

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

FROM PEOPLE-PLEASING TO GOD-PLEASING



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

Carol was a people-pleaser? She lived to make other people happy. Her whole life was dominated with questions like: “How can I make my boss happy?” or “How can I make my parents happy?” or “How can I make my husband happy?” or “How can I make my kids happy?” Does that sound familiar to you? It's a hamster wheel, isn't it? And you can't get off it.

Whether Carol ever succeeded in making everyone or anyone else happy, she was certainly not happy herself. Why was that?

Effects

Carol's people-pleasing:

- Produced **sin** by making her say/do wrong things, and not say/do right things.
- Required **mind-reading** as she tried to guess what might make others happy.
- Was **draining** because she exhausted herself trying to please everyone
- Made her **angry** at her inevitable failures.

Solution?

People-pleasing is miserable and impossible. Some of you know this but, like Carol, you don't know how to change. With God's help, though, you can change and live a better life as we will see in Colossians 1:9-14.

CONTEXT

In verses 9-14, the Apostle prays that the Colossians would become God-pleasers and explains what that is. The key to understanding this prayer for God-pleasing, and what God-pleasing looks like, is to trace four steps he takes in verses 9-10

(9) For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; (10) that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him...

Four Steps

Step 1: Because of your heavenly hope (3-8), I pray for you (9a).

Step 2: I pray that God will fill you with knowledge of his will (9b).

Step 3: I want you to know his will so that you can please him (10a).

Step 4: He defines a God-pleasing life with four verbs (doing words).

Four Verbs

Verb 1: Fruit-bearing (10b)

Verb 2: Knowing (10c)

Verb 3: Depending (11)

Verb 4: Thanking (12)

Background

We will be looking at each of these four activities (verbs) of God-pleasing. But before we do that, we might ask, “Why did Paul pray this prayer?” It could be simply that Christians are always tempted to become people-pleasers and therefore we always need this prayer.

However, there were special circumstances at Colossae. Very clever and influential false teachers (Gnostics) had invaded the Colossian church and the Colossian believers were being drawn to follow them, partly because they were such intellectually brilliant and popular people. We'll meet these heretics again shortly, but let's discover the first way to please God.



**What is the first way to please God?
It's through increased fruitfulness.**



1. INCREASED FRUITFULNESS PLEASURES GOD (10)

...fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work (10b).

God is a gardener

Before we can know God as a Gardener, we have to deal with him first of all as a Judge. We approach his court by faith in Christ, and he justifies us, declares us just and pleasing in the sight of his law (Rom. 3:21-28). As Judge, he is pleased with us. That never changes. Judicially, we cannot please God more or less than at the first moment we believed in Christ and were justified.

But the Judge then puts us into his garden to produce fruit. His pleasure in us as a Gardener can change depending on the fruit we produce in his garden. So, judicially, we please him unchangeably by faith in Christ. But, agriculturally, we can please him less or more.

God is pleased with visible good works

Elsewhere the Apostle focused mainly on internal good works (Gal. 5:22-23). But here he's focused on external good works. Why is he concerned here with the visible, and physical?

Well, heretics, called Gnostics, were threatening the Colossian church. Gnostic means "knower." We'll call them "Know-it-alls" because that's how they viewed themselves. These Know-it-alls said, "It doesn't matter how you live. All that matters is what you know. The mind is everything. The body is unimportant and dispensable. So it doesn't matter what you do with it."

The Apostle pushed back, "No, there must be fruit, there must be good works. What you do with and in your body is vital. God is very interested in visible, physical good works. God is pleased with good fruit. Good fruit makes God a happy Gardener."

APPLICATION

♥ Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). You therefore have to deal with God as a Judge before you can think of him as a Gardener. You have to get rid of your guilt before you think about growing fruit. You will never please him with good works until you have pleased him by faith in Christ. "Just Judge, I approach you in Christ's name alone and ask you to be well-pleased with me because you are well-pleased with him."

♥ "I praise you Just Judge that you have accepted Jesus in my place and I know that by believing in him I am as pleasing to you as Jesus was. But I want to please you as my Gardener too, and therefore help me to produce and increase visible good works that will give you pleasure."

PEOPLE-PLEASING PRODUCES
ROTTEN FRUIT AND AN ANGRY GOD,
BUT GOD-PLEASING PRODUCES
GOOD FRUIT AND A HAPPY GOD.



