

What Does God Require of Us As His People?

This title may seem rather trite for a Christian who has committed his or her entire life to serving the Creator, to one who has been given His spirit for a lifelong journey of fulfilling His ways. Why then even approach this subject? Will not the spirit within us keep us on the upward road that leads to Life eternal at the end of days?

Yes it will, if we let it, and if we continually nurture that spirit within us to grow and capture our entire being and will. Yet, we also understand the reality that we live in a world ruled by Satan the devil, and his desire is to capture all of us into his way of thinking, his way of life. We have a continual battle against those forces of darkness, for as Paul stated in Ephesians 6:12,

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against *rulers*, against *authorities*, against the *cosmic powers* of the darkness of this age, against *spiritual forces of evil* in the heavenly places.”

rulers = *archas*, “what comes first and therefore is chief (foremost)”

authorities = *exousias*, “delegated empowerment, operating in a designated jurisdiction”

cosmic powers = *kosmokratoras*, “world ruler, referring to Satan and the demons who influence people’s lives”

spiritual forces = *pneumatika*, “invisible sphere of the spirit”

evil = *ponerias*, “wickedness, pain, and toil”

Our battle is a constant one against unseen forces, but very real forces within the spirit world, for “... your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:9). The adversary wants desperately to convince us of our own free will, or force us by the agency of men

if he must, to abandon this calling God has given us.

What Our Heavenly Father Desires for Us

Our calling is to receive eternal life as spirits, but that life in the unseen realm is not a selfish one ... to sit on some heavenly cloud strumming a harp all day, gazing on the “Beatific Vision” of the Father on His throne. That is a pagan idea thrust into Christianity by very unchristian and evil forces. Our destiny is outlined very clearly in Scripture, and how brilliant a future we have to look forward to.

1. We will be brothers of Jesus Christ forever!

We are not called to be like angels, who are the servants of the saints (Hebrews 1:13-14), but we are to be like our Elder Brother in every way (Romans

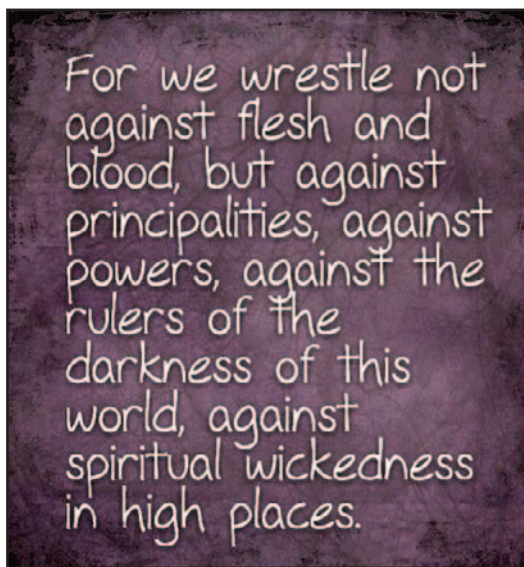
8:29; John 17:22; II Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21; I John 3:2).

2. Like Jesus, we will in our glorified form be sitting at the “right hand of God”, or that most favored position in our relationship with Him and our heavenly Father. We will rule with Him in a Kingdom (government) here on the earth. (Revelation 3:21; Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29-30; I Corinthians 6:2; II Timothy 2:11-12; Revelation 2:26-27).

3. Our rulership as Kings and Priests within this government will indeed be upon this earth, though it is based in the spirit realm (heaven) with the Father on His throne (Revelation 5:10; Exodus 19:5-6; I Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:5-6; 20:6; 22:5).

It is clear that this future we have to look forward to is beyond anything we can imagine in terms of the joy, beauty, peace, love, productivity, and fulfillment, for of that millennial reign on the earth we read,

Romans 8:18-23. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not wor-



thy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

I Corinthians 2:10-11. “But God has revealed them to us through His spirit. For the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the spirit of God.” (See also in Isaiah 64:4.)

What We Must Do to Get There

It goes without saying that you cannot become a son of God, a brother of Christ, without being predestined, called, and chosen to be His son (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:3-12). He makes clear that our foundation in the faith involves repentance from our sins, having faith in the Eternal to carry out His will through us, baptism, and the laying on of hands to receive the spirit (Hebrews 6:1-2). Thence begins a life of service to our Creator in the ways that He shows in His Laws, commandments, statutes, and judgments, just as He did for Abraham, our father in the spirit, as it were (Genesis 26:5).

