

# Pleasing God

by Jim Cymbala

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of discernment and living to please God, rather than trying to please men or seeking personal gain.*

**Duration:** 33:02

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:16

**Topics:** "Motivation"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not seeking personal gain or manipulating others in the name of Jesus. He warns against false preachers who claim that blessings can only be received by sending them money, calling it pure blasphemy. The preacher then shares his own experiences of facing opposition and mistreatment in Philippi, but boldly proclaiming the gospel with the help of God. He emphasizes that their preaching is not driven by error, impure motives, trickery, or flattery, but rather by a genuine desire to please God and serve others.

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## Transcript

So in the beginning of this year, we started a series together on the book of 1st Thessalonians. It's a letter. It's not a book, but we call it books of the Bible, books of the New Testament. The Apostle Paul had started a church there in northern Greece in Thessalonica. Everybody says Thessalonica, and that's how we get Thessalonians. He stayed there not long, had risked his life to preach the gospel, started a church. How he did these things we still don't know in such a short period of time, ordained leadership, then went on. Wondered how they were doing, sent Timothy to find out how they were doing as a young assistant. Timothy comes back, tells them good things for the most part, some doctrinal confusion. Which he's going to get to a little later on in that letter about the coming of Christ. But he also found out along with the good things that their faith was strong. He found out something that he kept finding out, almost everywhere he went, that after he left. Already back then, 2,000 years ago, there were religious con artists who came in after him. And did two things.

They tried to fleece the people of their money. Nothing's changed. Number two, they threw Paul under the bus and said nasty negative things about him. And we learn that even though Jesus didn't open his mouth. And that was for a reason to fulfill prophecy in the Old Testament. He, like a lamb led to slaughter, he didn't open his mouth. He said a few words to Pilate before he was crucified, but otherwise he didn't talk to King Herod and kept quiet. Some people have made that the basis of whenever someone says something

nasty, tells a lie, slanders you You should never say anything. Well, we find out that's not true When it affects the Christian church and people's faith You do speak up, not out of anger, not out of personal recrimination But out of the welfare of God's kingdom and the progress of the gospel But you do it by reasoning with people in a kind way, as he's going to do now Because Timothy came back and said you can't believe what these people have said who came after you They didn't start the church There's a whole brand of people who travel through the centuries if you study church history They go around and proselytize. They don't make new converts They just come in where there are converts and they try to Steal you over to following them, their personality, their charisma or they go after your money or they put down somebody else who really loves you and That's the way it goes.

What happened 2,000 years ago is still happening. They don't make converts They don't have that kind of blessing from God to lead people to Christ They just come in and spoil the crops and mess up everything and this was happening there So let's see how he defended himself. Now as I read this, you're gonna say Pastor Cimbala Why don't you just read this for yourself? Because this is really a picture of what ministers should never do But God put it in the New Testament so that you would not only Not only for ministers so that we could aim at something higher and better But it's a warning to all of us watch out for people who remember the the wolves come in what kind of clothing Yeah, so not everything that looks good is good not everything that looks legit is legit So, how do you know how can you discern? So there's some warnings here, right and this was happening already 2,000 years ago So it's a lesson to all of us.

Let's let's let's be careful let's have let's be wise as serpents harmless as doves as the scripture says let's be able to discern not be Hypercritical not be judgmental but at the same time let's understand there's difference between sheeps and wolves and We're also gonna see a principle in here that applies to all of us. So let's look at it. Shall we first? Thessalonians chapter 2, you know brothers and sisters that our visit to you was not without results We had previously suffered he's speaking about Philippi where he had been before Thrown in jail beat up and had been treated outrageously in Philippi as you know But with the help of our God we dared look at the boldness We dare to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition For the appeal we make now he's gonna go to five negatives things that he didn't do For the appeal we make does not spring from error number one or impure motives, too Nor are we trying to trick you three on the contrary We speak as though approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel We are not trying to please people but God who tests our hearts You know, we never use flattery Nor did we put on the mask to cover up greed five God is our witness We were not looking for praise from people not from you or for anyone else even though as apostles of Christ We could have asserted our authority and told you to help support us Which he's going to later go on and explain why he wouldn't take money from them And he worked with his own hands making tents, which was his trade every Jewish Person brought up under the law the parents had to teach them another trade.