I love the idea of producing fruit to please God, but how do I know what pleases him? The second verb provides the answer. It's increasing in the knowledge of God.



2. INCREASED THEOLOGY PLEASES GOD (10)

...fully pleasing him...increasing in the knowledge of God (10c).

Knowledge of God is important

Theology is the knowledge of God and the Know-it-alls thought they knew it all. But just because the Know-it-alls were making knowledge everything, Paul does not make it nothing. Yes, he corrects the Know-it-alls' exclusive focus on knowledge, but he doesn't reject knowledge. He sees it as very important (see verse 9). Fruit-bearing and theology are not contradictory but complementary.

Knowledge of God is available to all

Contrary to the Know-it-alls who reserved the highest knowledge for the elite, the academics, those "in the know," Paul prays that every Colossian believer would know God more.

Also, the knowledge that the 'know-it-alls' sought after was mystical, magical knowledge gained by rituals and formulas. As he makes clear elsewhere (2 Timothy 3:16-17), Paul wants believers to focus on knowing God by prayerful study of God's Word. This will help them to know God more and know what pleases God most.

APPLICATION

♥ You have no excuse for not knowing God. You have plenty of sermons, Bibles, books. You know plenty of Gospel ministers, Christians, and other ways to learn about God. It is available to you but you are not using it. "Unknown God, you are not unknowable. I have no excuse for not knowing you. I have not prioritized knowing you. I know lots of other things but I don't know you."

♥ Remember, every time you walk away from a sermon, Sunday school, or Bible-reading with more knowledge of God, God is pleased. "I thank you Lord that you have made so much knowledge of you available to me. Help me not to coast, not to plateau in my Christian knowledge but to keep growing, not only in head-knowledge but in heart-knowledge. "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, being conformed to his death" (Phil. 3:10).

PEOPLE-PLEASING DEPENDS ON MIND-READING,
GOD-PLEASING DEPENDS ON BIBLE-READING



More fruit AND more theology? How can I ever do that?
The third verb gives us hope: it's about depending on God not ourselves.



3. INCREASED DEPENDENCE PLEASURES GOD (11)

...fully pleasing him...strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy (11).

God enjoys empowering his people

"Strengthened" is a passive participle. "Passive" means it's something that is done to us, not something we do. "Participle" means that this is ongoing, constant, non-stop. It's not something that happens once, then we're on our own. It happens continually. We are constantly being empowered by God.

What kind of power does God give? Is it a few watts of power? A volt or two? What's the power source? It is "all might, according to his glorious power." It's his mighty glory. The powerful glory that filled the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament (Ex. 40; 1 Kings 8). The powerful glory that transfigured Christ (Matt. 17). That power is our power!

How do I get it? Active passivity. Active dependence. That's a strange combination, isn't it? It seems contradictory but it's not. We are to actively rely on God's power because God empowers the powerless who seek his power. We know so little of God's nuclear power because we rely so much on our own pathetic battery power.

God's power produces joyful patience

God strengthens us "for all patience and longsuffering with joy" (11). Endurance is holding one's place in the battle. It is standing firm even when facing difficult people and difficult circumstances. We need divine power just to stand still. Standing still by God's strength is more pleasing to him than making great strides in our own strength!

Winston Churchill visited his alma mater, Harrow school, after the Second World War. He stood up and said: "Young gentlemen, never give up. Never give up. Never give up. Never. Never. Never." Then he sat down. He wanted them to remember this and this alone

APPLICATION



What's your power source? What do you plug into? Are you a self-recharging battery when you could be connected to God's almighty power? Will you not throw away your recharger and your battery and get wired into God by faith?



"All-powerful God, I depend upon you entirely for strength even just to stand still. Help me to endure with a patient joy that will give you joy too."

PEOPLE-PLEASING DRAINS US, BUT
GOD-PLEASING STRENGTHENS US.



God gives me his glorious power to endure joyfully to the end. How can I repay?
He is pleased with increasing thanks for our salvation.



