

# Pleasing God

March 10, 2013 ~ Hebrews 11.1-6

## Knowing God, Pleasing God and Serving God

1. Knowing God (*last week*) was 1-dimensional (*How can we better know God?*)
2. Serving God (*next week*) is 2-dimensional (*we serve God 1) directly & 2) via others*)
3. Pleasing God (*today*) is 3-dimensional (*we please God 1) directly & 2) via others*)
  - ✧ And third, God is pleased by what He does for us
    - ◇ We'll cover this last one plus how we directly please God
    - ◇ How God is pleased indirectly by us serving others is next week
  - ✧ We'll start with **v6** ~ it is jam packed with meaning . . .

## v6a ~ "But without faith it is impossible to please Him"

- ❖ The presence of faith is essential in pleasing God
  - ✧ We must come to God in faith for our action to have "+" meaning to God
  - ✧ Faith is defined in **v1** as
    - ◇ "the substance of things hoped for" ~ faith is the substance of a belief
    - ◇ "the evidence of things unseen" ~ faith is evidence of the unseen
    - ◇ Faith is "evidence of confident belief in the invisible God"

## v6b ~ " .. he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

- ❖ The faithful are confident in 1) God's existence and 2) His goodness (*willing to help*)
  - ✧ We know fools deny the existence of God: **Ps 14.1, Ps 53.1, Rom 1**
  - ✧ "Why do we choose to come to God?"

## God Himself Commands It ~ He Challenges Us to do so

- ❖ **Ps 50.15** "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me."
- ❖ **Ps 86.5** ".. You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You."
- ❖ **Ps 91.15** "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him."
- ❖ **Ps 145.18** "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth."

**Xition:** The unfaithful but desperate also recognize their need of Him . . .

## Prayers of the Unfaithful (but Desperate) ~ Foxhole Pleas

### ❖ Ill: “*O Brother, Where Art Thou?*”

✧ Three escaped convicts are about to be hung ~ Everett (*George Clooney*)

◇ **Everett**: “Oh Lord, please look down and recognize us poor sinners. Please Lord. I just want to see my daughters again. I know I’ve been guilty of pride & sharp dealing. I’m sorry that I turned my back on you. Forgive me. We’re helpless Lord. For .. sakes .. help us please.”

▪ Flood comes and washes them all away to freedom

◇ **Delmar**: “A miracle! It was a miracle!”

◇ **Everett**: “Delmar, don’t be ignorant. I told you they was flooding this valley.”

◇ **Delmar**: “No! That ain’t it!”

◇ **Pete**: “We prayed to God & he pitied us!”

◇ **Everett**: “Well, it never fails. Once again you two hayseeds are showin’ how much you want for intellect. There’s a perfectly scientific explanation for what just happened. ..”

❖ Ill: “*The Measure of a Man* ~ by *Sidney Poitier*” ~ drowning incident

❖ Such prayers do not please God because they lack faith

## “Do People Really Want to Please God?”

❖ Ill: Article “*The Pleasing and Displeasing of God* by *I Gordon*”

✧ “.. many in the world, in all religions, desire to please God, but their zeal and commitment are not accepted for they are not based upon the solid truth that God has revealed in His Word.”

◇ I disagree ~ most people want only to appease God (*even Christians*)

◇ Appeasement and pleasure are very different concepts

▪ appeasement is just the deflection of wrath or hostility, whereas

▪ pleasure by contrast involves love / a more intimate relationship

❖ Most of us probably don’t consciously attempt to please God

✧ We may do things that please Him ~ but more a side-effect than a goal

✧ Paul told Timothy this in **2 Tim 2.4** ~ “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

◇ This verse about broke Elizabeth Eliot’s heart ~ Jim wrote it in her yearbook

▪ “He displayed a maturity and godliness that she found very attractive.”

**Xition**: How can we please God? By our conduct and our character . . .

## Simple One First ~ “How can we please God by our conduct?”

- ❖ Prov 15.8 ~ “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.” (prayer)
  - ✧ This refers to animal sacrifices ~ but prayer (*dependence on God*) valued more
- ❖ Ps 69.30-31 ~ “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bull .. ”
  - ✧ Again animal sacrifices ~ Now praise and thanksgiving are better
- ❖ 1 Sam 15.22 ~ “Has the LORD as great 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.” (obedience)
- ❖ Hosea 6.6 ~ “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (knowing God better than sacrifice)
- ❖ Note that every good act is contrasted with animal sacrifice (*required by God*)
- ❖ Rom 12.1 ~ “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (self-sacrifice / surrender)
  - ✧ Paul enjoins sacrifice – but self-sacrifice (not animal)
  - ✧ Jesus saved us . . . But God calls us to sacrifice ourselves too (*as Jesus did*)
- ❖ There are more conducts pleasing to God ~ but self-sacrifice is the key to all

## Next ~ “How can we please God by our character?”

- ❖ Ps 51.16-17 ~ “You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise.” (humility)
- ❖ Ps 147.11a ~ “The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him”
- ❖ Ps 147.11b ~ “The lord takes pleasure in those .. who hope in His steadfast love”

## “What Does God do for us that Pleases Him?”

- ❖ We know it pleased God to bruise Christ on our behalf ~ but I’m thinking directly
- ❖ Eph 1.5 ~ “predestined us to adoption .. a/to the good pleasure of His will”
- ❖ 1 Cor 1.21b ~ “.. it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” (through foolishness of preaching)
- ❖ Phil 2.13 ~ “.. God .. works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

**Xition: Let's close with some observations about this text . . .**

**Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,  
To God our Savior, who alone is wise,  
Be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever.  
Amen \*pause\* Go in peace . . .**