

## Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

by Bayless Conley

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley

Hello friend, thank you for joining me. I'm going to actually be picking up a message that I began last time. The title is Aiming at God's Pleasure. That's a pretty high calling in life to actually bring pleasure to our Creator. Jesus made a statement in John 8. He said, "I always do those things that please Him," speaking about His Heavenly Father. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to say that? When Jesus came up out of the waters of the Jordan River after John had baptized Him, the Father said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I want to read some verses to you from 2 Corinthians 5 beginning in verses 6–9 NKJV. It says,

<sup>6</sup> So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. <sup>7</sup> For we walk by faith, not by sight. <sup>8</sup> We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. <sup>9</sup> Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

We make it our aim, whether living on earth or living in heaven, it should be no different that our aim; our goal should be to bring pleasure to God, to be well pleasing to Him. But the truth is, we cannot aim at a target that we can't see. So, what is it that brings pleasure to God? What is it that is well pleasing to Him? That's really the heart of this message. If you were with me last time, we began by looking at the fact that faith pleases God. Hebrews 11:6 NKJV,

<sup>6</sup> 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.

This 11th chapter of Hebrews actually gives us sort of the hall of fame of faith. Men and women who walked by faith and pleased God. It's interesting because, in each case, their faith was expressed in a different way. The writer of Hebrews, among other things, what he's doing is showing us ways that our faith in our Heavenly Father, our faith in God and His promises can be expressed as well. Hebrews 11:1 NKJV says,

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The NIV says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we do not see." Weymouth Translation says, "Faith is a conviction of the reality of things we do not see." We found out last time that faith is expressed through giving God our first and our best. We looked at Abel, who gave a more excellent sacrifice than his brother Cain, and he did so by faith. The phrase more excellent means "better quality." If you look back in the book of Genesis, where the story is told, Abel gave to God his first and his best. Our faith in God is expressed by giving Him our first and our best. We talked about Enoch. He walked with God by faith. Now, Enoch didn't see God or feel God any more than you do. Again, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He walked and talked with a God he could not see. He ordered his life in such a way that you would know this man thinks that God has His eye upon him, that God is listening to what he's saying, that God is watching his deeds, and that God is weighing the intentions of his heart. He walked with God by faith.

### Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

Friend, faith is acting as if God can see you even when you can't see Him. Because the truth is He does see you. He does test the heart. He does weigh our actions and our inward intentions. So, it was wonderful that we talked about that. We looked at the fact that by faith, Noah prepared. Being warned about things not yet seen, he prepared an ark for the saving of himself and his household. So, faith is making preparations based on statements and promises of God. You may have no outward evidence for it, but faith prepares. Then, we ended last time talking about Sarah. By faith, Sarah received. She was past the age of childbearing, but she counted God faithful. God said that she would have a child, and so she received. Jesus taught about faith and prayer in Mark 11:24, "What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe that you have received them and you will have them." The receiving comes before the having. I believe the Amplified Bible says, "Believe that it has been granted to you, and you will get it." When do you believe you receive? When you pray. When you put your trust in the promise, not when it materializes, and not when circumstances change. So, we talked about all those things. I want to move on and talk about one more individual here in Hebrews 11. We're going to look at Hebrews 11:24, which talks about Moses. Moses did several things by faith. It says this in verses 24–27 NKJV,

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, <sup>26</sup> esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

It says by faith Moses refused. By faith, he chose. By faith he esteemed, and by faith he forsook. Let's talk about those things. Moses did those things. The Scripture says, "By faith, he believed there would be a reward." He believed in a life to come. He believed in a coming kingdom, and he focused on the unseen, which set his direction and guided his choices in life. Friend, I happen to believe that there will be a reward coming. I believe in the judgment seat of Christ for believers. I believe in the great white throne of judgment for unbelievers. The things that we do while in this life serving God, and I'm talking to believers right now, there certainly is a reward. There is a life to come. Eye hasn't seen, ear hasn't heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. As it has been said, and I think rightly so, this life is just a dressing room for eternity. The decisions that I make, my choices, the direction I go, and how I treat people are not just based on the temporal circumstances. I make those choices, and I harbor certain attitudes of heart, and I won't allow other things in my heart because I know that this life is just a vapor that appears for a little time, and then it vanishes away. If you truly believe there will be a day of reckoning, it will cause you to refuse some things and choose some other things, just like Moses did. If you truly believe there's an invisible God who has His eye upon you and that He is a rewarder, you will esteem some things as precious that the world thinks those things are absurd. You will certainly forsake some things that the world deems as precious. Faith causes your values to change.

