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Introduction

I would like to begin this message with a question: “How many of you want to please God more than anything else?” Most Christians, if not all, would probably answer positively to this question. Now here is another question and I want you to think about this one: “How many of you really please God?” The number of affirmative answers to this question might not be as high as for the first one. This poses a major problem, because if this is a real desire of yours to please God and yet you do not really feel like you are pleasing God, this is a recipe for disaster. There will be condemnation, discouragement, hatred of yourself, all kinds of things, because your number one goal is to please God and yet you do not feel like you please God, and many believers are in that situation. We will try in this message to reconcile that conflict.

What Does Really Please God?



Hebrews 11:5 (NKJV)

⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken *he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

This is amazing. Do you know what this means? It means that Enoch was going around telling everybody that he pleased God. Do you realize how rare that is? If a Christian today dares to say that he/she pleases God, he/she will get a lot of criticism and people will get angry on him/her). They will say things like: “Who do you think you are? What are you saying about yourself?” Just imagine Enoch for a moment walking around with his “I PLEASE GOD” t-shirt on him, and the reactions he must have gotten from everybody, but he testified this: “I please God”. In the secular world, people do not receive that very well, but the worse response comes from Christians. If you were to wear a t-shirt that says “I PLEASE GOD” on it, I can almost guarantee you that religious people will jump on you and be at your throat immediately: “Who do you think you are? Don’t you realize that we all sinned and come short of the glory of God and there is none righteous, no not one? All of our righteousness is like filthy rags!” This is the way religion presented it and this is the mindset that religion placed in people. Still Enoch had this testimony. He was so close to God that one day God took him. Enoch did not see death, but he was translated straight to God (Genesis 5:21-24). The next verse in the same chapter of Hebrews 11 says this:

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)

⁶But *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.

So, faith is what pleases God. When I asked you at the beginning: “How many of you really please God?” I can guarantee what you were thinking: you have done something that you knew it was not right. It could be something outward, you could have sinned and done something against all standards, or it could have been something that you failed to do. Maybe you have not studied the Word and prayed, maybe you have not loved your spouse the way you know you were supposed to, or maybe you know you should have been tithing but you have not done it. Most people believe that God loves them based on their performance. If you did not answer positively and confidently to the second question above, that means you have a performance-based relationship with God; and because your performance is not perfect, you are not absolutely sure that God is pleased with you. However, this passage shows us that it is faith that pleases God, and not your holiness or your good deeds. I am referring here to believers in Christ. It is not your goodness. God loves you because He is love, not because you are lovely. Now that we’ve seen that it is faith that really pleases God beyond good deeds and holiness, let’s discover together what exactly should we believe in.

Faith in What?

Most believers have put their faith in Jesus for forgiveness of sins only to escape hell in the future life after death. Their faith is relevant only for the after-life. However, in this life as well here on earth, faith is the only thing that pleases God and I am not referring to the faith in the after-life. But Faith in what? In mainly two things.

You Are Free of Condemnation, Even If You Still Sin

The issue of condemnation comes into play only when someone sins. Otherwise, there would not even be a discussion about condemnation, because if believers do not sin anymore, there is no reason to have condemnation. When Romans 8:1 says that “there is therefore now no

condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" it refers exactly to people who still sin. Christians need to have faith (1) in the fact that once they were born again, they have become unblamable in the face of God even if they still do bad things; (2) in the fact that God's love for them does not fluctuate when they sin; (3) in the fact that God is no longer upset with them when they still sin; and finally (4) in the fact that fellowship with God is not interrupted with them from God's point of view even when they sin. God sent Jesus to deal with our sins and He dealt with our sins once and for all. Jesus paid for all of our sins: past, present, and future.

Jesus died for the sins of the entire world. 1 John 2:2 tells us the following:

1 John 2:2 (NKJV)

²And He Himself is the propitiation (*the atoning sacrifice*) for our sins, and not for ours only *but also for the whole world*.

Jesus did not die only for the Christians that He knew would accept Him, but He has also died for the people that will never accept Him, and He has already paid for their sin. The sins of the whole world have been paid for. The Lord has paid for the sins of the whole world. As a consequence, people are not going to hell for their sins. Their sins have been paid for. People go to hell for rejecting the payment that was made for their sins, which is the Lord, Jesus. Jesus has paid for the sins of every single person. It does not matter whether you are a good person, a moral person, or a bad person, or even how holy you live. In Romans 3:23 it says that "all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God." Every person has missed heaven. Some of us have lived a little better than others, and some of us have not done the evil things other people have done, but compared to God's standard of holiness, all have sinned and come short of that. If you are trusting in your own goodness, your own holiness, and your good deeds, without receiving Christ, you will go to hell. Your sins were paid for by Jesus and you cannot come before God based on your goodness and tell Him: "God, I deserve heaven because I lived holy. I did not curse, steal, or kill. I am a holy person." You would be sent directly to hell; but Jesus paid for the sins of everybody. Everybody! All of your sins were paid for; it does not matter what you have done. It does not matter if you are the sorriest person in the world. Jesus has paid for your sins the same way He paid for every person's sins, so sin is not the problem anymore. Jesus ended the sin problem once and for all. It is all about Jesus. All that matters is that you put your faith in Jesus. Some of you may have never heard this perspective on sin.

