

God's Expectations

Jack Elder

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When I was given this speaking assignment to do on April 24, somehow that date rang a bell with me. I got to thinking about it, so I looked it up and it was this exact date in 2006 when I retired. It fell on a Monday that year. It was either that exact date that I retired on or during the week of the 24th—I can't remember exactly. I worked at a nuclear power plant—one of the only surviving ones in the Pacific Northwest—Columbia Generating Station at Hanford. It was a power plant, but we produced electricity, not bombs. It was run by a corporation. They have to have a board of directors and some of those are State employees—it's a big corporation. All corporations have their buzz words and one of the buzz words that came along for us was "expectations".

At one point at that plant, we had 1800 employees. But they later downsized; that was another buzz word, "downsized". They downsized so they could "right size" the organization. You can't make this stuff up, about how all these buzz words came along. They reduced the corporation down to 1200 people. As corporations go, it was very hierarchical and it had tiers of managers in all the departments. In fact, we had one CEO and five VP's. You have to think about that for a second because the U.S. has one President and one VP. As employees, we kidded each other that they were just insulation for the "big guy" and that was what they were for. The point being that all the employees who worked there had these layers of "expectations" which began to descend on us. We used to joke that all of us had "cascading waves of expectations" and "shifting priorities". We had individual expectations, we had supervisor expectations, we had corporate expectations, we had individual department managers and on and on this went. If you fell short of any of those "expectations", this would come up in your quarterly appraisal and would affect your salary. It became a very real thing.

As worrisome as those things were, if you were an employee there, obviously you agreed to work with the corporation and you complied with them. Just using that idea of "expectations", as God's people, He has "expectations" for us too. Today I am going to try and address some of those. Specifically, God's "expectations" for all of us and what He expects of us. You can put it that way.

I think all of us realize that, as adults, we have multiple expectations. We usually refer to them as responsibilities—the way we conduct ourselves, our behaviors and all of that. In whatever form, they are expectations that we have to meet in life; that's just a fact. I ran across this story which illustrates this whole topic of expectations. This one has to do with unfair expectations, and as near as I can tell, it came from a church blog somewhere. It just popped up—whenever you choose a topic to talk on you Google. That's what I do anyway and anything can pop up. This came from a church blog and the article is [Ten Unfair Expectations of Pastor's Wives](#). The article goes on like this:

The Pastor's wife in many churches carry heavy burdens. Sometimes they are impossible expectations.

What are some of these unfair expectations? Here are the top ten imposed upon these ladies.

- 1. I'm expected to attend every function at church. One wife told us that church members resent it when she's seen doing anything outside the church.*
- 2. Many church members expect me to know everything that is happening in the church.*

In other words, they want to know all the business of the pastor, his wife and everyone in the church; the gossip grapevine.

3. We have several church members who feel free to complain to me about my husband. One of these ladies said she had several members come to her with eleven messages to give to her husband after a specific worship service.

Probably a sermon he had given or whatever.

5. I'm still amazed how many church members expect me to function as an employee of the church. Some expect the pastor's wife to lead music or play a piano or act as a student or a child director in some activity in the church.

6. Some of the members expect our children to be perfect and act perfect. One wife explained that she and her husband were new to a church when a church member confronted them about their misbehaving children. The outlandish sin of the kids was running in church after services.

We used to have deacons that controlled that—didn't they?

7. I am always supposed to be perfectly made up and dressed when I leave the house. One lady expressed her dismay to a pastor's wife who ran into a grocery store without makeup.

You can't make that stuff up either.

8. I have no freedom at our church to be anything but perfectly emotionally composed.

This story really got to me—this writer said on this blog.

A deacon chastised a pastor's wife for shedding tears at church four days after her dad had died.

One pasture's wife said.

9. I think some of our church members expect our family to take a vow of poverty. [One pasture's wife said.] She was specifically referring to the criticism she received for purchasing a six-year-old minivan after the birth of her third child.

10. So many church members expect me to be their best friend. Obviously, a pastor's wife can't be the best friend to everyone, so she disappoints and angers other people.

So that's just some of the comments and they are just unreasonable "expectations". He goes on to say:

More than other staff positions, the pastor, and his wife too, are naturally the focus of attention and of criticism.