I remember there was a young man at Cottonwood. He was desperately trying to find a good job, one that would adequately take care of his needs and those of his family. He landed a great job. I remember talking to him several weeks after he got the job. He was so excited to get it, and I had actually prayed with him. He came to me one day and said, "Pastor, I'm going to quit my job." I said, "What?" I said, "Why would you quit your job? You just got this job, and it's actually more than we asked for economically. I mean, the hours are good. You don't have to drive far. They pay you a good salary. Why would you quit?" He said, "Well, about a week in, I found out that they were demanding that I misrepresent their product." He was in sales. He went to the manager and said, "Look, I can't do this. You're telling me to say thus and so to the

### Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

customers.” He says, “And you and I both know thus and so are not true.” The manager said, “Well, that’s the way it’s done here, and if you don’t like it, maybe you need to find another job.” He says, “I’ve agonized in prayer over the last week.” He said, “But Pastor, I’m not going to compromise my conscience, and I’m not going to lie to people.” He said, “I’m going to give up the job.” Why would you make a decision like that? I mean, you’re just telling a little white lie.

Well, you make decisions like that because of faith, because, like Moses, he looked for the world to come. He looked for the reward that was to come. So, that man let go of that job and let go of the security that it brought to him and to his family. Do you know what? It wasn’t long after that he got another job. God supplied his need. But it’s just sort of one illustration, and it could be carried out to everything from our interaction with our fellow employees that you’re not going to get involved in some of the naughtier talk that they get involved in and some of the lewd things that they might be saying. It’s going to affect how you deal with your neighbors. It should affect your marriage. It certainly will affect your work life. You’re going to have to choose some things and forsake some other things. Some people will think you’re crazy. But think about this. Moses forsook Egypt. He considered being in reproach with God’s people, being oppressed with the people of God, greater than all the treasures of Egypt because he looked for the reward. I’m sure that Pharaoh, who saw Moses go and leave with that ragtag bunch of slaves out of the land of Egypt, walk out into the desert, probably thought to himself, “Moses, you’re a fool. You’re a class A fool. You had it all at your fingertips. Here you refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, but do you know that being the son of Pharaoh’s daughter could have brought you all of the wealth of Egypt?”

It could have brought you any woman you wanted in the land of Egypt. You could have had a whole harem. You could have had wealth. You could have had power. Your names would have been inscribed on every important building in the land. People would have known your name. You could have had wealth, fame, and prestige. And you give it all up and you walk out into the desert? Moses, you are a fool.” Let me ask you a question. That Pharaoh has more than likely been burning in the fires of hell for the last 3,000 years. And Moses is, right now, enjoying the glories, the wealth, the treasure, the bliss, the light, and the unspeakable joys of heaven. He’s in the presence of God. Here’s my question. Who is the fool? The one who walked by faith, or the one who thought Moses was being foolish? I now want to move on to another area. I’m going to ask you, please, to stick with me on this because this point flows right into the next one. The truth is if you just listen to this point that I’m about to make, you’re going to miss so much because it really can’t be divorced from the next point to get the whole picture. But I need to deal with this one first. Okay? Are you ready? Are you staying with me? It’s not that long. It’ll do you good. Besides, it’ll help you. I want to read you from Psalm 35. I want to read verse 27 NKJV. It says,

<sup>27</sup> Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, “Let the Lord be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”

God is pleased when you’re blessed. God has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. The RSV translation says, “He delights in the welfare of His servant.” In Luke 12, when Jesus talked about God meeting our temporal and physical needs, he summed it up this way. He said, “And do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You see, we don’t need to somehow convince God to meet our needs. He has no problem with you being blessed with abundance. I think the fact is that many times, we live far below our privileges. We don’t know what God has provided for us. I remember hearing this story once of a guy whose father died. He was angry because he thought his father had left him nothing. All it was some

### Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

box of junk, he thought. He just put it up in the attic. "Stupid box of junk. That's all the he old man left me." That was it. In the will, specifically, the father had left him all the contents of that box. He looked through it and browsed through it hoping to find some stocks, some deeds, and some bank account records, but there was none of that. Just an old watch and a few other things. Anyway, he was just so upset. He sort of lived from hand to mouth for many years. He didn't do well and actually, was forced to sell the little house that he lived in because he couldn't continue to make the payments. He had a friend helping him clear things out. He was going to move into a little, cheap flat.

The friend says, "What's this?" He says, "Oh, it's a box of junk my old man left me." His friend starts looking through it, and he says, "This old watch, do you know what kind of watch is it?" He said, "Oh, just an old junk watch." He says, "It's not a junk watch. This thing is expensive." I don't remember what brand it was, but an expensive watch. He said, "And these old baseball cards, do you mind if I go check this out?" The guy said, "Oh, go ahead." The guy goes down to some local dealer that deals with antique watches. And the guy on the spot says, "Look, I'll give you \$30,000 for that watch right now." The guy said, "I don't think I want to sell it." He found out later that the watch was worth like \$90,000, and the baseball cards were worth \$400,000. They were some of the rarest baseball cards in existence. Now, to that story I'd heard so long ago, those baseball cards today would have been worth well over a million dollars. So, he's basically got in today's currency somewhere in the neighborhood of maybe \$1.2, \$1.3 million. It would have, in his day, taken care of all of his needs for the rest of his life. But he was unaware of what his father had left him. And I think some of us don't experience God's provision because we don't know about it. We don't know what has been promised to us.

There's an old story that's been told, and it's a bit used and worn out. But of all of the illustrations I can think of, I really think it illustrates the point the best. There was a guy, and this is back maybe late 1800s, early, early 1900s. He wants to make the trip from Europe over to the U.S., and he comes across on one of the old steamships. It's going to take a couple of weeks to make the crossing. This guy saves everything he can. He gets a ticket, and he's coming to the land of promise, to the good old U.S. of A. The land where anything is possible, the land of opportunity. He sits in his cabin every day. He has an old piece of dried salami, a little bit of dried cheese, and some old stale bread. He makes that last. He drinks water, eats a little bit of that salami, a little bit of that dried cheese and the bread all the way over, and never goes into the dining room. He looks in there many times. There are people there just banqueting every day. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served in there, and he looks longingly but thinks, "Well, hey, at least I'm going to the promised land." He goes back to his cabin, slices off another little piece of the salami, and eats another bit of cracker.

The day they're coming into port, the captain is walking the deck greeting people and sees him. He says, "Sir, I hope you don't mind me asking this, but have we offended you in some way?" And the guy's just taken aback. He said, "What do you mean? You offended me? Of course not." He said, "Well, we noticed that you never come into the dining hall and eat with everyone, and we just thought maybe you'd taken offense in some way." The man said, "Oh, no. Captain, you just don't understand. I only had enough money for the ticket to get here. I didn't have enough money to buy any meals." The captain just shook his head and said, "I'm so sorry. You misunderstood. All of the meals were included in the price of the ticket. You could have come in every day and dined with us."

I think it's, again, an old story, but there are a lot of believers who are just looking forward to getting to the land of promise. "I'm going to make it to heaven, and thank God. I'll get there by the skin of my teeth. I may have to suffer every day while I'm here, but I'm going to heaven and

### Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

thank God for that.” That, in keeping with the last point we just shared, is certainly the world to come is the most important thing. But there are benefits promised to us that are included in the ticket price, if you would. God does take pleasure in the prosperity of His servant. Sometimes, we're not partaking of it because we don't know. The Scripture says, “My people perish for a lack of knowledge.” Sometimes, however, it's because of our attitude. It said, “Let them shout for joy who favor My righteous cause. And let the Lord be magnified who takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.” Sometimes, we're not shouting for joy and being glad. We're grumbling, and we're upset. And that, I think, becomes a blockade between us and the blessing of God. We see someone else get blessed, and it's like, “Well, how come she got that? When is my turn going to come? I've been in this thing longer than they have. It's not fair.” In Matthew 20, Jesus tells a parable about guys who worked only an hour, and they got paid the same as those who worked all day. The ones who worked an hour got paid first. So, the ones who worked in the heat of the day thought, “Oh, we're going to get a lot more.” But they got what they were promised, and they were upset. They cried foul and said, “This isn't fair.” The master said, “Look, are you upset because I'm good? Can I do with my stuff what I want to? I gave you what I promised you. This is completely fair.”

Sometimes, we see a brother or sister. They get a new car. They get a promotion at work. They get prayed for, and they're instantly healed. Some people get upset and say, “Wait a minute. I've been praying for those things, and that hadn't happened for me. What's up with this, God? This is not fair.” No, what we ought to be saying when we see someone else get blessed is “Hallelujah! I'm in the same line, and my blessing is on the way as well. God promised me just like He promised them. I'm not in charge of the timetable, but hallelujah, my blessing is coming.” I want to see my children blessed. I take pleasure in the prosperity of my kids. They're all grown now. They're adults, but my heart is pleased to see them blessed. My heart is pleased to see them do better than my wife, Janet, and I have done. That's just the heart of any good parent. I never wanted to see them blessed without having a good work ethic, without learning the value of things, and without having a proper perspective on life, which brings me, actually, to the next point. God does have pleasure in our prosperity, but He never wants to see our prosperity and our blessing divorced from this particular attitude of heart. I want to read to you from 1 Kings 3 if I might. 1 Kings 3, and I want to begin in verses 5–10a NKJV. It says,

<sup>5</sup> At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask! What shall I give you?” <sup>6</sup> And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. <sup>7</sup> Now, O Lord my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup> And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup> Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (And listen to God's response at Solomon's request.) <sup>10</sup> The speech pleased the Lord.

We're talking about aiming at God's pleasure. Yes, God does have pleasure in the prosperity of His servant, but that prosperity should never ever be divorced from this attitude we find in Solomon. 1 Kings 3:10–13 NKJV,

<sup>10</sup> The speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. <sup>11</sup> Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself,



### Aiming to Please God (Part 3)

nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, <sup>12</sup> behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. (Listen) <sup>13</sup> And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

So, God says, "Hey, I'm giving you what you asked for. You're going to get the understanding heart, but you're going to get all the other stuff as well." And God is pleased when we put others before ourselves. That's what God wants to see is a heart for others. God wants to prosper us when prosperity is not our chief aim. It's a completely secondary thing. God will give us whatever is necessary to fulfill what He's called us to do as long as His mission for our life is paramount with us. God can add to our lives more than we ever dreamed, but we need to have our priorities in order. We need to keep first things first, which are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. So yes, the Lord does take pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. Listen, God does want to help you. Yeah, I know you need to make your rent this month. You need to be wise, certainly, and not be wasteful. You need to put God first and give Him your first and your best. You need to be a tither. You need to honor God with the first fruits of all your increase. And not be wasteful. It's just stupid to be wasteful with our money and then say, "God, help, help, help!" And just repeat that month after month after month. No, you need to be wise. Wisdom is a principle thing. Be wise and honor God. Listen, if you do that, God is faithful. He has a thousand avenues that He can bring blessing your way. He can bring promotion your way. He does want to help you get new clothes. Clothes for your kids for school. He does want to help you make rent. He does want to help you put fuel in your vehicle. He wants to help you. In fact, here's my definition for prosperity. Are you ready? I think this is a good biblical definition. Prosperity is having sufficient to meet all of your needs with enough left over to help someone else. Well, I trust that you have been blessed by this. I've actually got more to say. I don't know if we'll get to it or not. But take some time, go over these Scriptures that we've given you, and let God speak to you further along these lines. God bless.

Copyright © Answers with Bayless Conley