

WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF US

Christians who seek the will of God are sometimes puzzled to know whether to wait upon God to act, or whether to move ahead themselves. Does God expect us to use our limited human judgment or will He guide us through opened and closed doors? Can we ask Him to fight our battles for us and wait upon Him for victory, or are we to struggle against our besetting sins?

We will find views on this subjects among Christians, ranging all the way from "Stop trying to help God out," to, "God helps those who help themselves." This study is designed to provide a Scriptural understanding of "our part".

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice .. holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 12:1

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:11

And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:5

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Ephesians 4:24

But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth, lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Colossians 3:8-10

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. Romans 13:14

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:1,2

.... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; I Peter 2:11
Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility...Colossians 2:18

Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Romans 12:16

...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...Hebrews 12:1

Neither give place to the devil. Ephesians 4:27

Stand in awe, and sin not...Psalm 4:4

Abstain from all appearance of evil. I Thessalonians 5:22

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. Psalm 34:14

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness; and to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. II Peter 1:5-7

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. John 13:17

But nevertheless we shall all give account. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

For we are labourers together with God: I Corinthians 3:9

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. II Corinthians 6:1

And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. I Samuel 14:45

And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following. Mark 16:20

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Mark 13:34

Through thee will we push down our enemies, through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us, for I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name forever.

Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Psalm 127:1

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the flesh; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? II Corinthians 13:5

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. I Corinthians 10:12

But let every man prove his own work and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Galatians 6:4

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Luke 21:34

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. I Thessalonians 5:21

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ ;
Philippians 1:10

Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Revelation 3:2

Take heed unto thyself. I Timothy 4:16

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask more. Luke 12:48

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. I Timothy 4:14

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. Luke 19:13

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.
I Corinthians 14:12

For if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. II Corinthians 8:12

Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall man give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. Luke 6:38

Cursed be he that doeth the work of Jehovah negligently.
Jeremiah 48:10

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.
I Corinthians 15:58

But it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. Galatians 4:18

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. II Peter 3:14

Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. Romans 12:11

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. Eccl. 9:10

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools,
but as wise. Ephesians 5:15

Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:
be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
Matthew 10:16

....For the children of this world are in their generat-
ion wiser than the children of light. Luke 16:18

Brethren, be not children in understanding....I Corin-
inthians 14:20

He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and w
whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. Psalm 16:20

Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither
decline from the words of my mouth. Proverbs 4:5

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,
and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought
unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; I Peter 1:13

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming
the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned
with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every
Colossians 4:5,6 man.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,
as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and
so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Hebrews
10:25

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and
good works: Hebrews 10:24

But exhort one another daily, while it is called today;
lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness
of sin. Hebrews 3:13

Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one
another, even as also ye do. I Thessolonians 5:11

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law
of Christ. Galatians 6:2

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of
the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one
of us please his neighbor for his own good to edifica-
tion. Romans 15:1,2

For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only
use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by
love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Philippians 2:4

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed. II Corinthians 6:3

Let all your things be done with charity. I Corinthians 16:14

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: I Peter 1:22

But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Luke 6:35

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; Matthew 5:44

Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. Romans 14:13

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. John 7:24

...And be at peace among yourselves. I Thessolonians 5:13

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: Philippians 2:14

Use hospitality one to another without grudging. I Peter 4:9

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. Romans 14:1

I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. I Timothy 5:14

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Titus 2:5

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. I Timothy 5:8

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; Ephesians 6:4

That ye may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children. Titus 2:4

...and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. I Timothy 4:7

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. I Timothy 6:11

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Titus 2:12

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called. Ephesians 4:1

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:10

Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. I Timothy 4:15

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. II Corinthians 10:5

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ:....Philippians 1:27

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. I Peter 1:15

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. II Timothy 2:16

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. I Peter 2:2

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. II Timothy 2:15

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you. I Thessolonians 4:11

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. James 1:22

In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity. Titus 2:7

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. II Corinthians 9:8

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16

Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. II Corinthians 8:21

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. Psalm 37:8

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Ephesians 4:26

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. I Corinthians 9:27

With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men: Ephesians 6:7

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Colossians 3:23, I Corinthians 10:31

The principle running through the passages quoted indicates unmistakably that much of God's work in our lives He accomplishes through us, that is, through our efforts. Granted God can and may on occasion supercede human limitation or even work entirely without us, His usual plan is to work within the limits of human capacity. Yet just because we have a part in the action is no reason why we might hesitate to give God all the glory.

We all understand the principle of working for our food and yet giving God sincere thanks for it as a gift from Him. There are innumerable instances of this principle in the Christians's life. We do the living, the working, the thinking, the planning, and yet we trust God to guide our actions according to His will. In a word, the principle is this: God blesses our efforts. The work that we do in His name becomes His work.

