

Qualifications for ruling and reigning with Christ

God's qualifications for ruling and reigning with Christ clash with the world's values. The world will esteem and celebrate you if you can demonstrate:

- Great works
- Great gifts
- Success
- Self-confidence
- The approval of others

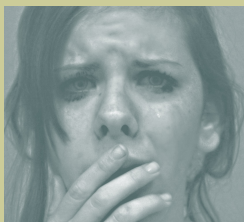
Basically, we're talking:



What are the requirements for ruling and reigning with Christ? There are two:

- Experience with evil
- Character

Basically, we're talking:



As already noted, endurance is required of one who will reign. How can one endure if there is nothing to endure? Exactly. Thus, God brings a measure of evil into our lives. Evil is the only possible canvas on which we can paint a masterpiece of endurance.

So forget about works, gifts, success, self-confidence, and approval. If you still trust God during the hard times, then you are a heartbeat away from celestial majesty. ■

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

Run to win the prize



Our Lord has called us to faith, but not all believers will rule and reign with Him in heavenly places. Like the stars of heaven, there are differing levels of glory in God's celestial kingdom:

"There are bodies celestial as well as bodies terrestrial. But a different glory, indeed, is that of the celestial, yet a different that of the terrestrial, another glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for star is excellent star in glory. Thus also is the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:40-42).

Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 4:8 of a wreath of righteousness that will be paid him:

"I have contended the ideal contest. I have finished my career. I have kept the faith. Furthermore, there is reserved for me the wreath of righteousness, which the Lord will be paying to me in that day; yet not to me only, but also to all who love His advent" (2 Tim. 4:8).

Whatever Paul is talking about here, it cannot be salvation. Salvation is not paid to anyone; it is the gracious gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). We are saved completely apart from our acts (2 Tim. 1:9). And yet here in 2 Tim. 4:8, note Paul's active verbs and the use of the personal pronoun "I":

- I have contended the ideal contest
- I have finished my career
- I have kept the faith
- I love His advent (not stated, but implied)

This is not a teaching on human free will. Just as God graciously gives some human beings the faith to believe the gospel, thus also He gives

some believers the energy and the desire to do God's work. This energy and desire is just as much a gift as salvation (Paul himself says in 1 Cor. 4:7, "What do you have that you did not receive?"), yet it is presented as something to be striven for.

In the above 2 Timothy passage, Paul considers himself in contention for this high calling. In 1 Cor. 9:24-27, he calls it a race:

"Are you not aware that those racing in a stadium are, indeed, all racing, yet one is obtaining the prize? Thus be racing that you may be grasping it."

Again, the "prize" of this context is not salvation, but rather ruling and reigning with Christ. 2 Timothy 2:11-13 distinguishes between basic salvation and reigning:

"Faithful is the saying: 'For if we died together, we shall be living together also; if we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also; if we are disowning, He also will be disowning us; if we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful—He cannot disown Himself.'"

The "dying together" and "living together" of the above passage is general salvation; we all have that on the basis of the death of Christ. Romans 6:8 says: "Now if we died together with Christ, we believe that we shall be living together with Him also." Our acts have nothing to do with this; endurance is not a prerequisite for salvation. However, only those who endure in the Christ life will reign. Endurance entails a measure of suffering for the faith. If we disown a life of suffering for Christ, then He will disown us *for reigning*, not for salvation. That He cannot disown us for salvation is the thrust of the last statement, "He cannot disown Himself."

What does ruling and reigning with Christ entail? I wish I knew. But I have a feeling that if I don't love, contend, endure, keep, and finish in this life, I will take one look at the wonders of heaven with my resurrected eyes, and I will want to kick my resurrected ass. ■

LOVE, CONTEND, ENDURE, KEEP, FINISH—by the grace of God, this is what I intend on doing.

Reliable evidence of the power of God

FORGET CHRISTIAN TELEVISION;
YOU'VE GOT *REAL* POWER

We all want the power of God. If you watch Christian television (God help you), it is possible that you have the wrong idea about how God's power is manifested. You may come to believe that the power of God has to do with feeling wonderful, clapping your hands, raising your arms in praise and victory, or being divinely delivered from a migraine headache. These things may occur in the wake of divine activity, but divine activity has higher goals in mind. As Paul writes to the Colossians:

"Therefore we do not cease praying for you and requesting that you may be...growing in the realization of God; being endued with all power, in accord with the might of His glory, for all endurance and patience with joy; at the same time giving thanks to the Father, Who makes you competent for a part of the allotment of the saints, in light" (Col. 1:9-12).

What a statement: "Being endued with all power." Wow. It makes one think that the next line will be: "...so that you may walk on water." Or, "...so that you may raise the dead." Or, "...so that you may be so happy that you will never have another bad day." But no. Paul wants the saints endued with all the power of God so that they might "endure with patience and joy."

We learned on the previous page that endurance is the one qualification for reigning with Christ—not works, not looks, not popularity, not wealth, and not even happiness, but rather: endurance with patience and joy. The miraculous part of this is the patience and joy. Friends, it takes **ALL THE POWER OF GOD** to cause a person to not only suffer patiently, but to suffer with inner joy, knowing that it is this very endurance that makes them "competent for a part of the



allotment of the saints in light." Here's the really crazy part, from verse 12: *at the same time giving thanks to the Father for it.* It takes a spiritual giant to endure trials with patience and joy, and then to thank God for them. Is this you? Then congratulations; you possess all the power of God—and will never qualify for Christian television. ■

Fact! Got Power?