In the night before His crucifixion, in John 16:7-11, Jesus gave His disciples some instructions, telling them:

John 16:7-11 (NKJV)

⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world *of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*:

⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me;

¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;

¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

In verse 8, we can see the three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit: to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It is amazing how religion in general has twisted this verse to make it condemning, when it is the exact opposite of this. The Lord knew that this will be misinterpreted it or that it could be misinterpreted, so He went on in the following verses, explaining exactly what He was talking about. In verse 9, it says "of sin" (singular) and not "sins" (plural). The Holy Spirit is not the One going around saying "you should not do this" or "you should not have done that". Some of you might be thinking: "Oh man, the Holy Spirit is telling me all the time I should not do this or that." No, that is religion, not the Holy Spirit. It is your own conscience that is condemning you, and your intuitive knowledge about good and evil,

or right and wrong. Then religion amplifies it and makes it worse. The Holy Spirit is not the One condemning you. Have you not heard people in church confessing things like: "Man, I did this thing wrong and the Holy Spirit just made me feel miserable? He would not give me any rest." They stand up, confess, and then they repent, and tell everybody what they have done; and they blame the Holy Spirit for this feeling of condemnation. They call it conviction, but it is actually condemnation. The passage we read says the Holy Spirit will convict the world (and not believers) of one sin: the sin of not believing in Jesus. He is not convicting the world of all individual sins. Concerning believers, the Holy Spirit doesn't convince them of this sin, but of righteousness. Why? Because Jesus is no longer with us to assure us of that. So, when you sin, the Holy Spirit is there to tell you: "you're still righteous", "you are not condemned", "God is not upset with you", "I am still here with you, helping you, strengthening you", "I am on your side no matter what", "I love you".

God does not love you based on your performance, but based on whether you made Jesus Christ your Lord or not. If you have been born again, then God loves you and there is nothing you can do about it. You cannot make Him love you more, and you cannot make Him love you less by your performance or holiness. God's Son paid for all your sins: past, present, and even sins you have not committed yet. If you believed in Jesus, Ephesians 1:6 says that "He made you accepted in the Beloved". God accepts you based on what Jesus did for you, and when you make Jesus your Lord you become a new person in Christ. The Greek word for "accepted" is used only twice in the New Testament: once here in Ephesians 1:6, and the second time in Luke 1:28, where the angel greets Mary and tells her: "Rejoice, highly favored one!" So, "accepted" was also translated "highly favored". Once you are born again, you are highly favored before God.

You Have Been Created Holy and Righteous

Christians must believe that at the moment of their salvation, they have been made a completely new creation in their spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17), and that they have been created holy. They have now the ability from God to live a holy life. They are not trying to become holy and improve as they go, but they have been made holy, and they live a holy life because of that changed nature.

John 4:24 (NKJV)

²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship *in spirit and truth*."

God is a Spirit and He looks at you in the Spirit. The only way you can have relationship with God is based on who you are in the Spirit when you get born again. If you approach God on the basis of your actions, and if you come to God saying: "Oh, God, I fasted, I prayed, I lived holy, now will You move in my life?", then you are not in the Spirit, you are in the flesh; and "those that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8). In Galatians 5:17, the Bible says that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Those that are in the flesh cannot please God. Being in the flesh does not consist only in doing sinful deeds, but it has more to do with seeing yourself as different than God sees you in the Spirit, and relating to Him based on your good deeds. God sees you holy and righteous, and you see yourself still a sinner, and you think about yourself in your mind and heart that you are still a sinner. You cannot please God based on physical actions. Those of you who did not think that you already pleased God thought that way because you were aware that your actions and thoughts were not perfect and you concluded that is why God was not pleased with you. You looked at yourselves in the flesh, but God does not relate to your flesh and your actions, but He relates to your born again spirit. Do not focus so much on your holy deeds and activities, but focus on your mindset and on what you believe about yourself and about your new identity when you do those holy deeds. If you do not have the right mindset and the right belief, everything you do for God will amount to nothing. The Bible says in Romans 14:23 that whatever is not from faith is sin. Whatever holy deed or activity you do without faith, in who you are in Christ, and in who Christ has become for you, will actually be sin in the face of God.