They just couldn't be religious They had to know how to do something. So when push came to shove they could make a living the rabbis taught anyone who raises a child to study the law and be a rabbi, but doesn't have a trade is Violating the law. So Paul at night worked making tents so that he wouldn't be a burden to them So now how does he defend himself? He reasons with them.

He says as you know He's not talking smack. He's not making up stuff He's saying come on. I was there you were there you remember what we didn't do What didn't we do? These other guys are trying to bury him.

These other guys are trying to ingratiate themselves with the people in Thessalonica He only cares about their spiritual welfare Paul. These other people have bad things on their mind So Paul says this first of all the teaching we gave you was not based on error We didn't make up stuff. We didn't give you our dreams or stuff that just came in our head We did as he later told Timothy to do preach the word Somebody's dreams won't help you.

You need the Word of God. I need the Word of God Heaven and earth will pass away, but this word is never gonna pass away Every time you hear anyone speak starting with this person or anyone who's here or anyone you watch on TV You just question everything they say and say is that in the Bible no, no, but an angel told me I don't care what angel told you is that in the Bible how many are with me here say amen Because Paul says our teaching was based on the final authority of God's Word Truth is found in God's Word and when we leave it or a minister leaves it He's going into uncharted waters and we do not follow him You don't follow me if I start preaching something that's in not in the Bible It's best if you get up while I'm preaching and leave because obviously I've lost my senses And I'm gonna be used to hurt a lot of people. So you question everything you ever hear.

Is this in the Bible? I don't care where the guy said the Holy Ghost just told me this that is that in the Bible Did people do that in the Bible did people act like that in the Bible? But of course you won't be you and I won't be able to do that unless we know our Bible That's why you got to read your Bible every day. Look at me everyone. You have to read your word every day Line upon line precept upon precept you got to fill yourself with the Word of God How will you know the counterfeit if you don't know the real the reason there's such biblical illiteracy now That's why a lot of these con artists exist because the people don't know what a real minister looks like what Jesus did They just go by some kind of the good Lord or the man upstairs and they don't know the Bible So they're just pray for these vultures who come in and take advantage of them Paul said it was not based on error But we never Had wrong motives impure motives not meaning sexually impure The word there in the Greek is probably used we were not conniving at something underhanded to take advantage of you Number three he says and we never tried to trick you Back in that day.

There were traveling itinerant philosophers speakers rabbis Pseudo-christian speakers who would get up without a microphone, but they knew how to with speech trick people make arguments that were bogus, but you you had to be pretty smart to understand the error in that and They would appeal to whatever just to trick the people to take advantage of them Paul says we never tricked you. There's a lot of tricksters But we weren't one of them. We didn't use tricks on you We didn't try to get over on you.

How would we say it today? We didn't play you How many meet people they try to play you come on if you live in New York someone tries to play you every day Come on He said I we didn't use those tricks I'm studying a book right now about 19th century Christianity in America Some of the emphases that developed in this country as it was still growing before the Civil War antebellum after the Civil War postbellum and Some of the characters that were raised up to get people to follow them I mean the whole Mormon religion began when a guy Joseph Smith went up and Said an angel said, you know talked to him up in Upstate New York and he came out with this these writings and and all of this and a whole religion began think of all the Mormons There are it began with people listening to something that's not in the Bible. It was extra biblical Yeah, the Bible is okay, but now here's the whole truth listen when you have the Bible you have the whole truth Can I get a loud? Amen. Come on.

Let's say amen to that loud You can't add You can't add you can't add no matter what Joseph Smith said or some minister or the Pope or anyone else you cannot add or take away from the Word of God Paul said we also didn't use flattery. That's interesting We didn't use flattery one of the tools that these speakers who travel around to get money they would use flattery by buttering up the people and telling them what they wanted to hear or Holding back truth from them because they knew it would rub against them the wrong way. That's a very evil thing When you know the truth about sin judgment God Jesus Heaven hell the future that everyone listening to me today 1 billion years from now.

We're all going to be somewhere When you know Jesus said you must be born again not go to church not try to live a good life Not join the Brooklyn Tabernacle. You must be born again. You must have an Relationship with Jesus to hold that back because it might rub people the wrong way is a very evil thing It's a it's a kind of negated flattery Don't tell people something they don't want to hear By the way, if you have friends who never speak the truth to you That's not a true friend a true friend if you read Proverbs The the wounds of a friend are like oil that come because a true friend will say yo, you're off.

