

# What's In Your Crosshairs?

If you're shooting a rifle at a target a thousand yards away, you'll never hit that target if you've got your sights or crosshairs on a different target that's only a hundred yards away and far off to your right or left. And if you're driving a car down a narrow, one-lane road, you'll drift off the road if you fix your gaze on everything off to either side and not on the road.

So it is in our walk with God. We can't stay on the narrow path or reach the goal of His Kingdom if our focus is elsewhere. Yeshua/Jesus told us not to worry about the things of this life, even the daily necessities, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mat. 6:31-34).

This is the number one priority. As Nathan Griffith has written previously, we must not be distracted. No matter the cost, no matter what's going on around us, we must keep our eyes on the prize.

When the storms of life are raging all around us, we must keep our eyes on the Messiah. Remember that as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, Peter walked on the water. The storm and the waves around him accounted for nothing. But when he got distracted by the storm and took his eyes off the Messiah, that's when he began to sink (Mat. 14:28-33).

## **The Pearl of Great Price**

This life, and everything in it, is only temporary. Our whole purpose here is to be prepared by God for His Kingdom. "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

That's why we must seek first, not the things that are temporary, but the things that are eternal: God's Kingdom and His righteousness. Nothing else matters so much as this.

Jesus told us, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Mat. 13:44-46).

## **Unconditional Surrender**

Seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness requires complete submission to Him. Unconditional surrender, as Daniel Botkin wrote in an excellent blog post a few weeks ago.

Our heavenly Father isn't looking for halfhearted devotion, partial obedience, or incomplete submission. God doesn't want all of you except for your conduct in your marriage, your job, or your hobbies. He wants ALL of you. Everything we say, do, or think ought to be in line with His calling.

Jesus told us, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mat. 10:37-39).

This is why God's Word speaks of our service to Him as a sacrifice. The apostle Paul exhorted, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2). Again, he wrote, "Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17).

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Be poured out to God as a drink offering. That's ALL of us! Everything we've got.

There's no bargaining. No deals to be made. We can't say, "God, I'll submit to You, but only if..." There are no buts. Just unconditional surrender. Give your whole self to God and hold nothing back.

This is beautifully illustrated by the following passage in the Book of Judges, where the Israelites prayed to God for deliverance from their enemies: "And the children of Israel said to the LORD, 'We have sinned! Do to us whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.' So they put away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul could no longer endure the misery of Israel" (Judg. 10:15-16).

The Israelites, on this occasion, showed true repentance. They humbled themselves before the Almighty, put away their idols, and threw themselves on His mercy. They made a request, but no demands. They said, "Do to us whatever seems best to You."

So it must be with each one of us. Anything that we prioritize over God's Kingdom and His righteousness is an idol. We must have no idols; we must put God first in everything. We must submit ourselves to Him without any reservation or condition. "I'm Yours, Lord. I and all I am and all I have are Yours to do with as seems best to You."

And when we unconditionally surrender to God and give our whole selves to Him, He will give us back far more than we ever dreamed!

## **Obedience**

Full submission to God means that we obey Him in all circumstances. And when we do this, He will take care of the rest. Jesus said,

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"

32 "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Mat. 6:31-34.)

2 Chron. 25 illustrates this beautifully. King Amaziah of Judah had hired 100,000 soldiers from Israel to help him in his war with Edom. Picking up the story in vv. 7-9, we find,

7 But a man of God came to him, saying, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel — not with any of the children of Ephraim.

8 "But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! Even so, God shall make you fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow."

9 Then Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?" And the man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this."

Obedience often requires sacrifice. By obeying God and sending the Israelite soldiers home, Amaziah would forfeit all the money he spent to hire them.

God has never promised that we wouldn't go through hard times or have to make sacrifices if we obey Him. Quite the contrary. But He has promised to be with us when we do. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isa. 43:2).

No matter how difficult the journey, obeying God's instructions will keep us on the path to His Kingdom. Though the path leads through the fire, or though it leads through the valley of the shadow of death, we must stay on the path, for God is with us. There are no detours. There's only one path to God's Kingdom.

If God tells us to do something, or not to do something, it's for our good. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12-13).

Trying to wander off the path and take shortcuts might sometimes seem easier, but in the long run, it leads only to infinitely more pain and suffering. We can make things so hard on ourselves by trying to do things our own way instead of God's. We can spend our lives swimming upstream, insisting on doing things our own way, and getting nowhere. As Yeshua/Jesus told the apostle Paul at the moment He called him, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:5; 26:14).

Or, we can simply stop fighting and resisting God's will, submit to Him, obey His simple instructions, and realize that He had our best interests in mind all along. That everything He told us to do was for our own good.

## **Faith and Patience**

Obedience requires faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). Likewise, faith requires obedience, for "faith without works is dead" (Jam. 2:20, 26).

God has promised that, whatever He asks us to sacrifice in this life, we have "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17) awaiting us. As His prophet told King Amaziah, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this" (2 Chron. 25:9).

So we must trust that God knows best and has our best interests at heart. In the midst of trials and tribulations, we must continue to have faith that God's purpose and timing is best, that He can see what we cannot. "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful" (Jam. 5:11).

And because we know that God knows best, we also know that if we're going through a trial or being persecuted, it's for our ultimate good. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

God's Word doesn't say He works some things together for good to those who love Him, or even that He works most things together for good. It says He works ALL things together for good.

We must remain steadfast and keep our eyes on God's Kingdom and His righteousness, no matter the storm raging around us. As long as we do what God tells us, then He will handle the rest.

As the apostle Paul wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

## **Contentment**

Because we can have faith and trust in God's greater purpose for us, we can also be content and thankful in every circumstance. The apostle Paul wrote, "For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

If we are rich in this life, we can be content and give thanks to God. If we have only the clothes on our backs, we can still be content and give thanks to God. These aren't my words, but God's, as we'll see below.

Our focus isn't on this world and everything in it, but rather we "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). We seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

Again, the apostle Paul wrote, in 1 Tim. 6:6-10,

6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

## **Conclusion**

So what's in our crosshairs? What do we have our hearts set on? Is it God's Kingdom and His righteousness, or is it the things of this world?

Let's close with 1 John 15-17: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

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