

Finding Pleasure in His Purpose

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Last two weeks: we established the gospel is like pure water but it can be contaminated by works.

We also saw that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus and anyone that perverts or turns the gospel from grace to works is accursed.

The contamination of the gospel at its worst can be deadly and at the least it steals the peace that God intends and replaces it with a burden.

**If you are looking for a good coach/trainer, what do you look for?**

Experience, proven track record, physical appearance, results, ability...

It is not just about content it is about integrity of the message.

It helps to appear to be in good shape, if others are going to listen to you.

**Today, Paul is going to establish the credibility for his message from the history of his life.**

The big idea is: **our life becomes a part of the gospel we share.**

So let's take a look at the life of Paul and point out a few interesting applications for us.

1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

ESV v 10. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

This first verse is a pretty powerful statement.

Paul has explained the Gospel and the curse for those who change it.

Then he lets them know...

*...He is not seeking the approval of or trying to please people*

**1. To live our lives trying to please people is a sad state of slavery.**

People are fickle and fallen.

**Living to please people is like riding a roller coaster without an end.**

*They take you up and take you down and take you all around.*

Whether it is in marriage or friendship or parenting.

Living to please God, is like getting off the roller coaster and riding a train.

**The pursuit of a real and right relationship with God and others is our mission.**

It is steady and stable because it is directed by Scripture and God's unchanging character- not emotions or people's demands.

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There are points to get off and on because there are healthy boundaries and limitations as we seek God's will.

It is productive and it is actually going somewhere because God is at work.

It is orderly not random or chaotic because God has created the order.

Husband and wife

Teacher and student

Parent and child

Employer and employee

Creator and created

I am created by Him and for His pleasure.

**2. It pleased God to create you, and it will be a pleasure for you to serve Him.**

I am not trying to be the cool parent, the Disney Dad or Miraculous mom.

I am not trying to manipulate my spouse or live according to their image.

I am not using friends for selfish gain or letting myself be used by them.

**Paul refers to himself as a “bondservant” of Christ—A Willing servant.**

God is a great king,

He is a perfect, loving and wise master.

I am happy to belong to Him.

**In Christ we begin with His service and end with His glory.**

*I seek to serve God by obeying His word.*

*and I seek to glorify God by reflecting His character.*

**As a parent with a child,**

I discipline and train my child because the Bible teaches me it is loving to discipline. I shouldn't let them do whatever they want, that brings shame.

It is what God does for his children.

And I do it with love, truth, and self control, not apathy or anger.

**God and I want what is best for them...**

**...and what is best for our family and God's family as a whole.**

**As a spouse,** I show love, honor, and respect. I seek to understand their heart and desires and I am willing to share my heart with them.

I die to myself and seek their best interest.

I do it with kindness & patience...

...not irritation, sarcasm or being condescending

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**As a friend**, I listen, I encourage, I am friendly. I speak love and truth.  
I have healthy boundaries.  
I do it with faithfulness, loyalty, and care, not slander or manipulative guilt trips.

These are based on Scripture and the character of God.  
Love, truthfulness, self control, kindness, patience, faithfulness, care...

**God is glorified when I obey His word and rightly represent His character... in my relationships because I am His servant.**

...And that can bring me joy and satisfaction because He is pleased.

So first Paul says he is a bondservant...  
Now he goes back to his personal history...

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.  
13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*.

Paul became a bondservant, but he started off a persecutor.

The testimony model of every mature Christian is...  
"I was this, but I am now His servant."

I was a blasphemer, or I was a cheat, or I was an angry person...  
But now I serve God.

*The next time you think there is no hope for someone...*  
*The next time you are discouraged that someone seems far from God...*  
...Consider Paul!

As recorded in Acts,  
Paul was actively participating in the imprisonment and killing of Christians.  
Stephen the first martyr of the church, lost his life while Paul held the coats of the assailants.  
Paul sought and obtained special papers to legally imprison Christians.  
He went around causing havoc in the Christian community.  
And yet God's purpose prevailed.

14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Not only was he a persecutor, Paul was very educated and "religious".

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He had a strong history in the Jewish religion.  
He was educated by one of the top Rabbi's in the nation.  
He was a respected member of the Pharisees and followed all the laws.

**He was very educated and religious...  
...but he didn't have a real or right relationship with God.**

*Educated or religious people can be difficult to reach with the gospel because they don't think they need saving.*

This was Paul...he was smart, he thought he was living right...  
Then everything changed...

