



The Real Battlefield

Life's Most Important Test

If an enemy can successfully deceive us about where the real battle is to be fought he will probably win in the end. Or better yet, if he can lead us to believe we aren't in a battle at all he will surely win! The superstitious foolishly say: "Don't be negative or negative things may happen . . ."

Being and staying alert to the immediate and impending dangers is the challenge of life (and death); even better yet is implementing and guarding disciplines to help us in and through trials and crises.

If the great enemy, the devil, fails to trick us about the reality of the never-ending battle his next, most common, tactic is misleading us about our part and responsibility in the fight – How, and in what areas, should we depend on God and His Grace and when/where are we on our own?

Jesus gave the most important warning in the entire *Bible* – and it shouldn't be a mystery as to what he means:

I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Mt 12:31

The reason this is not a confusing statement (even though we are all perilously close to failing in this area) is that this is a major theme of the *Bible* and the subject of many stories we find in it. Blasphemy against the Spirit is not a one-time thing we do, but the over-arching life-decision that "I can do it myself! In fact, I don't need God (if there is even a God) – I can do it better myself! My will be done!"

And even in religious circles there is much debate about the role we should expect of (or strive for) God to have in our lives. A short 20-question "aptitude" test (15 multiple choice and 5 fill-in the blank questions) will probably best gauge our viewpoint. And like any aptitude test, the questions are not comprehensive but, rather, reasonably representative to evaluate what (and who) we expect and depend on to successfully maneuver through life.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. 2Co 13:5

- A. Can/Should Handle this Myself
- B. Need God's Guidance and Grace
- C. God has limited interest in

A B C

C (Area of God's Interest)

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Money | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tithing - beyond this my responsibility. |
| 2. Investing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Ditto above |
| 3. Retiring | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If I work to age 65 this is enough! |
| 4. Vocation/Job/Employer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 5. Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | As long as it doesn't interfere with Sunday Church too often |
| 6. Selection of spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 7. Purchasing a home | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 8. Purchasing a car | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 9. Borrowing money | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | As long as I don't get in over my head |
| 10. Time spent with and in spiritual matters | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Going to Church (when it is convenient) is about all God is interested in |
| 11. My driving | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | As long as I don't speed <u>too</u> much |
| 12. Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 13. Paying taxes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | As long as I don't cheat too much . . . |
| 14. Talking with and about others | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 15. How I vote | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
16. I have little confidence in (God or myself)_____ to handle the day-to-day issues of life.
17. If only (God/I) _____ would cooperate with (me/God) _____ things would be MUCH better.
18. My objective is to have/get what (I/God) _____ want(s).
19. I am frequently disappointed with (myself/God) _____.
20. My problems stem from (God's/my)_____ failure to do what (I/God) _____ want(s).

We (encouraged by the devil) “naturally” consider how we can “divide and conquer” to meet and overcome life’s challenges and opportunities – compartmentalizing the issues of life; God and religion, under this concept, is one compartment – more or less important depending on the person. Yet we are not up to the challenges of life, and especially of death. The CLEAR message of the *Bible* is just that – we can’t (and shouldn’t expect) to do ANYTHING meaningful without God and His Grace given through the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to “believe” in God and Jesus (“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” *Jas 2:19*); as Jesus warned the religiously self-confident and self-righteous:

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.” *Lk 6:49*

Paul, similarly, warns the greater danger is in being religiously self-deceived than being an out-and-out “pagan” – few of us think we are not God’s gift to the world!

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. *2Ti 3:1-5*

But religious or not, blasphemy against the Spirit is not a one-time thing we do, but the over-arching life-decision that “I can do it myself! In fact, I don’t need God (or only want and need him when I am in real trouble) – otherwise I can do it better myself! My will be done!”

The cry, “Your will be done!” is one that seeks more (rather than less and less) to:

Commit to the LORD whatever you do,
and your plans will succeed. *Pr 16:3*

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. *1Co 10:31*

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. *Col 3:17*

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. *Phil 2:14-16*

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love. *1Co 16:13-14* Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. *2Co 13:5*