Unfortunately, that is often true of almost any church. I know one person who considers ministers way down several notches below a politician. The writer of the article goes on to say:

By extension, the pastor's family becomes the focus of unfair and unreasonable expectation.

That's the end of the article. I'm just using it to illustrate the power that "expectations" can have on our lives and how they impact us, whether we are aware of them or even conscious of them at all. God also has His "expectations" for us as a caring, loving parent does for a child. God is our parent—He's our heavenly Father and He has these "expectations" for us. In fact, they are very high as we will see as we go along. None of these scriptures that I am going to use are very complicated scriptures. Hebrews 12 is closing out the proceeding faith chapter, how Christ endured and is now at the right hand of the Father's throne. In a sense He's leaving us an example of endurance. I like the NLT here in Hebrews 12:3.

Hebrews 12:3 *Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. (NLT)*

An example for us.

*4) After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.
5) And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children?^[a] He said, My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. (NLT)*

He's quoting Proverbs 3:11-12.

6) *For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.*"

7) *As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father?*

8) *If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.*

9) *Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?*

10) *For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. (NLT)*

As Christ did, showing the way for us. The point is, as God's children He has high expectations for all of His children. Even more so than human parents do for their own children. We can relate to this through our youngest son and his family; he's in the throes of raising two teenage girls. Actually, one is soon to be twenty-one and we get to experience vicariously their "ups and downs" because they have a lot of them. We raised six children ourselves, so we know a little bit about that.

So, what are God's "expectations"? What does He expect from us, His children? I have five points to cover.

1. God expects us to live by His Words.

That is clearly spelled out in Deuteronomy 8. Deuteronomy means "The Second Giving of the Law". It is a story transition point for the nation of Israel, which was going from wandering in the wilderness where many died, into a land which God had prepared for them. Moses is telling them that it is not just the blessing of the land they were going into; the most important thing was obedience to God. So that is what he addresses here. I'll use Young's Literal Translation which I like.

Deuteronomy 8:1 *All the command which I am commanding thee to-day ye observe to do, so that ye live, and have multiplied, and gone in, and possessed the land which Jehovah hath sworn to your fathers;*
2) *and thou hast remembered all the way which Jehovah thy God hath caused thee to go these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble thee to try thee, to know that which [is] in thy heart, whether thou dost keep His commands or not.*
3) *And He doth humble thee, and cause thee to hunger and doth cause thee to eat the manna (which thou hast not known, even thy fathers have not known), in order to cause thee to know that not by bread alone doth man live, but by every produce of the mouth of Jehovah man doth live. (YLT)*

That probably sounds familiar because it's quoted in the New Testament in Matthew 4. We know this is when Christ was being tempted by Satan. Again, this is from the Literal Translation. Most of the time it says almost the same thing the King James says.

Matthew 4:4 *But he answering said, 'It hath been written, not upon bread alone doth man live, but upon every word coming forth from the mouth of God.'* (YLT)

He is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. Also, in Luke's account in Luke 4:3 and 4, Christ is again being confronted by Satan and being tempted by him.

Luke 4:3 *and the Devil said to him, 'If Son thou art of God, speak to this stone that it may become bread.'*

4) *And Jesus answered him, saying, 'It hath been written, that, not on bread only shall man live, but on every saying of God.'* (YLT)

Deuteronomy 8:3 is a direct quote. In both of those, bread is mentioned—eating—God knows we have physical needs, He knows we need the nourishment but He sees way beyond this physical life. He knows and provides those spiritual needs for us. You have to ask yourself—the question raised in the sermonette—why does He want us to live by His Words? It's simple—we would never figure it out on our own. We would be born, live out our lives and die and return to the dust where we came from. But the Father and His Son both, want more for us than that; They have a much higher purpose for us. We would never see that without Them. We wouldn't have a clue. We would just exist and then not exist—simple as that.

In Psalm 8, David marveled at this same dilemma. It is a human dilemma, apart from God.

Do we just live?
Do we just carry out a physical life and that's it?
Is that all there is to it?

In Psalm 8, David asked God a question—he just talks to God. Psalm 8:3-4, again from the Literal Translation.

Psalm 8:3 *For I see Thy heavens, a work of Thy fingers, Moon and stars that Thou didst establish.*

4) *What [is] man that Thou rememberest him? The son of man that Thou inspectest him?* (YLT)

Considering the grand scope of the universe—and we can only get a glimpse of it—David asked Yehovah,

“Why do You care? Why do You even care for us?”