**15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace,**

Interesting phrase right?...**"When** it pleased God..."  
It wasn't when Paul decided.  
*Salvation starts with God.*

**3.It is God's pleasure and God's timing as to when He reveals Himself.**

**Paul says he was separated "from his mother's womb".**

Before he was born, God had a purpose for him.  
Paul was a person with a purpose before he was born.

**Unborn people are people created with a purpose.**

And it was by grace...Paul didn't earn it-he wasn't even born yet!

**Now it does seem that Paul had been "kicking against the goads"**  
God says this to him!  
Even though God had a purpose for his life...Paul had been rejecting it.

It seems God had been prodding his heart for a time...  
...but Paul was resisting.  
*Then finally, God literally knocked him off his horse and appeared to him.*  
(There is the easy way and there is the hard way...)

**So...Paul's purpose wasn't dependent on his merit...  
...But I think it had to do with his make up.**

#### 4. Your purpose isn't based on merit but make up.

God created Paul with a mind and the drive to do what he was meant to do.

It would take many years for the purpose to finally be known...  
But it would come to pass, in God's time.

- His passion and stubbornness that caused him to persecute Christians became a passion and stubbornness that caused him to persevere in preaching Christ.
- The zeal he had for the Jewish faith became a zeal for Jesus, the Fulfillment of the faith for Jew and Gentile.

And all the steps along the way were preparing him for the purpose.

#### 5. God uses our past to equip us for His future.

- The education that he was given gave him an ability to intelligently share with secular philosophers and religious rabbis alike.

What experience has God given you?  
Broken home? Difficult past? Strong family? Loving home? Education?

God will use it all for His purpose.

16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

So Paul says that his next purpose was for Jesus to be revealed in him.

**Reveal is the word: apokalypto-to uncover, make known, manifest**  
*Jesus was not just revealed to Paul, but in Paul.*

#### 6. God's purpose is to reveal Himself in us.

Christ in us is the hope of glory.

**We can't preach the gospel effectively, if we are not living the gospel in reality.**

Before Paul could fulfill his purpose to preach Christ,  
...God had to reveal Christ in him.

**The little greek word "en" is also used to describe Mary "with" child.**

Just as a pregnant woman is revealed to have a baby inside...so a Christian must also be revealed to have Christ inside.

Paul went alone to Arabia and Damascus for three years.

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Paul was not to be distracted by church politics or the status quo...  
...Paul was going to need to hear it straight from the Lord.

And this is true for us as well at times.

**God may use seasons of separation to prepare us to serve Him.**

From Abraham, to Joseph to Joshua to Daniel...  
...they all experienced desert times of separation and solitude...  
... and probably a bit of confusion or discouragement.

**God allows us at times to feel a little lost so that He can more easily show us the way.**

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now *concerning* the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

21 Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which *were* in Christ. 23 But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy." 24 And they glorified God in me.

And this is really the goal for us all...

They knew the direction of his life had changed.

They knew the purpose of his life was different.

And they glorified God for it.

*They recognized God's work.*

**7. The testimony of a changed life is a powerful example of the gospel.**

...Our life becomes a part of the gospel we share.

**Let's make specific application...**

We often want to change, but we don't know how.

We all want to know our purpose, but we don't know what to do.

**That's why so many people use the before and after photos and the personal testimonies.**

**So Paul's testimony can provide a great template for a life serving God, fulfilling His purpose.**

Fulfill your purpose with 7 Don'ts

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First, don't try to be someone else.

Recognize that God is your creator and the way you are created is purposeful. (But that doesn't mean don't grow...)

Second, Don't run from your history, learn from it.

Realize the history God has given or allowed may be part of His plan for your future.

Third, don't get caught up with people pleasing.

Know God's word and just try to do what pleases Him.

Fourth, don't ignore the goads.

Do what you think you should do, AND be sensitive to what God may be saying, prodding or leading.

Fifth, Don't try to hide what God desires to reveal.

Allow Jesus to be revealed in you.

Sixth, Don't be scared of being alone.

Be willing to be alone with God. Endure the desert times. Desert times bring future fruitfulness.

Seventh, don't forget that your story is for His glory.

Look for opportunities to share what God has done in your life so He is glorified and people are drawn to Him.