I Thought that was profound. Nobody said amen or anything No a true friend isn't always going yo, David You're the best and all that a true friend will take you aside and say you know what I heard I saw how you just did that that probably isn't the best thing you should do that wouldn't remind anyone of Jesus Hey, what do you mean? No, I'm a true friend. I have friends around the country pastors and my friends And I tell them anytime you see something here's something that you're not buying into you knock on my door others visit and preach here We have a relationship Anything you pick up you come and tell me because the first rule of life is you could be wrong Am I wrong or right here on that? Well, of course if you never could be wrong, then you're God and None of us are God One of the first things he says we didn't use flattery and finally we didn't put a mask on to cover up greed These are the five things he said We didn't trick you.

We didn't have bad motives. We didn't preach error. We didn't use flattery These are all the tools of people Who have ulterior motives other than glorifying Christ and helping the people of God and they're running all over the place Sure, I had a guy when I the church was first starting to grow he called me and he said hey listen He's fairly well known in certain circles.

Hey, yo, can I come to your church? I'll preach I Had heard of them and he said here's the way I work it You don't have to give me an honorarium I'll come and preach but I take the offering. Oh This is talking commonplace stuff here fans. This is what goes on many times behind the scenes.

I Take the offering I keep 80% you keep 20. No one knows But his offering was going to take 40 minutes He was gonna preach for 15 Aren't you from Brooklyn aren't you from New York? Don't you watch TV? Send in \$177 Seven is the number of completion and Paul says we didn't put on notice when people are gonna lift your money They don't tell you. Hey, I'm a crook.

I'm gonna take your money now He says we didn't put on a mask to cover up greed If not, I didn't want your money. I wanted you look at me everyone Paul's feeling was like this I don't want your money. I want your welfare.

I want you to know God. I want you to grow I want you to love me like I love you. I don't care about your money.

I'll work making tents I'll find another way, but I'm after you. I'm not after what you have What an example to everyone who's in the ministry, right? Just think of that and the day we live in It's one minister well known on TV If you want to book him, it's public knowledge if you want to book him he you can have him But you have to pay him a hundred thousand and fly him in a private plane. He's not flying even first-class Yo, he's not flying first-class You send a plane.

It's like that Sounded a lot like Jesus, didn't it? Or the Apostle Paul So this isn't to denigrate anyone. This is to say heads up Heads up don't be deceived, you know warning caution signs Paul was just the opposite. He wasn't interested in those things and then he says something which I want to close with as he says that's not what the minister should look like and that's what we shouldn't look like as Christians you shouldn't use flattery to get on the good side of people because you want something from them Flatterers are very dangerous people When someone flatters you flatters you and flatters you Look for your wallet.

Just hold on to that baby right there right Like why are you saying all that stuff? He said he claims I didn't use flattery. We should never be using people brothers and sisters. Look at me Let's help people Let's try to understand what they're going through and be a blessing to them.

Not what do you have? That I can use and then when you don't have it anymore. I don't have time for you When I was in the ministry about five years a well well-known guy He's still on TV poor soul and He told the minister friend of mine who told me he said you know what brother so-and-so says he said This is one of the first rules of his of his ministry never hang around anyone who can't help you Never be around anyone if they can't help you. Why are you wasting time? that really sounds like Jesus doesn't it who had friends like Simon the leper and Mary Magdalene and the others So we should never have it in us that we use people Christians who are filled with the love of God they're givers.

They're not takers You shouldn't be always looking for an angle and edge With people because that doesn't represent Jesus how many are with me say aloud amen better yet come on Let's put our hands together say yes to that Then he says the sentence we learned a little bit about the ministry What a challenge to me and others to all of us the things we should avoid and the things to watch out for I? Could review with you, but you all I I value as being really smart and discerning But for some of you are not just just remember when anyone is preaching about Jesus and mentions God I don't care what they say But you can't get your blessing unless you send the money that is wrong God gives blessings free I heard someone say I Heard someone say and it's just pure blasphemy in fact I yelled out as we were just watching a little bit my wife screamed turn it off if you send the 177 or whatever the con game is they're playing Once I get it then your daughter will come to Christ Now that's blasphemy That's basing God doing something on them getting money. That's what started the Protestant Reformation, right? John Tetzel and others were collecting indulgent Selling indulgences, and they would say the moment the coin hits the bottom of the pot All your loved ones who are being punished in purgatory, which is of course not in the Bible They'll all be released But the money has to get there first and Luther went wild when he heard that because he knew his Bible You don't buy people out of anything God is a good God if we ask we will receive He's rich in mercy to everyone who calls upon him ask and you shall receive Seek and you'll find knock and it will be open come to the prayer meeting on Tuesday night and see God will do things for You and I that we can't even dream about Did you hear me? You don't have to pay anything and you have to bring an offering on Tuesday You don't have to bring anything if you don't want to give it if you don't want to give to God keep it But God he's so full of mercy when you and I weren't looking for him. He already sent his son Why would I have to send money to somebody to have anything happen? Am I wrong or right

here? I saw this other one.

