

The Way to Please God

by James Smith

To please God, one must receive right views of him, be reconciled to him, exercise filial confidence in him, keep their eye directed to him in all things, and aim at his glory in all things.

Scripture: Proverbs 16:7, Romans 8:8, 1 Corinthians 7:32, 2 Corinthians 5:9, Philippians 2:13, Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 13:16, 1 John 3:22

Topics: "Pleasing God", "Christian Living"

Description

James Smith preaches on the importance of living a life that pleases the Lord, emphasizing the need to detach from worldly desires and focus on seeking to please God above all else. He highlights key principles such as having right views of God, being reconciled to Him through Christ, exercising filial confidence, keeping our eyes on Him, and cheerfully acquiescing to His will. Smith also stresses the significance of honoring Jesus, striving against sin, being zealous for God's cause, avoiding what displeases Him, and aiming at His glory in all aspects of life.

Transcript

"How he may please the Lord." 1 Corinthians 7:32

The Apostle, in replying to several questions which were sent him by the church at Corinth, teaches us that we should live detached from the world, holding all the things of time with a very loose hand. We are only here on earth for a time, and it may be a very short time; therefore the pleasures or pains, the acquirements or losses of the present world--will not affect us long. We should pass through the world as those who are not of it, keeping ourselves distinct from it. Influenced by other principles, walking by another rule--we should aim at another end in all we do.

The one end of the unmarried person, according to the Apostle, was to please God; and this is the great end for us all to keep in view. Nothing is worth a moment's consideration in comparison with this, "How I may please the Lord?" The Lord who created me by his power, redeemed me by his blood, sanctified me by his grace--and promises that I shall dwell with him in glory forever. Be this our subject, then, for a little season, and let us ask, "How may we please the Lord?"

1. If we would please God--we must receive right views of him into our minds. We must conceive of him as lovely. He has given us such a revelation of his nature, attributes, and perfections in his Word, and in the person of his Son--as will, if received into the mind and heartily believed, incline our hearts to seek to

please him. Here he is represented as infinitely loving--and inflexibly just. The former inspires us with confidence--the latter fills us with reverence. Because he is love--I shall not slavishly fear him; and because he is inflexibly just--I shall not attempt to take undue liberties with him. Let us study the character of God as revealed in Jesus, praying the Holy Spirit to unfold that character to us--and we shall love him--and as a natural consequence of our love, we shall seek to please him.

2. If we would please God--we must first be reconciled to him, and live at peace with him. This brings us to the cross of Christ. At the cross alone, can we be reconciled to God. Here it is that we see God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Here I hear God saying, "Sinner, I want you to be reconciled to me, I will pardon all your sins, I will forget all your transgressions, I will treat you as a friend--if you do but surrender yourself to me. I only ask your confidence and your love. I have given my Son to suffer, bleed, and die in your stead; and now I am prepared to place to your account the merit of all he has done and suffered."

This subdues the heart, destroys the enmity, produces repentance, begets confidence, and draws forth love. Reconciliation is effected. The soul is at peace with God, and the way to maintain peace, is to have constant dealings with the blood of Christ. We must view God--as the God of peace, and make it the one business of life to please him.

3. If we would please the Lord--we must exercise filial confidence in him. God wishes us to call him Father--and treat him as our Father. Nor will he be pleased with us except we do so. Hence he lovingly speaks to us, as if he were asking a great favor of us, and says, "Will you not from this time cry unto me, My Father--you are the guide of my youth." "Call me Father--treat me as your Father." Now, as the child has confidence in the father's wisdom, care, and kindness; just so should we. The child obeys his father without reasoning, and expects him to fulfill his Word without disputing; so should we. The testimony of Paul is striking, "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him."

4. If we would please the Lord--we must keep the eye directed to him in all things. We must act as under his eye--and act as those who must give account to him. If we lose sight of God--we shall be sure to displease him. In all our ways we must acknowledge him--and then he will direct our steps. We must look to him for wisdom and strength, for direction--and do everything as in his presence. As the eyes of a servant are unto the hands of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden are unto the hands of her mistress--so should our eyes be constantly up unto the Lord.

5. If we would please God--we must endeavor cheerfully to acquiesce in his will. His will is like his nature--and his nature like his law--holy, just and good. Now if God's will is holy, just, and good--then whatever God wills is holy, just, and good; and if whatever God wills is holy, just, and good--it is but reason that we should acquiesce in his will. The will of God is the law of the universe. The will of God not only rules the vast whole, but every, even the minutest part. He does according to his will in heaven, in earth, and on the seas! He wills to permit, or he wills to work, whatever takes place, and all with a view to the best interests of his people. Therefore, it ought to be our daily aim to bring our wills to acquiesce with his will. Nor shall we ever be happy until it is so. God is pleased when we heartily wish him to rule, and desire that in all things he should have his way; and while God is pleased--we are both happy and holy.

6. If we would please God--we must be clothed with humility. God resists the proud--but gives grace unto the humble. Foremost among the things that God hates--is a proud look. We please him, when humbled

under a sense of his goodness, and our own vileness--we receive everything from him with gratitude, and lay low at his feet, confessing our sins, and admiring his grace. A deep sense of our unworthiness, connected with steady confidence in God, and expectation of all promised blessings from God--is pleasing in his sight.

It is not humility to doubt, fear, and despond; these things more frequently spring from pride. True humility: believes--when God speaks, acts--when God bids, waits--when God commands, expects--when God promises, and stands silent--while God reproves. It yields to God, is silent before God, and always justifies God.

7. If we would please God--we must honor his beloved Son. "This," said Jesus, "is the will of him that sent me--that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him." To honor Jesus is to believe him, confide in him, imitate him, and worship him.

