WHAT PLEASES GOD

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first." —REVELATIONS 2:4-5

What are the grounds on which we may please God? Is it what we do for God: our discipline, our obedience, our doctrine, evangelism, strategies and generosity? OR do the things that please God derive from what we allow Him to do for us: His strength in place of our weaknesses; His riches in place of our poverty, His victory in place of our failures and His wisdom in place of our folly?

When John penned the letter from Jesus to the church in Ephesus, Jesus was able to commend it for "your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary" (Revelation 2:2-3). We would commend any church with such a reputation, but there was just one problem that undermined and devalued everything else that was good in the church at Ephesus. They had forgotten and forsaken Jesus! "You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen."

Every outward appearance may be good, impressive and commendable, but if the church is not primarily an expression of Jesus Himself, whose body is the church; if it is not fulfilling the desires of the head of that body, who is Christ; if it is not operating in the power

of the life of the body, which is the Holy Spirit who inhabits the body, then says Jesus, “I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place” (2:5). In effect, Jesus is saying, “I will switch you off!” The need of this doctrinally pure and hardworking church in Ephesus was to “repent and return”; to get back to a love relationship with Jesus that would be expressed in dependency on Him alone.

What pleases God is not human effort, strategy or wisdom. It is the “fruit of the Spirit; love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). This is not the fruit of the Christian, but of the Spirit as these things are impossible apart from the Spirit’s enabling, which represents nothing less than the expression of the character of Christ within us. There is, of course, a personal discipline that works out godliness. What we are to ‘work out’ is a result of what God ‘works in’ us.

What pleases God centers all on Jesus. It is living in a loving, committed relationship with Him in which we are dependent upon Him to produce in us the fruit of His Spirit.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, I pray for more discipline in working out what You have worked in me so that my life exhibits more of the fruit of the Spirit.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I see my life more as an expression of what I do for Jesus or what Jesus does for me?