Jesus hanging on the cross *and still loving people* was one of the highest manifestations of GOD'S POWER. (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

Q&A

WHY DOESN'T GOD SPEAK?

Q: Why doesn't God speak to me? I pray to see Him or hear Him, but I don't. Is there something wrong with me?

A: There is nothing wrong with you. What parts of the Bible are you focusing on? If you are reading the Old Testament, or the four gospel accounts—or even the book of Acts—you might get the idea that God is in the business today of outward, obvious manifestations of His spirit. You know—stuff like this:



God operated that way at one time (delivering Israel from Egypt, for instance), but this is not His current method. Jesus said to Thomas, "Happy are those who have not seen, and yet believe." Our Lord was introducing here a new era of spiritual manifestation: FAITH. Nothing pleases God more than faith, and nothing encourages faith more than NOT seeing things. After all, that's what faith is: not seeing things (Heb. 11:1).

God speaks to you today through quiet manifestations of His power such as love, joy, peace, and patience; all the gifts of the spirit. He is also speaking through His Word. Are you worried that God is either ignoring you or not loving you? Read Romans, chapters 5-8 and call me in the morning! ■

Work of faith? Toil of love? *Hell yes!*

ARE YOU STILL EXPECTING CHRIST TO RETURN?; STILL WAITING?
STILL LOVING HIM? THEN YOU MUST BE REALLY, REALLY TIRED

"We are thanking God always concerning you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering your work of faith and toil of love and endurance of expectation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:2-3).



Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Or not. Whatever. I'll still be here.

Are you worried that you're not doing anything for Jesus? Stop being so hard on yourself. You are working your tail off in a world run by Satan, still getting up in the morning—probably on less than six hours of sleep—plagued each day by death, disease, wars, rumors of wars, and a ninety percent chance that fifty percent of your life sucks—and yet you *still* love Jesus, you're *still* waiting for Him, you're *still* confident that He'll do what He says. To Paul, this counts big time as work and toil for Christ. Paul thanks God for you—and so do I. So why not lie down for a while? You must be really, really tired. ■

Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



Anti-worry practice at Meijer



If you look up “worry” in the back of the Concordant Literal New Testament, you’ll find the Greek word *merimnao*. This is a lovely little two-part Greek word: *meri* means PART, and *mmao* means REMIND. To worry, therefore, is to be reminded of many parts. Think of a grocery list. Grocery shopping with a list is not

ordinarily an excursion of pleasure. You must constantly scrutinize your list, often with a pencil in hand to scratch each item as you cart it.

“Instead of enjoying these moments, you analyze all the little parts of them.”

Isn’t worry somewhat like this? With worry, you miss so many potentially beautiful moments. Instead of enjoying these moments, you analyze all the little parts of them. Is the moment too much? Is it too little? Will you get the moment right? Can you afford what the moment offers, or will

you be caught short? What about all the *other* moments that might be better or worse than this one?

To help cure yourself of such troublesome analysis, start at the grocery store; my store of choice for this exercise is Meijer. Now, Meijer is classier than Wal-Mart, and classier generally equals costlier—except to the person who wisely leaves his wallet in his car.

Early Saturday morning is the best time for anti-worry practice at Meijer.

It’s as simple as this: I peruse the aisles and appreciate the amazing array of stuff. The key to this exercise, of course, is the lack of a list; there is not a single PART-REMIND on my person.

What joy lies (do you know of it, dear reader?) in the symmetrical beauty of rows of rows of Cheez Whiz. Enhancing the experience is the deliverance from comparing it to generic brands of cheese product, or analyzing the fat content of the Whiz, or digging inside one’s jacket pocket for the Cheez Whiz coupon.

This is only the beginning. By the time my excursion is finished, I have regaled myself with visions of car mats, cat snacks, pomegranates, pretzels, beer, wine, kitchen knives, bath towels, mirrors, posters, jeans, onions, widescreen televisions, and the latest in women’s footwear.

“For nothing do we carry into this world, and it is evident that neither can we carry anything out” (1 Tim. 6:7).

Perhaps this is the key to a worry-free life: carrying nothing out of moments except the moments themselves. And if we are honest with ourselves, these moments are quite enough. ■

“Sabbath” means cease, not rest

Did God need a multi-vitamin?

Genesis 2:2 in the common versions says: “And by the seventh day, God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day.” The Concordant Version says, “And *ceasing* is He on the seventh day, from all His work.” I’m glad that “sabbath” means cease, not rest. It is first of all nice to know that God doesn’t get tired; He didn’t run out of gas creating stuff and then have to sit

down for a blow. I thought highly of God before, when I pictured Him huffing and puffing, but now I’m *really* impressed to know that God just shrugged after the sixth day and said, “Well, there’s nothing more to create, so why keep doing it?”

When we’re convinced we’re not doing enough for God, we rest to gear up for more—and then have the audacity to call it a Sabbath. Why don’t we execute a *real* Sabbath—and stop trying to impress God altogether. ■