God is a loving Father and He wants the best for His children and He wants to be involved in every part of our lives—He just does. That is why He has these “expectations”. In the process of that He sets very high standards for us. Those standards are embodied in His Word. That's why He wants us to live by every Word that He gives us.

That brings up point 2. Matthew 5:48 from the Amplified just brings it out a little bit more.

Matthew 5:48 ... *you, therefore, will be perfect* [growing into spiritual maturity, both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], *as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (AMP)

That's a key point—in mind and character. Those are very high standards. He wants our ethics to be as high as they can possibly be. I have a book on Christian ethics and it's like an encyclopedia. The editors are obviously very educated and very much seminary educated. They actually discount entirely the Old Testament, yet use it as principle. So that statement in Matthew 5:48 has some value to it. Back in Leviticus 19 there is a similar statement about being holy, as Yehovah is holy.

Leviticus 19:1 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.*

2. God expects His children to be perfect.

You have to think about that for a minute; what does *perfect* mean? The sense in the Greek is “perfect in mental and moral character”. In other words, a person of very high integrity. It means as it is in the context of the so-called Beatitudes, God expects us to incorporate His standards into every part of our lives. This is what God expects from us in the way we think, the way we act, the way we conduct our lives. God sets the standards in everything we do. He does that in a similar fashion as a human father would.

In a way, I can relate that back to the way I was raised. My dad was a construction craftsman; he was a carpenter, a millwright and spent a good deal of time out of the home just going from construction project to construction project providing for his family. As I grew up, I grew up watching him, the way he conducted himself as a craftsman. Some other ways maybe not so morally, but as a craftsman. After my five-year stint in the Navy, I spent a couple years at a community college, following in my dad footsteps. After that couple of years in community college, I came out of there and got put to work right out of school. I never had a day's break. If anybody is looking for a career, those skills they teach in the bow tech side of community college are very valuable.

At some point during all this time as I'm growing up, I matured and realized what my dad had done. He was a perfectionist in everything that he did. It was kind of amazing. He became an apprentice carpenter under a cabinet maker. I saw some of the cabinets that he would make. One time we built a cabin up in the Blue Mountains and another time he built a set of cabinets for a local church. He was just very good at that. He was a perfectionist at it. You can go down to a hardware store and buy ball bearings, drawer slides and everything—he didn't need those. He was wood on wood but it felt like ball bearings; he was just such a perfectionist. The point is, by default I tried to be that way

myself. In the construction industry or as a craftsman anywhere, you survive by your reputation. When I would go from job to job people who knew my dad before he retired, would always ask me, “Are you as good as your dad was?” It put me on the spot. I didn’t know if I could live up to my dad’s reputation or not. “I am just trying to do my job—just let me do it”. The point again is, do we live up to our heavenly Father’s standards, His “expectations”? Because He has a lot of them and they are very high. That’s a pretty tall order for all of us, to live up to God’s “expectations”. We can try that. His “expectations” are far above our carnal standards.

That word *perfect* in the Greek means a “change in thinking and a change in character” and that’s what we should all be striving for. It’s a lifelong process. It goes up and down. We will be doing good for a while and then we wane for a little and then pick right up and keep on going. The whole point is, our aspirations are always to be like our heavenly Father’s and we have His Son as an example—a very high calling. His standards are on a much higher plane than ours. Do you remember our carnal standards before we were called? I do. Isaiah 55 is a very familiar scripture. This should be a memory scripture for all of us. I’ll use the New Living Translation as it doesn’t change the intent of the words.

Isaiah 55:6 *Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near.*

7) *Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.*

8) *My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine.*

9) *For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts”. (NLT)*

God’s values are up on a very high plane and we are way down here on a low plane. Before conversion we were even further down. The difference between God’s standards, God’s ways and our ways are aptly described in Galatians 5—another very familiar scripture. Here is where our standards were and we are supposed to rise from this. Paul was correcting these Galatians pretty sharply—they had a lot of issues.

Galatians 5:16 *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

17) *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

18) *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (NKJV)*

Getting into context what he was discussing with these Galatians.

19) *Now the works of the flesh are evident [these were no doubt evident in our past to some degree or another], which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,*

20) *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,*
21) *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

Practice means “that you habitually do those things”. Hopefully at this point in our lives in conversion, we don’t practice the wrong things by doing them habitually.

22) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [a vast difference here]*
23) *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*
24) *And those who are Christ s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
25) *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (NKJV)*

This verse seems kind of out of place—verse 26.

26) *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (NKJV)*

It seems out of place but it has to do with the preceding context. They thought they had this one unique thing and they thought if they had that and if you look back in the context, it was the necessity of circumcision. That’s what new converts had to have—they had to be circumcised. They thought if they had this teaching just right, they were somehow pleasing to God and more righteous than everybody else. If you look back in the context—verse 15—it says:

15) *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (NKJV)*

In other words, not using God’s Holy Spirit and reverting back to the hatred, jealousy and all those things. That is what happened then and it happens in churches still. In regard to that second point, yes God has “expectations” for the way we conduct ourselves—very high “expectations”.

3. God expects us to be an example.

Matthew 5:13 *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*

14) *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

15) *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (NKJV)

We've all heard explanations about the two symbols—the salt and the light--I can recall hearing sermons and sermonettes about the qualities and characteristics of salt and light. The key here is that God expects us as His people to be visible people. Not go hide behind a rock and be reclusive. I've known people in the past who take some of the scriptures like those in James about "being unspotted from the world" and actually just isolate themselves. Go off and live in the mountains, taking it literally. Christ never intended us to do that at all. God expects us to function wherever we may find ourselves in this world—that's part of our calling. He doesn't call us *out* of the world, He calls us to be not *of* the world. Matthew 17 is often read as part of the Passover service.

John 17:6 *I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. [Christ talking to His Father] They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

7) Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

8) For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

9) I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.

10) And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

11) Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You [nearing the end of His life] Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

12) While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition [talking about Judas], that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (NKJV)

Continuing in verse 14...

14) I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

15) I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (NKJV)

And God does give us that protection. Part of the prayer is to protect us from the evil one.

16) They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

17) Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

18) As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (NKJV)

That's where we live, that's where we function, that's where we operate. Continuing in... verse 20.

20) I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; (NKJV)

Not just His disciples then, but us too—today.

21) that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (NKJV)

So, in every sense, it's obvious to us when we read those words that God expects His people—the ecclesia—to be different from the world, the society and culture we live in. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul had to deal with a particular situation with the Corinthian church that illustrates this point. The context is the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Again, a very familiar scripture.

1 Corinthians 5:1 *I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother.*

2) you are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. (NLT)

Paul is scolding them for their casual acceptance of a blatant sin that was obviously well known. He told them they should be ashamed of themselves; they should be ashamed of the example that they were setting as a church.

3) Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man

4) in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. (NLT)

Actually, God the Father and Christ were very displeased with what they were doing—the conduct of the whole church at this point.

5) Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord^l returns. (NLT)

We know that later this particular individual repented. Paul also has to get after them over that.

6) Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? (NLT)

It's what happens when you do have a bad example. Sometimes it's from the ministry on down and that can affect the whole church.

7) *Get rid of the old yeast” by removing this wicked person from among you. [Stop this behavior is what he is telling them.] Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. (NLT)*

They were forgetting that.

8) *So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread^{of} of sincerity and truth.*

9) *When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin.*

10) *But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.*

11) *I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people. (NLT)*

We've been around people like that—it doesn't mean their behavior rubs off on us. Again, Paul is reminding them not to be in the world—to be part of it, but not of it. We would rather be an example of God's standards—His values—not the world's. Unless we are oblivious, we never watch the news or know what's going on around us today in our culture. We used to hear a phrase like “situational awareness” but we don't even hear that anymore because pretty much anything goes. Any and every deviant behavior is acceptable. In fact, the more deviant the better. We'll even make a law protecting it; that's what society says—that's societies standards. We all know this. Let's continue in verse 11.

11) *I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer^{of} yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people. (NLT)*

I don't think any of us hang around in bars and those kinds of places. Not that you can't—for example, sometimes we go to a lounge or something in a hotel.

12) *It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. (NLT)*

Obvious sins that we can see.

13) *God will judge those on the outside; [we know from 2 Peter 4:17 that He is judging the church now] but as the Scriptures say, You must remove the evil person from among you.” (NLT)*

That is also in Deuteronomy 17:7. The point is—Paul's point—don't set a bad example as a church or as an individual. God expects us to be good examples.