We must not forget that we are none of His without the spirit of the Eternal within us (Romans 8:9-11). That spirit, that is given to us at baptism and the laying on of hands, is the key that ties us to our heavenly Father and to Jesus Christ; we live within each other, as a unified whole (John 17:21), an unshakable bond that will last for eternity as long as we continually nurture that bond of oneness.

Please be aware that none of these points that will be discussed below can stand by themselves. They all blend together in one life effort, unified by the One who made us.

1. We must do the will of the Father, just as Jesus did when He said in John 5:19-20,

“Then Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.’”

We in turn must walk as our Elder Brother walked when He was flesh and blood on the earth (I John 2:6), for when we do we will be doing the will of the Father as well (Matthew 11:29-30; John 13:15; I Peter 2:21).

2. We must keep the Law as written in the Torah, (Exodus 20:2-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21), for these commands are the very essence of the personality of our Creator, covering our relationship to Him as well as to one another.

Matthew 22:36-40. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’”

3. The “Royal Law” must be continually in our minds and hearts, as we seek to do good to all people, especially to those who might hate us.

Matthew 7:12. “Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Note also Luke 6:3).

If we continually reach out to those around us by

trying to “get inside their minds”, so to speak, to discover their needs and despair, their troubles and heartache, then we will be able to serve them with the things that will really comfort and uplift them, showing them the way to abundant life which we have already been shown. Christ stated that we must love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those that hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use and persecute us (Matthew 5:44). We are not to take vengeance upon ourselves but leave that to God (Romans 12:17-21). Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good!

4. We must strive to serve our fellow man in a spirit of humility. Jesus set the example when He, the very Son of God, washed the disciple’s feet (John 13:3-16), and when He excoriated them after they debated among themselves who would be the greatest in the coming government of God here on the earth. (Matthew 20:20-28)

“And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

If the disciples had difficulty understanding what true humility in servanthood is, how much more must it be difficult for us to express such service within our culture today that glorifies physical wealth and position? Notice in Luke 22:24-27 that even after taking the symbols of Christ’s body and blood at the Passover before the crucifixion — symbols epitomizing selfless service — the disciples squabbled about who should be greatest! Again, the servant is the greatest. Christ turns the world upside down.

The Parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) further makes clear that those of us who will inherit the Kingdom of God are those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in strangers,

clothe the naked, and visit the sick and those in prison. All of these require an investment in time and energy. It is giving of one’s own substance to help those in need, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father,” as Jesus said it (James 1:27).

5. We must resist evil continually. Satan and his minions cannot stand against the name of Jesus Christ, nor can they invade the lives of those who are committed to God. This is made clear in James 4:7-8.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts you double-minded.”

I Peter 5:9 reiterates this advice to resist the devil, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith,” since we all must endure such afflictions as the verse goes on to say. Satan and the demons cannot gain entry and influence your life as long as you thwart his every assault.

6. Accept suffering for your calling as a necessary part of your lifestyle. We are told in Romans 8:17 that if we are God’s children we are “... heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” All people suffer afflictions of various sorts in this physical life — and if you are going to suffer it may as well be for the right reasons — but for us the conflicts are many times assaults on our character, where Satan tempts us to sin in our weakest areas of living. Yet, when we are weak then we are strong, as Paul states in II Corinthians 12:10:

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

7. We must go beyond the strictly literal obedience to the Law, but express the Law’s intent in our lives, as Jesus lived it. Jesus castigated the Pharisees for meticulously counting out tiny mint, anise, and cummin seeds to tithe on these agricultural products, as the Law requires, but they left off the “weightier matters of the Law”:

Matthew 23:23. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

These Pharisees loved to be viewed as good and upright by others, but they themselves were inwardly immoral, insincere, and greedy. Thus He called them "whited sepulchers," fools and blind," and "hypocrites" for being leaders of Israel but failing to mete out true justice. Jesus admonished the Israelites to obey their lawful teachings, but assaulted them for being hypocritical.

Matthew 23:1-4. "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.'"

