

## **Driven: Things that Enable, Empower and Inspire Believers**

### ***The Ambition to Please Christ***

2 Corinthians 5:9

June 7, 2020 am

HDBC

**This is # 4** in the series, ***Driven***. Things that enable, empower and inspire us to live out the gospel. Sometimes we get weary, discouraged or just sidetracked. God understands this has provided reminders that motivate us to keep on keeping on!

**1st, we have** an eternal treasure in earthen vessels. Our bodies are fragile and temporary. The gospel brings spiritual life that never dies.

**2nd, we have confidence to age.** As outer man is wearing out, the inner man the inner person is being renewed, growing stronger.

**3rd, we have the courage to die.** Our bodies will die, but God is making for us a new body that will be eternal and will last forever in Heaven. Today, we look at the 4<sup>th</sup> thing that drives us. ***The Ambition to Please Christ.***

***Ambition*** is sometimes viewed in a negative light. The Puritan writer, Thomas Brooks wrote this.

*Ambition is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague, the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the original of vices, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts, turning medicines into maladies and remedied into diseases.* Wow. He did not think much of ***ambition***.

**When we think** of ambition, we often think of it in negative terms. Out-of-control ambition can drive us to seek wealth, prestige, power and status at the expense of others. The Bible does condemn sinful ambition. But it also speaks of a positive ambition. We see that in our text for this morning.

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 5:9

***Aspire to a goal.*** *To be jealous to accomplish, that which drives us.*

**There is a place** in our lives for a noble ambition, for a passion that drives our lives, our decisions, our priorities. For Paul, it was to please Christ! Pleasing God is the most noble and highest ambition to which anyone can aspire. Of all the things that drive us, motivate us, inspire us, this is the greatest!

**However**, that was not being practiced in the Corinthian church. Paul addresses it for them and for us. For we also often fail to have this as the primary ambition of our lives. This is a clear reminder that nothing is more important for the believer than living to please Christ. So, how do we please Christ?

**I just did a simple** search to see how many places I could find references to pleasing Christ or pleasing God. I found **two** obvious things that are not pleasing to God. I found **seven** things that are pleasing to God. So, here we go.

### **Two things that do not please Christ**

There are many more than these two, but these are clearly communicated and encompass most, if not all things are not pleasing to God. So, we could look at these as sort of umbrella statements.

#### **1. Walking in the flesh (Romans 8:8)**

*And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

**What does** it mean to be in the flesh? First and foremost, it means to live for self. To do what pleases self. To yield to the carnal, sinful cravings of a heart and mind that are enslaved to sin. It is to do what I want to do with little or no regard for others. It is to do what makes me happy, what brings me pleasure.

**Along with that**, it means to live according to the standards and moral values of the secular culture with no regard for the creator who gave us life and has established the standards for right and wrong.

#### **2. Living without faith (Hebrews 11:6)**

*And without faith it is impossible to please Him (God).*

**Pleasing God** starts with faith. Where there is no faith, not only is there no pleasing God, but it is not possible to please God. Faith is pretty important to Him. In verse one we learn that ***faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.***

**Living without faith** then means we live only for the here and now. We make decisions based only on what we can **see, touch and experience** with our physical senses. We assume there is nothing more than this life. Because God is very much beyond this life, we cannot please Him if we restrict our perspective to this life only. Faith is what enables us to experience the spiritual and that is where we know God and can please God.

**If you are unable** or unwilling to believe what you cannot see, to act on what you cannot experience with your physical senses, then you will never be able to please God. It takes faith to please God.

### **Seven things that please Christ**

#### **1. Surrender to the will of God** (Romans 12:1)

*Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God.*

**Same word** used in 2 Corinthians 5:9. To present your body as a living and holy sacrifice means to absolute surrender to the will of God. The simple four phrase statement that I've shared many times, sums up the essence of this statement and the essence of discipleship.

Go where He tells you to go. Be what He tells you to be.  
Say what He tells you to say. Do what He tells you to do.

**If you want** to please Him, it starts with absolute surrender to the will of God. I am not my own boss. I yield to the Lordship of Christ.

