a distraction for what it is and count it as dung compared to knowing Jesus, we partake of His holiness.

This commandment isn't about perfection. Jesus knows we live in a world full of legitimate demands on our attention. But He's showing us what deliberate, purposeful focus looks like. In the week before His death, with enemies plotting and pressure mounting, He taught daily in the temple. He stayed on mission. He kept doing what the Father sent Him to do.

That's the call. Stay on purpose. Attend upon the Lord without distraction. Recognize when your attention is being pulled away from what matters most, and resist. Count the distractions as dung. Be willing to be distracted to Jesus rather than from Him.

Because this is how we demonstrate our love for Christ--not by knowing that distractions exist, not by understanding the theology of focus, but by actively, daily, deliberately choosing to stay on the Father's business no matter what tries to pull us away. This is smart action, not beating the air. This is purposeful living that prepares us for eternity, where all distractions will cease and we will attend upon the Lord forever without anything pulling our attention away from His glory.

So examine your life. Identify the distractions. Name them. Evaluate them against God's purpose for you. And then make the hard choices necessary to stay on mission. Because the time for making amends is running out, and when Christ returns, He won't ask us about how well we managed our distractions. He'll ask whether we stayed faithful to what He called us to do. Whether we, like Him, taught daily despite the opposition. Whether we stayed on the Father's business to the end.

BILL PRINCE, JR.
(Oxford, AL)

**SATAN ALWAYS USES A LURE
DON'T TAKE THE BAIT**

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE SCRIPTURES

Following is a list of the prophetic books of the Old Testament in the order in which they were written. The books from Genesis through Esther are in chronological order. Job appears to have been written of a time contemporary with Abraham, about 1900/2000 B.C. The books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon are poetic in nature and, in effect, separate the books of history from the books of prophecy. The latter are those prophetic books which are not necessarily in chronological order. As you will also note, the first five of these prophetic books are larger in size, thus termed “major prophets.” The remaining twelve are smaller in size and are referred to as the “minor prophets.” This arrangement and these terms are by human arrangement and do not indicate that major is more important than minor. All the books of the Bible were written separately and were combined over time in their order by human design.

The New Testament books were all written within less than one hundred years of each other, thus their chronological order is interesting, but not necessary for their understanding in relation to one another. The first four record events which took place during the last days of the Old Testament era. This fulfilled the coming, life, and sacrificial death of the Messiah and events preceding the establishment of His kingdom, the church. Acts records the beginning of the Lord’s church and events which occurred during its early years. Except for Revelation, the remaining books constitute letters from inspired writers to the various congregations and individual Christians. Revelation is a prophecy concerning events then future which were to come during the Christian era.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

Before Assyrian Conquest (721 B.C.)

- Jonah (about 800 B.C.)
- Joel (800 B.C.)
- Amos (800 B.C.)
- Hosea (800 B.C.)
- Isaiah (800-726 B.C.)
- Micah (750 B.C.)

Between Assyrian Conquest (721 B.C.) and Babylonian Captivity (587 B.C.)

- Nahum
- Jeremiah (627 - 587 B.C.)
- Habakkuk

Book of the Law had been lost, but in the days of Josiah it was found (2 Kings 22:1-20, 622 B.C.).

During Time of Three Babylonian Invasions (606 - 587 B.C.)

- Daniel
- Ezekiel

During Time of Babylonian Captivity (587 - 517 B.C.)

- Lamentations
- Obadiah

Scriptures undoubtedly taken with Jews to Babylon and preserved.

During Time of Rebuilding (517 - 445 B.C.)

- Ezra
- Haggai

- Zechariah
- Nehemiah
- Esther

After Judah's Return from Babylonian Captivity (445 B.C.)

- Malachi

HARRY COBB
(Deceased)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Which animal did the ten spies liken themselves to, when compared to the people of the land of Canaan?
2. According to the Book of Proverbs, what is "bound in the heart of a child"?
3. Who were the first two disciples to be called?
4. Jesus said not to "swear by your head" because you cannot do what?
5. What did the mighty angel throw into the sea that represented the throwing down of Babylon?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. How old was Joshua when he died? 110 (Jos. 24:29)
2. Which king helped Solomon with his building projects?
HIRAM, KING OF TYRE (1 Kings 7:13-14)
3. How were the family warned that someone wanted to kill the baby Jesus? IN A DREAM (Mat. 2:13)
4. What was Timothy advised to take to help with his illnesses? WINE (1 Tim. 5:23)
5. According to James, what should we do after "confessing our faults to one another"?
PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER (Jas. 5:16)