

"Pleasing God"

Each day we're choosing what is important to us. Who are you pleasing? Who is important to you? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to explore the need to please God. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Scriptures teach us how to please God and to be good to our fellow man. Romans 12 verse 2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." Yes, the word of God is good. We should welcome the benefits it brings to our lives. If you want to be a better person, follow the perfect standard found in God's word. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Now each day we're choosing what matters and the direction of our lives. Some choose a broad path, while others choose the narrow way. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7 verses 13 to 14, "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it." Now the broad way is popular and easy. It attracts lots of people, but they may not know their destiny. The things that seem attractive and popular may be destructive.

Jesus urges us to choose the small gate and the narrow way that leads to life. The choice is whether to follow the crowd or to follow Jesus. Choose Jesus, because He alone can lead you to eternal life. The apostle Paul asked in Galatians 1 and verse 10, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." What are you choosing?

We offer today's study free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, then mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free at our website www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Corinthians 5 verses 6 to 9, and then we'll explore our need to please God.

Our reading today comes from 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verses 6 thru 9. "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." I hope that's your ambition too, to be pleasing to Him. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful for Your word that teaches us how to love you and how to serve You. Help us to be good servants and to love You always. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen!

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:28 to 29, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him."

Jesus lived to please His Father in heaven. He was entirely unselfish. He gave up everything to do the Father's will and to save mankind from sin.

Because our world leads us to be often self-centered, we find it hard to understand how anybody could devote himself totally to the will and pleasure of someone else. Many think that the only way to happiness is to be their own master and to serve no one. They think selfish ambition will lead them to greatness. They may even suppose the rules apply to everyone else, but not to them. The Lord Jesus, who has passed through the heavens, the King of kings and Lord of lords, however, chose to be a servant.

The Lord explained to his disciples in Matthew 20 verses 25 to 28, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. 'It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'" The Lord Jesus saw greatness not in possessions or power but in service and sacrifice.

So, we must ask ourselves, "how do we please God?" The Scriptures give us the answer. First, we must place our faith in God. Hebrews 11 verses 1 and 2 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it (that is by faith) the men of old gained approval." The blessing of God comes only to those who believe. Hebrews 11 and verse 6 says, "And 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 seek Him." You cannot expect to please God if you refuse to believe in Him or in what He teaches. Believing in God means believing what God says. You believe what He teaches and you're willing to obey His instructions.

Second, we cannot love sin and practice sin and still please God. 1 John 2 verses 15 to 17 says, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; and the one who does the will of God (but that person, is the one who will) live forever." Now each day we're choosing whether we're going to follow our passions and the love of this world or whether we're going to follow the Lord and love Him.

The world tells us that we may pursue whatever fleshly passion that we desire. But just because the world says something is okay doesn't mean God is pleased by it. Romans 8 verses 5 to 8 says, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it doesn't subject itself to the law of God, for it's not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." You can't continue following the pleasures of the flesh and think God won't mind. He knows your heart, and a mind set on the flesh cannot please God.

And so Paul urges us in Galatians 5 verses 16 and 17, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." When people follow the flesh and the world, they actually make themselves an enemy of God according to James 4 and verse 4. Following the world will do nothing but ruin your life and your soul. Galatians 5:24 says, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." My friend, do you follow Christ or do you follow your passions?

Third, we must love God more than others. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10 verses 37 to 39, that “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.” The Lord expects us to put Him first in all things, even before our loved ones. We may have a family member who challenges our devotion to Christ. Well we cannot let our love for anyone in our family lead us astray from God or from His teaching. If we let people come between God and ourselves, we’re not worthy of Christ. Though we are to love all people, even our enemies, we must love Christ even more.

John tells of some Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus but loved their friends more than they loved God. John 12:42 to 43 says, “Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.” You see they believed but were unwilling to confess it openly. They didn’t want to lose their status in the community. And so they feared the Pharisees more than God and loved their place in the community more than the approval of God.