#### **2. Give to support kingdom causes** (Philippians 4:18)

*But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

**This is simply** a thank-you note from Paul to the Philippians for the financial support they had provided. But in the note Paul reveals an important truth. Their act of giving to meet his needs was **well-pleasing** to God. God loved it. When he saw what they did, it pleased Him.

**We please Christ** when we give to kingdom causes. When you give to Cornerstone, Options on Main, BCM, HDBC, CityYouth, and any number of other Christian ministries you are pleasing God.

**3. Obey your parents** (Colossians 3:20)

*Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.*

**This one** is for kids who are still leaving under the authority of your parents. Kids, you have a responsibility to obey your parents, in all things. When you do, you will please your parents, but more importantly you will please God. You not only are being observed by your parents but also by God.

**One day** you will no longer have to live by the rules and guidelines of your parents. But, you will always be under the authority of God. For now, He has given you parents or a parent for your protection, for your training and to help get you to adulthood.

**4. Declare the gospel** (1 Thessalonians 2:4)

*Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who examines our hearts.*

**We have been** entrusted with the gospel, not to keep it, to hide it or to store it, but to share it. The treasure is the gospel. Paul wrote, we've been entrusted with the gospel, **so we speak**. When we declare the gospel to others, we are doing so not to please people but to please God. You cannot fail if you are attempting to declare the gospel to others.

**5. Stay focused** (2 Timothy 2:4)

*No soldier entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

**Paul is using** the military as a metaphor for our relationship with God. We are soldiers who have been enlisted by God. A good soldier refuses to get **entangled** (*caught up in*) the stuff of everyday life. Why? So he can stay focused on what he is supposed to do as a soldier. In other words, to stay focused on the main thing.

**If we want** to please God, we need to stay focused on the things that matter the most. **Starts with Christ and His kingdom.** Every day that I live I should wake up asking myself, *what can I do for the kingdom of Christ today?* We can multitask. We have to go to work, take care of our families, go to school, clean the house, feed the dog, etc. But in the midst of all those other, lesser things, we must stay focused!

**Honestly, that is** the main reason I have a to-do list every day. It keeps me on task. It keeps me focused on the main things.

## 6. Do good (Hebrews 13:16)

*And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

**Let's not make** it more complicated than it has to be. Sometimes pleasing God simply comes down to doing good. In this context, the implication is doing good things for other people.

**We need** to be intentional about it. **Do not neglect** implies that it is easy to forget, to let slide, to put on a back burner. There are some **good things** that never get done because we are not intentional.

Martin Luther was approached by a working man who wanted to know how he could serve God. Luther asked him, **What kind of work do you do?** The man said, **I'm a shoemaker.**

Luther replied, **Then make good shoes and sell them at a fair price.** Luther didn't tell the man to make "Christian shoes." He didn't tell the man to leave his shoe business and become a monk.

## 7. Share with others (Hebrews 13:16)

*And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

**Just give some** stuff away. Resist the urge to cling and learn to the joy of letting go. There is probably something you have that someone else could use, maybe that they need a lot more than you do. **Want to please God?** Start giving some things away. Start sharing with others.

**One of the neat** characteristics of the early church was their willingness to share with one another. They were liberated to turn loose of their stuff and bless others. And that was pleasing to God. If you want God to smile on your action, try sharing something with someone else.

### Two things that do not please Christ

### Seven things that please Christ

#### **One reason to please Christ**

Let go back to our key verse. 2 Corinthians 5:9. What is the first word?

**Therefore.** What do you do when you see the word **therefore** in the Bible? You ask, **what's it there for?** The answer is found in the preceding verses.

**Paul is motivated** to please Christ because of **what Christ has done for Him.**

Declared that inner man is growing stronger even as body is growing weaker.

Promised a new body to replace this one that is wearing out.

Promised an eternal home in heaven where we will never die.

Declared that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

**All these** are made possible through the incredible sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus died on a cross so that our sins might be forgiven, that we might be brought in to God's family, escaping hell and being given heaven.

Wow! What a gift!

**That's why Paul's** ambition was the please Christ!

That's why my ambition is to please Christ!

**Do you know Him? He loves you and wants to forgive you.**

#### **Homework:**

Rank all seven from 1-7 with 1 being the most important to you.

List them where you can read through them at the beginning of each day.

Pray through them each morning and seek to do them.