An implication of this principle is that wherein we are limited God does not usually make up the difference, but rather operates within our limitations. One who has a poor singing voice is not made a soloist upon yielding himself to Christ. It is not as if the seed of the Christian farmer always produces a bumper crop, or if a saint loses his wallet he always finds it. The finest Christian has to look too when he crosses the street and the Christian who has poor business would sit at home and ask God to send them a job. If a person has a toothache he gets himself off to a dentist and thanks God when it's over.

But these instances are not spiritual problems. We know how to handle them, but what about problems such as guidance and victory?

Man will suffer just like anyone else even though he asks God to bless his business. We do not live hocus-focus lives but are, like anyone else, obliged to live within the rules of God's universe.

If we wish to work for the Lord we need adequate preparation for the job. A Christian musician needs to practice hard and long. A minister of the Gospel needs to learn how to study, prepare outlines, think on his feet, express himself. Some who display a gift of gab and depend on it say the least. Paul told Timothy, "Give attendance to reading." God places no premium on ignorance. Yet certainly all the human wisdom in the world unyielded to God is useless, vain, and foolish. We as Christians of all people have reason to improve our skills; study, train, educate. God wants our best. He could send down a legion of angels and finish His work today. Yet it pleases Him to consume time, to use us with all our human limitations. All He asks is that we present ourselves a living sacrifice, doing our work heartily unto the Lord.

A further and important illustration of this principle is seen in the development of Christian character. Some Christians are inclined to expect God to eradicate

their sinful habits and even feel it is very wrong to try to conquer their sins by any efforts of their own. Yet let us inquire how Christian character is formed.

For one person a temper may be a besetting sin. In such a case how is he to find victory? Will God remove his temper for the asking? Will it automatically disappear if he yields himself fully to Christ? Shall he seek the fullness of the Spirit in order to get rid of his temper? Or is there some other way? Certainly the testimony of many a Christian is that he has pleaded with the Lord in tears for deliverance from his besetting sin only to fall into it again. What is the way to victory?

Using a bad temper as an illustration let us inquire as to where it came from. Is it possible to train a child so that he will not grow up with a temper? Some parents excuse their children's tempers as being hereditary; just like Uncle Joe, etc., or 'a chip off the old block.' As a matter of fact while this is what we might like to believe there is no factual justification for such a view. We can train tempers in children. Almost all children will a tantrum and if there are favorable results more will follow.

In short, one who is properly trained will not have a bad temper as a besetting sin. The application of good child training procedures or, in a word, psychology, would have prevented the sin of a bad temper. As much may be

said for other sins: cheating, stealing, gluttony, lying, or any other sin we might name. If we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.

It is not enough then, for parents to pray for character for their children. It is the parent's job to build that character. There are principles and laws by which character may be instilled in a child. It is the parents duty to learn those laws and apply them. All the praying in the world is no substitute for doing the job that is ours. Certainly prayer is important, but it should be to ask God's blessing on the efforts made, -not to ask Him to do for us what we can very well and should do for ourselves.

But if the use of psychology could have prevented the sin in the first place what if the temper is there? How is it controlled? Again, those very same preventive measures are curative. One can learn to control his temper whether he is a child or an adult.

Here then is an instance where a sinful habit can be broken by the use of psychology. To some, such a suggestion is sacrilegious; God doesn't need psychology or psychologists. No, God doesn't need dentists either. He could pull teeth, or better, heal their decay, but He has not chosen to. As a usual thing He leaves us to do what we can for ourselves.

This then is why the Bible is so full of challenges to us to resist the devil, flee youthful lusts, make no

provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. We do the fighting; God is the victor. David did not trust in his sword, but he used it. His men fought bravely; God won the battle.

Just as we work for our food and thank God for it, so we work for victory and give God all the glory. As long as we sit on the sidelines waiting for God to fight our battles we are waiting in vain. He calls upon us to fight the good fight of faith. We are to engage the enemy.

David says, "Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." Should the watchman go home and sleep if Jehovah will keep the city? No, just the opposite. They may as well go home and sleep if He is not going to guard it. He will only guard the city through the watchman. Without Him they are useless. Without Him the builders build in vain. With God the builders are useful.

We are the workman. God does His work through our hands, our mouths, and our brains. He does not move our fingers. We must move them, and, if for Him, he will bless. We must make the decisions and use the abilities and common sense He has given us; a common sense yielded to Him. He will not think our thoughts for us, but He will guide them as we think. He will guide the steps we take. We take the steps; He does the guiding.