When you get born again in the spirit, you are as righteous and pure and holy as Jesus is, because it is His Spirit that is sent in your heart, crying Abba, Father (Galatians 4:6). God's Spirit lives on the inside of you, and if you put your faith in Jesus, God is pleased with you; and

yet, there are so many Christians that have never felt God's pleasure about them. Many Christians believe God exists, they love Him, they have accepted salvation, they believe that if they were to die, they would go to heaven, but they are not enjoying His pleasure. They sing about when they will go to heaven, what a day that will be, they long for heaven, but in the rough season of now, they just struggle along and they feel like they continually do not please God, because they know they are not acting and thinking in the way they know they should, and they have never let God love them. They have never let God's pleasure flow through them. You know I struggle with this concept as well many times, because in the natural world, everything is geared towards performance. People outside of the body of Christ they are not going to base their relationship with you on who you are in the Spirit, they do not even know who you are in the Spirit. Everything is based on physical actions. If you go and drive your car above the speed limit singing and rejoicing about who you are in the Spirit, and the police pulls you over, you cannot tell him: "Hey officer, my sins are forgiven and God sees me in the Spirit". That officer will deal with you based on your physical performance. In the natural realm, everything is about how you act, and you have to perform right, you have to do a good job, or you will not get an increase, a raise, or a promotion. Even in marriage, our relationships are all based on performance. There is nobody that deals with you independent of your performance in this world, except God; and because of this, most people have never renewed their mind, and they just do not understand that God is pleased with them simply by the fact that they have accepted Jesus in their lives. The gospel and the grace are not intuitive and easy to assimilate, but counterintuitive, almost completely opposite to the natural thinking tendency, and it requires an intentional sustained effort to live in grace in the daily practical life. If you are born again, 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." In your spirit, you are totally brand new. In 1 John 4:17, the Bible says that "love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." It did not say "so are we going to be in the next world". That is what religion is preaching: "get saved, and now you are just saved and stuck; you are nothing but a sinner saved by grace." That is not true. I was a sinner, but I got saved by grace, and I became a new creature. In my spirit, I am right now as He is, in this world. In my spirit I am a brand new person, and God is a Spirit, and God relates to me spirit to spirit. He is aware of my flesh, He is aware of my performance, and if I am messing up, He'll tell me that Satan will take advantage of me. However, He relates to me based on who I am in Christ, and because of that, I can feel the pleasure of God.

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰For *we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Most Christians look at this verse and think that they are becoming His workmanship, He is working on them, and now they are getting to where they are better and holier. They think again about their physical actions, and about how they are living holier than they used to, that they do not have the same evil thoughts as before. This is not what this verse is talking about. The workmanship is in your spirit. Your spirit is His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, and it is right now righteous and holy and pure. I hear sometimes Christians praying: "Oh Lord, make me righteous." If you want to be righteous, get born again.

Ephesians 4:24 (NKJV)

²⁴and that you put on the new man, *which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

You are created righteous, you do not grow into righteousness, you do not become righteous, you are not striving to be righteous. If you have been born again, in your spirit you are righteous. You are holy and you are pure. You are created in true righteousness and holiness. If you come before God as a Christian and say: "Oh God, I am so unrighteous, please make me righteous." This is like slapping Jesus in the face.

If you say "all my righteousness is like filthy rags", that is a quotation from Isaiah 64:6. This is a Scripture that most Christians know and

quote it so often. If you are talking about your flesh and about your physical actions in comparison to God's holiness and perfection, that is true; but if you are saying "all of your righteousness is like filthy rags", then you are calling Jesus a filthy rag. Isaiah said that in the Old Testament, and it was appropriate for him to say that, because he did not have Jesus yet, he was not born again, he did not have any part of him recreated into righteousness and true holiness; but you and I have been born again and Jesus was made unto us righteousness. God is a Spirit and He sees you in the spirit perfect.

1 Corinthians 6:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷But he who is joined to the Lord *is one (gr. Heis) spirit with Him.*

The Greek word for "one" is *heis*, which means "a singular one to the exclusion of another". In other words, it is not as if God is up there, and I am down here, but we are parallel; I have a little bit of God in me. No, my spirit is now united with Him, it is ONE with Him, ounce for ounce, molecule for molecule, I am identical to Jesus. You are identical to Jesus.

Now, You might quote to me John 15:5 - "Without Me you can do nothing." I agree. Without Him, I can do nothing; but I am not without Him. He never leaves me nor forsakes me. I have been born again, and in my spirit I am a brand new person, and because of this, I can sit down and say: "Father, You love me, in spite of my flesh, my wrong thinking, or the way I look and act, in my spirit I can worship You."