They're selling prayer shawls So listen send your whatever offering your seat, whatever It's just a total scam. So these are prayer shawls that have been worn by Jewish people for thousands of years when they pray I'm not Jewish and I don't need a shawl How many know you can call on God wherever you are in the subway lift your hand he's rich in mercy I don't need a shawl But then worse and this gets into black magic and that kind of thing Because as you put the shawl on there's an anointing with the shawl. There's no anointing with any physical object No object has power over us That's a principle of voodoo not of Christian faith You need to buy anything and how about people who are too poor to buy the shawl? So now that God has them at the disadvantage.

Yo, I'm not gonna answer you. You don't have your shawl, but I have no money tough How many are happy God is not like that. God is a good God.

God is a merciful God Then he says this. Why did I do all of that? Why didn't I do all those things? We'll find out next Sunday the things he did do that. He points to why didn't I do all of that? Why didn't I try to do that because he said what you have to understand is I'm not trying to please men I'm trying to please God Why didn't I do that? Oh, it might have made you happy.

But if God is unhappy, I'm in the soup I'm trying to please God not men What a principle what courage but let's apply it to ourselves See every one of us here when you wake up in the morning, you're trying to please someone that day. It's a given Nobody isn't trying to please anyone you can try to please yourself You can live to please others or you can live to please God But every one of us here and some of these interweave and we're not as single-minded as we ought to be But everybody here whether you believe in God don't believe in God I'm telling you I know this about you because it's true about me every day We're trying to please someone now most of us most people on the earth. Just try to please themselves whatever the urge is whatever the desire is whatever the lust of the eye or of the flesh or Whatever the pride show of life is I got to have that dress got to look good to people got to do it that way Hey, I'm not some scum here.

You know, I got to do it, right? All of that is a manifestation of something that denies Jesus because the whole reason he gave his life for us is Now that we would belong to him and we would live lives wanting to please him Paul says over and over again learn to live lives that are pleasing to God Make God happy. I can be happy. I can be unhappy when I'm living for myself if things work out It's like yo nice When things don't work out good, then I'm unhappy why because I wanted to please myself, but it didn't happen That means God can be pleased and made happy and God can be made sad by all of us obviously anything you do You plan to get married you plan to switch jobs.

You talk to someone at lunch. You plan a wedding whatever you do It can be pleasing to God or not pleasing to God Here's the crazy thing about life the more you live to please yourself the less you please yourself The more you aim at no, I got to have it my way. I want it the more you get it.

It's empty There's still this thing inside and the more you live to please God the happier you get inside and you weren't even trying to be happy But by living to please God who made us he automatically transfers joy and peace to us So the worst thing to do to get happy is try to be happy The best way to please yourself is to forget yourself. That's why Paul says I die daily To live to please me. That's the root of sin Jim symbol of pleasing himself.

That's the root of all sin Whether it's stealing lying immorality Gratifying my desires because yo, I'm the center of the universe That's to deny Christ to come to church and say you're a Christian and then live only to please yourself. It's it's a contradiction So there's no answer there Paul didn't live to please himself But then there's another trap you try to please people and here's the thing about pleasing people no matter how hard You try to please people you won't Even your family even your sister even your brother I Went to visit my mother yesterday She's such a trip. My mom's gonna be 102 in November So my brother's coming in town my older brother.

My dad's favorite was my younger sister My dad passed away. That was his favorite because he had two boys then this girl here was one a girl My mother's favorite was my brother. I don't blame her.

He was a model child. I was always getting in trouble He's six years older. He got A's in school I got M's and N's and O and P and all kinds of stuff like that and I Would kid her, you know, but I'm getting closer to her now because he's in the West Coast, but he's coming into town next week.

I Brought some food over to yesterday. I'm talking to her and I go mom. She's holding my hand She's kissing it and we're just I'm telling you how much I love her and I said mom your favorite son is coming into town And she's just chewing this thing.

