

CLARITY TRUMPET

For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. — 1 Corinthians 14:8, 9

Should the Believer Work or Trust God to Work?

In living the Christian life, how do I know when I should work, or when I should simply trust the Lord to work? Where is the balance? There are times recorded in the Bible where —

- It seems that God refuses to work on behalf of His children *when* they refuse to obey Him.
- It seems that *all* depends upon me.
- It seems that just *faith is enough* and God does it all.

First look at the following examples of how God refused to work on behalf of His children *when* they refused to obey Him.

In Judges 2:1–4 it is clear that God had intended to drive Israel’s enemies out of the land, but because of their disobedience He refused to do it and even allowed their enemies to capture them.

Another revealing passage is 1 Samuel 15:22, 23. King Saul was told by God to kill all of the Amalekites as punishment for what they had previously done to Israel. Instead, Saul saved King Agag alive and kept “the best of the things that should have been utterly destroyed.” For failure to obey God fully, the Lord took the kingdom away from Saul and gave it to David. The lesson to be learned is that partial obedience is disobedience!

I can’t help but wonder how much I have possibly missed in my Christian life through failures to obey the Lord when I should have. How about you? Have there been times when you felt God wanted you to

do something — perhaps to witness to someone, or to give to a missions project, or to ask someone for forgiveness — and you didn’t. Do you believe God just lets little disobediences go by without noticing?

Even if you were not aware of any negative consequences at the time, Scripture is clear that those who know Christ as their Savior will give account of every deed, every word and every motive. Jesus said, “There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known” (Matthew 10:26). Later He added, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). The apostle Paul expressed a similar thought when he wrote, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels [motives] of the hearts” (1 Corinthians 4:5). And Hebrews 4:13 adds this frightening thought: “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

What about the times in Scripture when it seems that *all* depends upon the child of God?

In 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 it tells us, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” *We* do the sowing and what *we* sow determines how much *we* reap. Also, *we* determine how much *we* will give. It seems that all depends upon us and our decisions.

The lesson to be learned is that partial obedience is disobedience!

First Peter 5:5–9 says, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...” *We* do the submitting, *we* humble ourselves, and *we* are the ones who resist the devil. Again, it could be construed by some that all success depends upon us.

Finally in Revelation 22:12, Jesus says, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work.” Whose work is rewarded? Ours. *We* do the work. *We* get rewarded for what *we* have done. It could be argued that all depends on us and our performance.

In contrast there are still other times in the Bible where it seems that just having faith is enough and God does everything else — all of the work.

In Romans 4:18–22, Abraham’s faith, makes it clear that it was God who enabled him to have a child in his old age, and this was done because Abraham trusted in the Lord.

Similarly, Jesus’ mother Mary was enabled by God to conceive Jesus without any human instrumentality involved. She, too, simply believed God, as evidenced by her reply to Him when He had explained how the conception and birth would occur. She replied, “Let it be to me according to Your word” (Luke 1:38). She sincerely believed what God had revealed to her. She had faith.

Even though it’s possible to view our walk with the Lord in one or more of these three ways, we see the

balance in the Biblical norm which is a combination of God working *in* us as we respond in submission to Him. This is called “abiding” in John’s writings, e.g., John 15:1–8.

Joshua 3:5–13 records God’s instructions to Israel as to how they would cross the Jordan River. God is the one who split the waters for them to cross on dry ground, but Israel — in particular, the priests — had one responsibility before the river would divide before them. The priests had to step into the water and then, and only then, would God divide the waters before them. *They had to get their feet wet!* It was teamwork between God and His children.

Judges, chapters 6 through 8, tells the story of one Gideon — a man who was somewhat of a coward. In 6:11–16, 36, God appeared to Gideon to inform him that he had been selected to “save Israel from the hand of the Midianites” (v. 14). And God added the promise, “Have I not sent you?” Later Gideon acknowledged that “... You will save Israel by my hand” (v. 36). So once again we see that it was God working through Gideon as Gideon cooperated with the Lord. Teamwork.

In Philippians 2:12, 13 it is stated so beautifully that we “work out” in everyday life the salvation that God has already worked within us, empowering us “to will and to do for His good pleasure.” An excellent passage to

close with is Hebrews 13:20, 21 where it says in part, “Now may the God of peace... make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

God working in us “to do His will” is the key. We make ourselves available to Him, and He brings about the “fruit that remains” (John 15:16). No wonder, therefore, the glory and the praise, all goes to Him — and rightly so.

Richard A Seymour

Clarity Trumpet #52

God working in us “to do His will” is the key.