2 Corinthians 5:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶Therefore, from now on, *we regard no one according to the flesh.* Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

Paul used to relate to people according to the flesh, as we do; but then he said he regarded no one according to the flesh anymore, but according to the spirit. That is how we should related to one another and to ourselves, that is how God relates to us. Another thing I want to bring to your attention today in this context is that God in His heart is blessed by us, and yet many of us never realized that we can bless the Lord. We hear and use this terminology a lot: "Bless the Lord". That may or may not bless the Lord. Just saying "Bless the Lord" does not necessarily bless the Lord. To bless the Lord means that you love Him, and in the process God gets blessed. God loves it when we feel loved by Him, and love Him back. When my son Justin tells me all of the sudden without any intention or reasons: "I love you daddy", I am blessed by that; Or when he tells his teachers at school, that "My daddy will always come back for me" or "I love falling asleep with daddy.", I get blessed. He does not go "Bless you dad". In the same way, we can tell God: "God, you are such a good God", "Father I love you", "Thank you for loving me"; and you know what that does? That blesses God. It makes His heart beat faster.

Galatians 5:6 (NKJV)

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but *faith working through love.*

You know, if we get to know how much God loves us, and become aware of His love for us, faith becomes so easy. You would not have to confess and declare all the time, and struggle to get something from God by faith. Justin, my son, does not come to tell me: "I believe with my heart and I confess with my mouth that my dad will feed me today, or buy me a bike when I am four years old". He just rests and enjoys life because he knows I love him, and I am ready to get anything for him. He does not beg me to give him things. Now, after hearing all this, I am sure you have a question lingering there on your mind, that you want to know the answer to.

What Is the Role of Holiness Then?

Does all this mean I can go and do whatever I want and not care about the spiritual things or holy deeds? You know interestingly enough, Paul's audience in Romans 6:1 and 6:15 asked him the same things, which makes me think he preached the same thing: "What therefore shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" I am glad you asked.

No, that does not mean you can continue living in sin, because your performance will make you receive and experience His love for you more or less, and consequently you will love Him more or love Him less. Reading and listening to the Word, worshipping the Lord, praying, going to church, walking in holiness will not change God's heart towards you, but will change your heart towards God. So, yes we should still live holy, yes we should still study the Word, we should still go to church. However, did you know that if you never went to church ever again in your life, God's love for you would not fluctuate? God's love for you is not based on your church attendance. If you never go to church, God will still love you exactly the same, but you will not love God the same, because you will not be around believers that edify you, you will not be listening to the Word, you will struggle spiritually. God will always love you in spite of your actions, but Hebrews 3:13 tells us "to exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." God loves you independently of your church attendance and holiness, but your fellowship with other believers, your study of the Word, your prayer and other things will change your heart towards God. It will not not change God's heart towards you.

The Holy Spirit will show you that you should not hurt people, you should not lie, and you should not steal. He will show you these things not because God bases His acceptance or rejection of you on your holiness, but because Satan uses your actions as an open door into your life, to bring death. Romans 6:16 tells us the following:

Romans 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether *of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*

Our sinful actions lead to death, that might not be necessarily manifested instantly and tangible or in the way we expect, but it is death manifested in confusion of our minds, depression, fear, unbelief, sickness, lack of blessing in our marriage and ministry, and ultimately even premature physical death. You will probably notice that when you sin, the devil and your conscience will attack directly your faith in what I have just spoken until now. They will tell you the following: "God is upset with you, your fellowship with Him is interrupted, the Holy Spirit has left you, you are not loved anymore, and you are still a sinner." That is part of the death I was talking about. When you sin, it becomes more difficult for your mind to believe again the truth of God about you, it requires extra effort to counter those thoughts of death generated by your sinful actions. We are interested first and foremost not to sin, because when we sin, we hurt ourselves without even knowing. The offence of our sins towards God has already been paid for, so it is not God getting hurt, but we are. Yes, God is grieved when we sin, but grief is not anger or offence; it is rather a pain and a sadness of God, flowing out of God's love as Father towards us when He sees us destroying ourselves, and playing with death. God does not reject us when we sin, because our sins have already been removed. God does not tell us: "I will not love you if you do this", or "I will not bless you if you do that", or "I will forsake you and interrupt my fellowship with you if you sin." But John 10:10 tells us the thief (Satan) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. Our sinful actions give him the opportunity to do that.

Lastly, our sinful actions, when they become known by other people, it decreases our influence, weight, and effectiveness in our relation and ministry to other people. That is again because the world is geared towards performance and it is difficult for people to receive something

from someone who is not a model of holy living in practice. So, a holy living is important and God will reward us for those holy deeds flowing from faith and a right mindset, but they do not maintain our salvation, and do not contribute with anything to our righteousness and acceptance before God. Christ alone is our righteousness.

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