4. INCREASED THANKS PLEASES GOD (12-14)

...fully pleasing him...(12) giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. (13) He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (14) in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

Thank God for qualification

I recently saw a headline quoting Michael Bloomberg: **“I have earned my place in heaven.”** The subtitle was, **“The former New York City mayor is confident that his latest \$50 million gun-control initiative has secured him a happy afterlife.”** The article said **“Bloomberg is proud of himself, too — ready for his Judgment Day.”** Bloomberg boasted:

I AM TELLING YOU, IF THERE IS A GOD, WHEN I GET TO HEAVEN I'M NOT STOPPING TO BE INTERVIEWED. I AM HEADING STRAIGHT IN. I HAVE EARNED MY PLACE IN HEAVEN. IT'S NOT EVEN CLOSE.
MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

But, we're not only unqualified for heaven. We're disqualified. And we cannot qualify ourselves. Just as none of us can say: "I pronounce myself the heir to Michael Bloomberg's millions," so none of us can say, "I pronounce myself qualified for heaven's riches."

Only God the Father can make us qualified for heaven (12). And he does so by accepting Christ's qualifications on our behalf. And if he qualifies us, no one can disqualify us. No one can "cancel" us. This is a far bigger inheritance than we can ever imagine.

Thank God for deportation

The word for "conveyed" in verse 13 is also used of the deportation of a nation, being moved from one kingdom to another. In this case, it is deported from one world to another, from a world of darkness to a world of love. Again, all through Christ. This is a far bigger change than we realize.

Thank God for redemption

Christ qualifies us for heaven, deports us from a terrible world to a wonderful world, and redeems us by forgiving our sins. This is a far bigger deal than we have ever calculated.

APPLICATION

♥ Maybe you cannot thank God for any of these things because you've never experienced them. "Lord, qualify me by accepting Christ's qualifications. Deport me from the dominion of darkness and into the kingdom of your beloved Son. Redeem me by forgiving my worst sins, my habitual sins, my indwelling sin, all my sin." Then you'll have something to thank God for.

♥ Increase thanks by thinking on qualification, deportation, and redemption. "Thank you Savior, for qualifying me, deporting me, and forgiving me. Thank you that you will never cancel me." And can you not rejoice in the God who can be pleased with you? You can give God pleasure. He permits himself to be happy with you as you thank him.

PEOPLE-PLEASING PRODUCES BITTERNESS,
BUT GOD-PLEASING RESULTS FROM THANKSGIVING



Do you see how 'easy' it is to please God? Just thank him more.
What a relief, to move from people-pleasing to God-pleasing.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [The Pleasure of Pleasing God](#) by Luke Humphrey
- [Yes You Can Please Your Heavenly Father](#) by Kevin DeYoung

Book

- [Pleasing God: Discovering the Meaning and Importance of Sanctification](#) by R. C. Sproul

Confessions and Catechisms

- Westminster Confession of Faith 13.1
- Westminster Larger Catechism 97
- Belgic Confession 33
- Heidelberg Catechism 34, 94

Discussion Questions

- Who are the people you are tempted to please most?
- What are the effects of people-pleasing in your life?
- What visible good works can you increase?
- What's your plan to increase your knowledge of God this week?
- Where are you thinking of giving up and how do these verses help you keep going?
- How can you increase thanks to God and so increase the pleasure you give to him?
- Do you really believe that you can make God happy? What does this tell you about God?

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FROM PEOPLE-PLEASING TO GOD-PLEASING



Pray for a filling of spiritual wisdom so that you can be a God-pleaser through increased fruitfulness, theology, dependence, and gratitude.



People-pleasing

- Produces sin
- Requires mind-reading
- Draining and debilitating
- Bitterness and anger

Biblical answer?

BY 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 PLEASSED GOD. BUT 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.

HEBREWS 11:5-6



Increased fruitfulness pleases God

- God is a Gardener
- God is pleased with visible good works

PEOPLE-PLEASING PRODUCES ROTTEN FRUIT AND AN ANGRY GOD BUT GOD-PLEASING PRODUCES GOOD FRUIT AND A HAPPY GOD.

How do I know what pleases God?



Increased theology pleases God

- Knowledge of God is important
- Knowledge of God is available

PEOPLE-PLEASING DEPENDS ON MIND-READING, GOD-PLEASING DEPENDS ON BIBLE-READING

More fruit + More theology! How?



Increased dependence pleases God

- God enjoys empowering his people
- God's power produces joyful patience

PEOPLE-PLEASING DRAINS US, BUT GOD-PLEASING STRENGTHENS US.

How can I repay?



Increased thanks pleases God

- Thanks for qualification
- Thanks for deportation
- Thanks for redemption

PEOPLE-PLEASING > BITTERNESS, GOD-PLEASING > THANKSGIVING

Action?