If I would please the Father--I must think highly of Jesus, speak well of Jesus, and act befittingly toward Jesus. I must look to him as my Prophet--to teach me, as my Priest--to atone for me, and as my King--to rule over me and in me. I must admit his claims, believe his doctrines, trust his promises, wear his robe of righteousness, rely on his atoning blood, practice his precepts, copy his example, and spread his fame. I must enthrone him in my affections, crown him in my songs, and prefer him in my heart of hearts. The more I honor Jesus, the more God is pleased with me, and the greater proof I have of the Holy Spirit dwelling within me.

8. If we would please God--we must watch and strive against inward sin. If sin has power in the heart--it will rule in the life. And if sin is not watched over, confessed before God, and daily pardoned by God--it will rule in our mortal bodies. God hates nothing--but sin. Nothing offends God--but sin. And no sin offends him--like the sin of his own children. If we indulge in any sin, we cannot please God, nor shall we be allowed to enjoy communion with God. But sin is always indulged--if it is not sought out, dragged to the cross, and exposed before God's throne. In vain do we talk of pleasing God--if we do not watch against our besetting sins, and strive to overcome them in strength derived from God. O for more tenderness of conscience, for more hatred to hidden sin, and for more jealous watchfulness over the evils that lurk in our hearts!

9. If we would please God--we must be zealous in his cause. God identifies himself with his cause on earth. His honor is involved in it. He glorifies himself by it. He requires us to view it--as he does, feel toward it--as he does, and act in it--as he does. He hates indifference and lukewarmness. He loves to see life, energy, determination, and zeal. How then can he be pleased with us--if we think more of our own interest than his? How then can he be pleased with us--if we do more for our own gratification--than for his glory? How then can he be pleased with us--if we are lively in the world, and indifferent in the church? How then can he be pleased with us--if we are zealous for gold--but careless about godliness? It cannot be! Phineas was commended, and received the promise of an everlasting covenant, because he was zealous for his God; and Laodicea was threatened and punished because it was lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold.

10. If we would please the Lord--we must carefully avoid what displeases him; especially, loving the present world. This caused the apostasy of Demas, and has ruined thousands besides. Therefore the apostle John wrote to the brethren, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man

loves the world--the love of the Father is not him."

And what is in the world? Wealth, honor, pleasure. Christians are not of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world. They are therefore called upon to come out of it, and be separate from it. They should be influenced by other principles, walk by other rules, and seek higher and holier ends. When we are on terms of friendship with the world, imbibing its spirit, adopting its maxims, and enjoying its pursuits--then we displease God, for "the friendship of the world is enmity with God; if any man is the friend of the world--he is the enemy of God."

So also, when we grieve the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Comforter is grieved whenever we indulge in any sin, encourage low thoughts of Christ, or lose sight of the great end of our vocation.

Once more, when we indulge in sloth and self-indulgence. How many are slothful now! How much self-indulgence prevails among professors now! How little mortifying of the flesh, putting off the old man, or being crucified with Christ, do we witness now! How many walk on the very margin of Christian liberty--and how many step over the boundary line! Yet it is said by the Apostle, "If you live after the flesh--you shall die; but if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body--you shall live!"

11. Finally, if we would please the Lord--we must in all things aim at his glory. For this purpose he created us at first, and for this purpose he redeemed us, at the expense of the life of his Son. Therefore he says to us, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits which are God's." And to show that this is to be carried out into all the circumstances of every day life, he says, "Wherefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do--do all to the glory of God." God's glory is therefore to be consulted in everything.

In the provisions of the table, in the active duties of life, in our dress, in our pleasures, down to the minutest particular, we should aim at God's glory. This is the way to be holy, and this is the way to be happy. How many evils would be avoided, how many dangers would be escaped, and how many temptations would be overcome--if we were in the habit of asking before we act, "Will this glorify God?" determined if it will not, to refuse to engage in it. Then, yes then, shall we please God, when every purpose is formed, every plan laid, every purchase made, and every engagement entered into, with a view to the glory of God.

Observe, God is easily pleased, if our spirit is filial. As the human parent is pleased with a mere trifle from a child, if it manifests an affectionate disposition, and a desire to please--just so is our heavenly Father. We cannot be happy, if the grace of God is in our hearts, unless our ways please God. This is impossible, because there will be no sweet communion, no refreshing communications, no cheering smiles, no witnessing of the Spirit in our hearts. The grand object to be pursued by us, is pleasing God. On this, our heart should be set. In this, should all our efforts tend. For this purpose, should everything be done.

If we have the inward consciousness that we are pleasing God--we need not fear anyone or anything. What can harm you--if you be followers of that which is good. When a man's ways please the Lord--he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Sweet must have been the satisfaction of Jesus when he testified to the Jews concerning the Father, "I do always those things that please him." Precious, also, was the testimony borne to Enoch before his translation, that "he pleased God." If God is pleased with me--let the world frown upon me, let Nature be convulsed around me, let the most terrible visitations be witnessed by me--my heart shall not fear--but with one of old will I say, "Therefore will we not fear though the earth is removed, and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea;" for if God is pleased with

me--it must be well with me, and well forever!

But no unconverted sinner can possibly please God; for it is written, "So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." No, there must first be faith in Christ, submission to the righteousness of God, reconciliation through the blood of the cross, and an entire surrender to a sovereign God. Regeneration is not only necessary to prepare and make us fit for heaven--but it is equally necessary to enable us to please God on earth. Reader, you must be born again, for if you are not, God is displeased with everything you do--and everything you say! Your very tears and prayers call for his righteous wrath. It is only by fleeing to Jesus and receiving Christ as God's free gift, that God will be pleased with you, listen to you, and richly bless you.

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