

Column

From time to time I hear people say such things as, “I am not going to worry about all the bad stuff going on in the world. I am going to let God sort it out.”

Well, such a sentiment is understandable, especially in light of all the political shenanigans going on in Washington. It’s very dismal to see the country so divided and to witness the demise of civil discourse.

“Letting God sort things out” – at least on the surface – sounds very pious. A biblical precedent seems to exist. After all, does not the Bible command us to “wait on the Lord”?

Even so, I believe such a sentiment – at least carried to the extreme -- is wrong-headed. The problem with that approach is that Scripture not only teaches us to wait on the Lord but also to fight the good fight of faith . . . to trust and obey.

In the Old Testament, for example, the children of Israel on their way out of Egypt found themselves in the uncomfortable positions of having the pursuing Egyptians behind them and the Red Sea before them. In this situation, Moses’ instruction was to wait on the Lord and see what He would do, but the story does not end with them waiting. Once God had rolled back the waters of the Red Sea, they were to go. It would have been very foolish if they had just stood there waiting for God to carry them over.

What I am trying to say is ultimately the Kingdom – the reign of God – comes through the direct action of God – and not through our own unaided human efforts – but this does not preclude Christians working in the present for and in anticipation of that Kingdom.

One way of thinking about it might be to imagining a brick house under construction. We don’t build this house: the Master Mason does. Even so, we can and ought to be gathering bricks to be used in this house.

In other words, what we do in the present counts and will not be lost in eternity. This is the point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15:58 when he writes: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovedable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

More than that, often we don't have to wait for eternity to discover that our efforts in the present are not in vain. For example, 200 years ago William Wilberforce mounted a campaign that ended the Atlantic slave trade. He did not have to wait for God come and sort things out. He was God's man for the hour.

So, one or more persons can make a difference. Edmund Burke perhaps said it best: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."

Almighty God, who hast created man in thine own image; Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression; and that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations, to the glory of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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