

SEEING THE BALANCE

The Believer's Working (labouring, striving)

God's Working in the believer

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... (Phil. 2:12-13)	...for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure
Whereunto I also labour, striving... (Col. 1:28)	...according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.
Let us labour (make every effort, be diligent) therefore... (Heb. 4:11)	...to enter into that rest (the enjoyment of His working)
I laboured more abundantly than they all... (1 Cor. 15:10)	...yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Compare Galatians 2:20 "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"

I work; yet not I, but Christ worketh in me.

I labour; yet not I, but Christ laboreth in me. etc.

Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord... (1 Cor. 15:58)	...forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain <i>in the Lord</i> .
who labour... Persis laboured much... (Romans 16:12)	...in the Lord ...in the Lord
For we are labourers... (1 Cor. 3:9)	...together with God
We then as workers... (2 Cor. 6:1)	...together with Him
for he (Timothy) worketh... (1 Cor. 16:10)	...the work of the Lord
being fruitful in every good work... (Col. 1:10-11)	...strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power.
...which (good works) God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10)	For we are His workmanship...
in every good work to do His will... (Heb. 13:21)	...working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight.
And they went forth and preached every where... (Mark 16:20)	...the Lord working with them
Fight the good fight... (1 Tim. 6:12)	...of faith [<i>it is by faith that we draw upon God's power and resources</i>]

Additional Comments

The chart on the opposite page begins with Philippians 2:12-13 because these two verses present the proper balance in a way that is very clear and easy to see.

If we cling to Philippians 2:12 (*man's working*) and forget about Philippians 2:13 (*God's working*) then we are left with only man's working and thus there is no supernatural dynamic. It is like the disciples who "toiled all the night, and have taken nothing" (Luke 5:5). It is like the frustrated branch which is trying to produce fruit without being connected to the vine: "without me [apart from Me, separated from Me] ye can do *nothing*" (John 15:5). By self-effort alone, we will never be able to perform that which is good (Rom. 7:18).

Another common mistake is to err in the other direction by clinging to Philippians 2:13 (God's working) and forgetting about Philippians 2:12 (man's working). This leads to the wrong idea that "God does everything and I do nothing." This kind of thinking tends to make the believer passive and inactive and dormant. Sometimes it is stated this way: "*Let go and let God.*" God's Word does not tell the believer to "*let go*" but rather to "*HOLD FAST*"--see Hebrews 3:6; 3:14 ("hold"=hold fast); 10:23; Luke 8:15 ("keep"=hold fast); 1 Cor. 15:2 ("keep in memory"=hold fast). The believer is to have an active, living faith in a powerful Saviour, clinging to Him who is OUR LIFE.

The life that we now live in the flesh is an active life of trusting the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). Faith is the key because "we walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7). This is how we are to live (Gal. 2:20). We are to fight, but it is to be "the fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). We are to strive "according to His working" (Col. 1:29). We are to work, ever knowing that He is working in us mightily (Eph. 3:20; Heb. 13:21). We are to labour, but our labour must be in the Lord as we abide in Him (1 Cor. 15:58; Romans 16:12). By faith we actively draw upon the limitless resources of the risen Christ who is the only Source of our life and power. Apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Through Him we can do all things (Phil. 4:13)!

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A very extreme Calvinist position would deny that a believer has a responsibility to the lost: "*If God does the electing then I need do nothing. If God wants them saved, He will save them. Either God will bring them to faith in Christ or He will not. It's totally God's work whether we do anything or not.*" The Bible answer to this is best expressed by the apostle Paul himself:

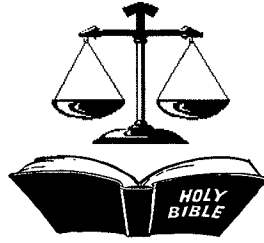
"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10).

Yes, Paul laboured for the lost, prayed for the lost, preached to the lost, suffered for the lost and poured out his energy for the lost. Why? "*that the elect may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*" Paul knew that God's sovereignty did not interfere with man's responsibility. Paul knew that God would do His part. Paul also knew that he must do his part: "*woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel*" (1 Cor. 9:16).

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John 6:27-29 is an interesting passage showing the balance between God's working and man's working when it comes to salvation. The Lord told them to labour or work for the right kind of food (v.27). They then asked, "What shall *we do*, that we might work the works of God?" The Lord did not say, "You should do *NOTHING!*" Instead He said, "You must *BELIEVE!*" (v.29).

The Believer's Responsibility



God's Working in the Believer

1. (*Mark 16:20*) And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.
2. (*John 15:5*) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.
3. (*Acts 11:19,21*) Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only...And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.
4. (*Acts 13:48*) Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.
5. (*Acts 14:27*) And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
6. (*Acts 15:12*) Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.
7. (*Acts 16:14*) Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.
8. (*Acts 18:9-10*) Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."
9. (*Rom. 16:12*) Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord.
10. (*1 Cor. 1:26-31*) For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; ³¹ that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."
11. (*1 Cor. 2:3-5*) I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
12. (*1 Cor. 3:6-9*) I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

13. (1 Cor. 15:10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.
14. (1 Cor. 15:58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.
15. (2 Cor. 6:1) We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.
16. (2 Cor. 9:8-11) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work.⁹ As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness remains forever."¹⁰ Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,¹¹ while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.
17. (2 Cor. 12:9-10) And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.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.
18. (Gal. 2:20) I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
19. (Eph. 2:10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
20. (Eph. 4:24-27) And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness.²⁵ Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.²⁶ "Be angry, and do not sin:" do not let the sun go down on your wrath,²⁷ nor give place to the devil.
21. (Phil. 2:12-13) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
22. (Col. 1:10-11) That you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;¹¹ strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.
23. (Col. 1:29) To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.
24. (Col. 3:8-10) But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.
25. (Heb. 13:21)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.
26. (James 4:13-16) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit;"¹⁴ whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.