Fourth, we must love Christ more than our heritage. Paul is the perfect example of someone who gave up everything in his past in order to follow Christ. You remember he said in Philippians 3 verses 4 to 8, that “If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me (he says), those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”

Paul left his place in Judaism to become a Christian. Oh he “was advancing in Judaism beyond many (he says) of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions” (Galatians 1 verse 14). But all that heritage, all of it couldn’t do what Christ could do for him. He wanted Christ! He wanted to be right with God! My friend, do you?

Fifth, we need to worship the Lord in the way that pleases Him, not ourselves. Worship by its very nature is a means of honoring, praising, and showing respect for the Person that we worship. We want God to be pleased with our sacrifices. Hebrews 13 verses 15 to 16 says, “Through Him (that is through Christ) then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” God wants His people to offer their hearts, their lips, and their lives in worship to Him.

God accepted the worship that Abel offered, but He refused to accept Cain or his sacrifices. Now Hebrews 11:4 explains, “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.” Now Abel’s gift was by faith, while Cain’s gifts lacked that quality. We need faith in God when we worship. And that means that we listen to His instructions, His commandments and do them. We don’t know all the differences between Cain and Abel, but we do know that Cain didn’t have the faith in God that he needed to please God.

Worshippers in Isaiah’s time thought they could live anyway they pleased and God would accept their prayers. We find these words in Isaiah 1 verses 15 to 17: he said “So when you spread out your

hands in prayer, (God says) I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen (why). Your hands are covered with blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow." You see their immoral and wicked lives made their worship unacceptable to God. Only when they repented would God hear their prayers and accept their worship.

Sixth, we must not let other interests interfere with our service to God. The apostle Paul told the young preacher Timothy, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, you entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (And then he says) No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier" (that's from 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 thru 4).

We can get so busy with our own lives that we forget our commitment to God. The Lord Jesus described how some hearts were like seed sown on thorny soil. You remember He said in Luke 8 and verse 14, that "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity." I tell you, you can hardly serve the Lord when you allow every wind that blows to come before Him, and His instructions, and the way He wants you to live, and going to church. Whenever you let other things interfere with your serving God, then you really can't please Him.

Seventh, God is pleased when His people obey Him. God told Saul to go and utterly destroy all the Amalekites and all of their livestock, but Saul failed to obey God. He brought back King Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen to offer up as sacrifices. Well, God regretted that He had made Saul king, because He turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commandments. Now Saul feared the people and forgot about God. Well whenever he was confronted, the prophet Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15 verse 22). My friend, obeying God means doing His will, pleasing Him, and serving Him the way that He instructs. Look at your life, look at your attitudes. Are you, are you pleasing to God? Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to humble our hearts in love toward You. And to serve You our great and matchless God of Heaven. And to serve Your son Jesus who died for us. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

2 Corinthians 5:6 to 9 says, "Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we're absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we're of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." What is your ambition? How badly do you want to be right with God? How badly do you want to be free from sin? How badly do you want to be "at home with the Lord"?

God wants you to come home to Him and live with Him forever. And He sent Jesus to the cross so you could be saved. God loves you and wants to forgive you. And that love and grace of God calls you to respond to Him in faith and love. Now love for God means that you'll see your sins differently than you did in years past. You'll wish you had never committed them and don't ever want to commit them again. It's that penitent, contrite heart that pleases God. You remember David said about God in Psalm 51 verses 16 and 17, "For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You're not pleased

with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.”

God wants to forgive you. Trust in Him, trust in His word, and repent of your sins and turn to the Lord, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. And when you're baptized, you can enjoy God's gift of forgiveness. You can be a child of God and an heir of heaven. Why wait even another day to get right with God? There's no better day than today to make your calling and election sure!

We hope that you'll make it your ambition to please God. If you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. You can catch this program on YouTube anytime! Just go to our channel "SearchTVMinistry." We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.