

## Pleasing God



David Wilkerson September 24, 2012

The Bible says that when Jesus was baptized at the Jordan River, “the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of god descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved son, in whom i am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17).

Is it possible God could say the same thing today about his children? Does he ever look upon you or me and say, “Here is one in whom I am well pleased”? According to Scripture, it happened with Enoch: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death...for before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). None of us expects to be translated as Enoch was. But every Christian wants to hear our Lord say at the Judgment, “You lived a life that was pleasing to me.”

Christ said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). My heart is stirred as I read these words, and I wonder, “What are ‘those things’ Jesus is talking about? How do I do them?” As I ponder this, I remind myself his yoke is easy and his burden is light — so “those things” cannot bring a heavy yoke. Clearly, God enables us to please him out of his heart of love.

His Word clearly reveals the things that please him. All of these things are possible for any believer. Let me share with you a few:

Loving one another pleases God.

“Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (1 John 3:22-23).

It’s impossible to love others until you’re fully assured of God’s love for you. John writes, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (4:16). We simply can’t love others until this truth has been firmly established in us: “In spite of all my weaknesses and failures, God loves me.” If we’re convinced of God’s love for us, his love will flow out of us naturally.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (4:11). The love for our brother described here isn’t merely a handshake, hug or flattery. No, this kind of love means seeing our brother’s need and doing something about it. In fact, according to John, if we see our brother in need and don’t do anything about it, the love of God isn’t in us.

“Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (3:17-18). If you truly want to please God — if you want to experience his love for others — the Lord will open your eyes to needs.

Also, according to Scripture, if we hold a grudge against a brother or sister, we don’t possess God’s love. We have no right to witness in God’s name if we refuse to forgive someone else. Moreover, if we withhold forgiveness

from another, God withholds his forgiveness from us. So love isn't something just to talk about. It's a matter of doing, acting, living.

There is much talk in the church today about unity. But I don't believe we've yet understood unity as God sees it. Unity isn't merely an attitude of, "Let's all get together and put our arms around each other. We'll set aside our prejudices and pet doctrines, and we'll love one another." That isn't unity; it's just normal Christianity.

Unity means uniting yourself to the need of someone who's in distress, needing help. The Spirit of Christ unites us to others' needs in this way, causing us to cry, "Brother, sister, let me help. I want to stand with you, to be one with you in your trouble." This is pleasing to God, and when we do it he commands his blessings on us.

Selfish, self-centered Christians don't know this kind of love for others. Why? The gift of caring love is given only to those who seek it and pray for it. Once you start this way of giving and caring, God will send you one person after another in need. Yet it won't be a burden. On the contrary, it will thrill you, because you'll share in God's own joy.

Those who "hope in his mercy" please God.

"He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psalm 147:10). The references to horses and legs here represent dependence on the flesh. "A horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength" (Psalm 33:17).

God has no pleasure in those who try to appease him by striving in their flesh. Such people have deceived themselves. They think they can drive sin out of their hearts by inflicting suffering on themselves. But the flesh can never be brought under subjection by human power. It simply won't happen through fasting or promises or even seclusion on an isolated island.

I have a book in my library that tells countless stories of believers throughout history who tried to please God through their flesh. The author writes: "One certain monk lived for fifty years in a subterranean cave, trying to bring his body under subjection to the Spirit. Others buried themselves up to their necks in burning sand, hoping to 'burn out' their iniquities...All of these self-torturing methods were inflicted by monks trying to do away with the evil presence in them. They were trying to annihilate that part of them that lusted after sin."

Paul's teaching refutes all of this. He states, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Galatians 5:5). "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

Here is the Christian who pleases God: the one who trusts in his mercy. Praying, fasting and doing charitable works are all good things, and we're commanded to practice them. But the psalmist who speaks of placing trust in horses and flesh is saying, in essence, "First you have to believe the Lord is merciful toward you. Only then can you practice mercy toward others."

The saving of one lost soul is most pleasing to the Lord.

When we go out seeking lost souls and someone is won to Jesus, there is great joy in heaven. Christ gives this parable:

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together all his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost...likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:4-7).

I'm sure you know this parable. It's all about the shepherd's care for his sheep. If that shepherd loses just one of them, he goes after the lost sheep and doesn't give up until he finds it. Then, when he locates the sheep, he doesn't punish it. He gently picks up the bruised, bewildered animal and cradles it in his arms. Then he carries it back to the fold rejoicing.

Likewise, God's heart rejoices in the rescue of one lost soul, causing heaven to rejoice. That alone ought to be our motivation in winning souls: to bring joy and pleasure to the Lord.

It is time for the church to focus again on soul-winning.

Your own community is a field that is ready for harvest. All it takes is for you to go out. You wouldn't be reading this newsletter today if a skinny, 115-pound preacher from the country hadn't followed God's call to the streets of New York City. I was scared to death of cities. But God broke my heart over lost souls, and he directed me: "I want you to go to the gangs, addicts and prostitutes and minister my Word to them."

As I walked the streets of Brooklyn and Spanish Harlem, I prayed, "Lord, lead me to the lost." And God gave me divine appointments everywhere I went. I told everyone about Jesus, always praying, "Lord, send the Spirit to convict them and open their eyes."

I once found a young man standing under an elevated train, waiting for his drug pusher. I walked up to him and said, "Somebody's been praying for you." The boy just shook his head and said, "My 'hallelujah mother' sent you, didn't she?" I said, "No, I don't know your mother." He answered, "Every time I go to see her, she hounds me about Jesus. She's been praying for me for years. And now here you come."

That boy's name was Sonny Arguinzoni. God got hold of Sonny the same way he did with Nicky Cruz. One of my greatest joys in life came several years ago when I went to visit Sonny in California. I was his guest at a Christian gathering he was leading under a big tent with 15,000 converted drug addicts, alcoholics and prostitutes.

You see, when Sonny came to Jesus, his life became the Holy Spirit's. And the change that took place in him wasn't just about going to church every time the doors opened. No, he submitted himself to the Holy Ghost. And the Spirit led him out to where the hurting were.

All of this came about because of God's work in and through one scared, skinny country preacher. The Holy Ghost gave me a heart for the lost I couldn't have conjured up myself. If it weren't for his sustaining power, I never would have made it through all the trials and hardships our tiny ministry faced in those days. It had to be a work of God or we wouldn't have lasted.

Unless the Holy Ghost does the work, we can witness to as many people as we want and nothing will happen. No one comes to the Father except as they're drawn by the Spirit. Only the Holy Ghost can speak to the deepest reaches of the heart. And to win the lost to Jesus, we have to be on our knees, getting to know the Spirit's voice. He will lead us to the people he has singled out. And he'll give us the words to speak when we need them.

Dear saint, all of this is what's pleasing to the Lord. Indeed, of all "those things that please him" which Jesus mentioned, this is his supreme joy and pleasure: to see us come to him rejoicing, bringing with us our sheaves of harvest. Then we share in the joy of heaven as the entire host cries, "Hallelujah!"

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