Is not this the true meaning behind Luke 17:7-10? When we have done all that we have been commanded, are we then not unprofitable servants? A servant is not thanked for doing what is expected of him by his master, but he is thanked for when he has gone beyond the "letter of the law" and fulfilled the "spirit of the law." We might say the contract here is between ancient Israel's adherence to tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments, versus these being written in the hearts of the elect (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10).

8. We must heed the cryptic words of the prophets in Scripture, whose wisdom is beyond reproach.

Solomon. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, in-

cluding every secret thing, whether good or evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

Yahweh's own words. "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?" Deuteronomy 10:12-13.

Again, Yahweh's own words. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

Micah. "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

Isaiah. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:16-17.

Samuel. "So Samuel said: 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have

rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king.” I Samuel 15:22.

Hosea. “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.... So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually.” Hosea 6:6; 12:6.

9. Endure to the end! This short sentence spoken by Jesus Christ in Matthew 10:22, and reinforced in Matthew 24:13, emphasizes the need to *endure* (*hupomeno*, “to abide under, to bear up courageously under suffering, and to wait for”) ... endure through all of the trials and sufferings and temptations that will arise during the normal course of living, and especially during the great trials at the end of the age when even family members might betray you as followers of Christ. We must bear up against the terrible injustices and pains that will hit us from every side, and never flag in our quest to be sitting at the Father’s right hand in due time ... for “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” Every bit of suffering we must endure to attain the Kingdom of God will be as nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed in us at the resurrection (Roman 8:18). We can also be absolutely confident that our heavenly Father will not allow us to endure trials that are too hard for us to endure (I Corinthians 10:13). They are ultimately for our own good, if we will just see it that way; as James wrote, count it all joy when we experience trials, for they end up building the character God wants in us (James 1:2).

10. Be committed to captivating every thought and intention of your life to the Creator,

who holds you in the palm of His hand and shelters you under His protective wings.

II Corinthians 10:5. “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

Examine your life carefully, as David admonished himself in Psalm 19:12. What words do you allow yourself to speak, what television programs and movies do you watch, what radio programs do you listen to, what friends do you have, what clothes do you wear, what food and drink do you enjoy, and

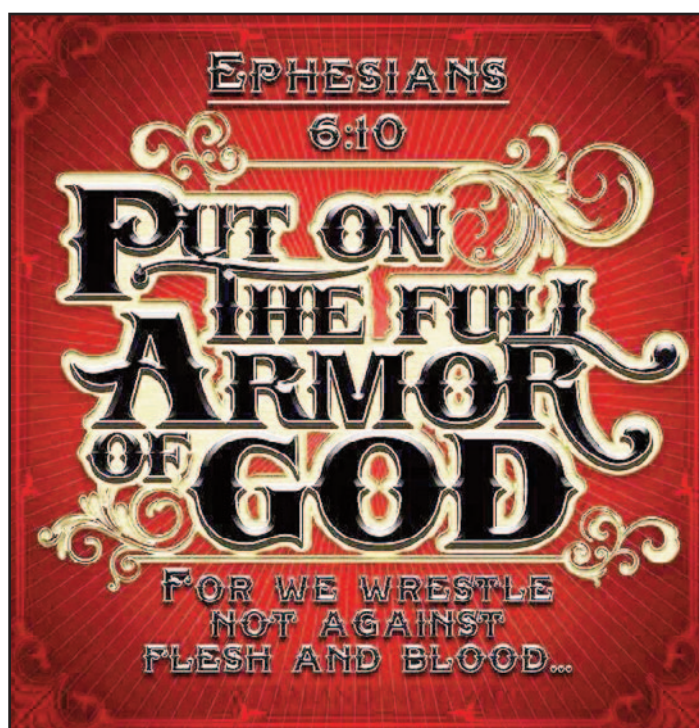
how do you rear your children, what sort of work do you do, and on goes the list. In everything you are a sacrifice to the Living God who loves you and cares deeply for you!

The Conclusion of the Matter

So ... what does God require of us in this life? The ten interrelated points given above provide us a synopsis of these requirements, and let us not forget that they are all grounded upon the foundation of *love (agape)*, which is what we as brethren are to be noted for (John 13:34-35).

We must put on the whole armor of God so that we can withstand the evil that Satan and this world throw against us.

Ephesians 6:11-18. “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heav-



only places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Moreover, we must heed the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 33:14-17.

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil; he will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off.”