4. He expects us to be an overcomer.

I've heard whole sermons in the past about being an overcomer, overcoming.

1 John 5:1 *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.* (NKJV)

That is the brethren for each other—love one another, care for one another.

2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (NKJV)

God's standards are not burdensome, when we compare them to the standards of the world. There's the burden. There is also death.

4) For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

5) Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (NKJV)

The thing to look at here are the two words, *overcome* and *the world*. *Overcome* in the Greek means "to prevail, the conquered, to overcome, to get the victory over something, to win over something". *The world* is the Greek *cosmos*—we've heard that many times. "It's inclusive of everything in the present world. It's inhabitance and figuratively about its morals—the morality of the world around us". That's what Paul is talking about and that's what we've been talking about. Once again, God expects our conduct and behavior to be different from the world. The one we find ourselves in, in any given generation, and ours is right now. Not a very good one at that but this is where we find ourselves. What God expects and what He looks for us to do is to use His Holy Spirit to win the victory—to be victorious. It says in another place to be conquerors of all that ungodly influence that we have confronting us each and every day.

Paul describes the world he lived in his time as being engaged in a kind of warfare. He recognized the conflict between his carnal nature and God's Holy Spirit operating in his mind. He saw it as a literal battle, albeit it was a spiritual one, it was a battle nonetheless and it was constant. In Romans 7:7—just to break in on it—Paul used an illustration here.

Romans 7:7 *Well then, am I suggesting that the law of God is sinful? Of course not! In fact, it was the law that showed me my sin. I would never have known that coveting is wrong if the law had not said, You must not covet."* (NLT)

That is a purpose of the law—to show us what sin is. We need God’s Holy Spirit to recognize that.

8) But sin used this command to arouse all kinds of covetous desires within me! If there were no law, sin would not have that power.

9) At one time I lived without understanding the law. But when I learned the command not to covet, for instance, the power of sin came to life ... (NLT)

He recognized it.

10) and I died. So, I discovered that the law’s commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead.

11) Sin took advantage of those commands and deceived me; it used the commands to kill me. (NLT)

In other words, he recognized his guilt.

12) But still, the law itself is holy, and its commands are holy and right and good.

13) But how can that be? Did the law, which is good, cause my death? Of course not! Sin used what was good to bring about my condemnation to death. So, we can see how terrible sin really is. It uses God’s good commands for its own evil purposes.

14) So, the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.

15) I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate.

16) But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good.

17) So, I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. (NLT)

Actually, it’s carnal nature he recognizes.

18) And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. (NLT)

Not by ourselves.

19) I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.

20) But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

21) I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. (NLT)

What Paul is really describing is the conversion process. It’s a continual struggle.

22) *I love God's law with all my heart.*

23) *But there is another power within me that is at war [if you look that up in the Greek it means "under attack".] with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. (NLT)*

Carnality, if it's out of control.

24) *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?*

25) *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So, you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. (NLT)*

That's just Paul's explanation of the daily struggle we all face. Overcoming his own human nature and the entire world under Satan's way which counters the influence of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. It's a constant battle.

We could come up with an analogy—you might come up with a different one to the one I did, to try to describe what Paul was trying to explain here. If we can imagine ourselves as a commander on the battlefield. This commander has a mutiny going on in the ranks and he also has incoming, coming from the enemy, so he's caught in between. In a situation like that, apart from God, our chance of winning is zero to none. We just don't have any chance. Paul continues those thoughts in chapter 8, again from the New Living, verse 35. He knew his problem and he knew the solution. If we leave God out of our lives, if we leave God out of the picture—we all know this—we don't stand a chance. We can't overcome these things under our own power or steam, it just doesn't work.

Romans 8:35 *Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?*

36) *(As the Scriptures say, For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.) (NLT)*

He's quoting Psalm 44:22.

37) *No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory [that's one of the meanings of the word, to overcome. In fact, the New King James says, "in all these things we are more than conquerors"] is ours through Christ, who loved us.*

38) *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[p] neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell [New Living term] can separate us from God's love.*

39) *No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NLT)*

With God's help, He expects us to be overcomers. I don't know if you have ever noticed or not, Christ always pointed to the Father and the apostles always pointed to Christ because He was the link.

Point five is in the form of a question.