I gave her and I said mom I said Bob's coming your favorite son and she turns she goes he doesn't think he's my favorite son. Does he I Said yeah, he does mom Everyone does everyone knows and she looked at me. She said good This is why I'm in therapy, I'm still getting counseling What are you gonna do? So if you try to please others, here's what happens.

It's a trap Read Proverbs Solomon looked at life He had more wisdom than anyone who ever lived except for Jesus and he said trying to please people is a trap It gets you into trouble to evil and it leaves you empty because the people you're trying to please they could turn on you in a New York second and Many people by the way, we dress everything the way we act the way we talk at the job at the office party We compromise what why do we compromise and we throw Jesus out? Why because we're trying to please others and we don't want them to go like yeah, what are you crazy? What are you Christian? Are you a holy roller? What are you a nut? So we play games No, don't live to please ourselves. Let's not do that He never pleased himself. You think the cross made him happy in the flesh the nails the crown of thorns You think he was pleasing himself? No, he's pleasing God for us And Paul says no, I don't live to please myself and I don't live to please Others because that's a trap.

Oh, is that a trap? I Wasted a good part of my college years I was there on a basketball scholarship and I was shaking and baking and all of that But oh what a compromiser I was because I wanted to fit in with the student body my peers What a total trap and what does it get you when you lay in bed at night or when you face death You think it'll matter what people thought of you? Won't matter a second. You know, it'll matter what God thought of you That you live to please him how many wanted to start today by God's grace I'm gonna want to live every day every conversation with a thought Does this make him happy and by the way, this does away with all rules all regulations all laws for the most part Look at me everyone. Listen I don't know if I should go to that club and and all of that and the you know They're hanging out and they say they're Christian.

Maybe I should hang out in that club. Well, you know what goes on in that club? Would that make Jesus happy if it would make Jesus happy and you could take him then go If it wouldn't make him happy then don't go you don't need a minister to tell you you don't need rules and regulations Would it make Jesus

happy to hear you tell that joke? That thing you're watching when no one's around would that make Jesus happy or is that making you happy in some sick way? That's all that's the rule Do anything you want just love Jesus and try to make him happy then do whatever you want Do whatever you want. Well, you can tell me this pass him but walk with your mom and spend two hours with her Well, what should I do? No, I know how you love her do whatever you want Because I'm never gonna hurt my mom.

No, you put a gun to my head. I'm not hurting my mom You take my life, but I'm not hurting my mom Not gonna talk rude to my mother not gonna tell her a lie Why? Because I want to make her happy just make God happy. Don't make yourself happy.

You'll never be happy Don't live to please people. They'll never be happy and they don't matter anyway Remember though you're kind to people we're nice to people don't be a bull in a china shop and be rude and nasty and Lemony and citrus and whatever and then blame it on I don't live to please people That's not what this verse is telling us Paul elsewhere says be kind to everyone be gentle with everyone But don't live to please them Live to please God close your eyes with me Jesus I thank you that you didn't come to please yourself But to lay down your life for us Give us that spirit Start with me Lord Take away everything that's not of you and my preaching my ministry Take it away from our church Make us a church that when people leave they say you know what? God's love is there those people are trying to please God There's so many voices Lord calling us the media the office pool the school Family culture We surrender ourselves to you fresh today We want to please you every word. We speak let those words make you happy whatever we look at Let it make you happy if that we're gonna look at something or go someplace that won't make you happy Holy Spirit come and give us a check just check us just Convict us whatever you have to do because we don't want to please ourselves or fit in with people Please then how can we say we belong to you? So Jesus do a new deep work in all of our hearts Help us never to use other people But to serve other people you took off your garments and you knelt Jesus and you washed the disciples feet including Judas Judas you washed his feet If people think they're getting over on us let them think they're getting over on us We just don't want to be takers.

We want to be givers Gentle kind Not using false flattery never putting a mask to cover up greed or self-serving We thank you Jesus. We belong to you today and your spirit lives within us now Let there be an explosion of your spirit in us. So people will see Jesus and not Jim Simbala He's no advertisement for anything But let them see you Jesus, please God.

I pray publicly in front of everyone. Let the world see Jesus in our lives We thank you for the family. You've given us the family of God Bless us and make us a blessing.

We pray in Jesus name everyone said Everybody stand up Every lady hug five ladies and say something good to them Something kind brothers. Come on. No handshakes.

Give a hug

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