5. Why do we want to meet God's expectations?

The answer is very simple; we want to give honor and glory to the Father and Christ. That's why we want to meet God's "expectations". If you look up that word *glory* in the Greek and Hebrew, for *glory*, depending on the context it means "honor, praise"—we praise God with our hymns; that's one way of honoring God—it can mean "worship, majesty, splendor, brilliance, dignity, reverence"—it can mean all those things. It's fairly easy to see how it's used in the context. We do that to honor and to glorify God. That's why we want to meet His "expectations". This section of 1Corinthians 10 in my Bible says, "Do all for the glory of God".

1 Corinthians 10:23 *You say, I am allowed to do anything—but not everything is good for you. You say, I am allowed to do anything* [the context here is meat offered to idols; we've heard that expounded before]—*but not everything is beneficial.*

24) *Don't be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.*

25) *So you may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience.*

26) [He quotes Psalm 24:1] *For the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.*

27) *If someone who isn't a believer asks you home for dinner, accept the invitation if you want to. Eat whatever is offered to you [doesn't say even if it's pork, we've heard that explained before] without raising questions of conscience.*

28) *(But suppose someone tells you, This meat was offered to an idol." Don't eat it, out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you.*

29) *It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.) For why should my freedom be limited by what someone else thinks?*

30) *If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, why should I be condemned for eating it? (NLT)*

Well, for conscience's sake. Just reading this verse [31] it struck me how profound this verse is.

31) *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (NLT)*

The whole point in why we do something—for the glory of God; whatever you do. If we just let that one statement define the spirituality of our life—do whatever we do to honor and glorify God—what could we achieve with that if we did everything to the glory of God? It wouldn't be near the world it is today; it wouldn't be at all.

32) *Don't give offense to Jews or Gentiles or the church of God.* (NLT)

What he is saying is don't give offense because we want to honor and glorify God. When you think about that whole concept of doing everything we do to the glory of God, you have to think about how rare it is that we see that.

33) *I, too, try to please everyone in everything I do. I don't just do what is best for me; I do what is best for others so that many may be saved.* (NLT)

I see Paul's approach—the sense of his approach—as far as people are concerned, he wanted the same thing for people that God did. He wanted to glorify God. With God, everybody counts or nobody does. That was Paul's approach. When I sat down to make this list of what God expects from us, I pretty quickly had a page and a half. You can see I've only scratched the surface here. It's compared to a drop in the ocean. God expects so much from us. Maybe you can make your own list; it's going to be a long list and take some time. Think of those things, considering all of them, meditating on all of them—that is a never-ending process for a lifetime.

There's a parable that Christ gave that comes to mind in Luke 12 beginning verse 35.

Luke 12:35 *Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks.* (NLT)

I hope we all understand who the master and the servant are here.

37) *The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat!*

38) *He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready.*

39) *Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would not permit his house to be broken into.* (NLT)

That might be a reference to Exodus 22 where it talks about protecting one's home.

40) *You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected."*

41) *Peter asked, "Lord, is that illustration just for us or for everyone?"*

42) *And the Lord replied, "A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them.*

43) *If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward".* (NLT)

Lives up to God's standard and does a good job.

44) I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.

45) But what if the servant thinks, "My master won't be back for a while", and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? (NLT)

"Doesn't really matter how I conduct myself"—that kind of an attitude; "I have time".

46) The master will return unannounced and unexpected, and he will cut the servant in pieces and banish him with the unfaithful.

47) And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn't prepared and doesn't carry out those instructions, will be severely punished.

48) But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required. (NLT)

God expects much from His children, from all of us and that's exactly where we are brethren. We have been given much; a calling, a promise, a hope of eternal life, a future beyond our wildest dreams. That's what we've been given and as part of that, God has "expectations" for His children; for all of us at any time.

Just to summarize a few things we have covered and again, it's so minuscule, but I had to start somewhere.

- God expects us to live by His Words.
- God expects us to be perfect—to aspire to that perfection and to be looking to God for that.
- To be an example. (That's a hard one, but that's what God expects of us.)
- And to be an overcomer.
- The last one we had was, why do we want to meet God's "expectations"?

That was the last point—and the answer was to give honor and glory to the Father and to Christ—A very simple answer.

God's "expectations" for us in this life are very, very high. That's because He is a loving heavenly Father and He wants to prepare all of His children for the life to come.