

The Goal of Christian Ethics:
The Challenge and the Joy of Living a Life Pleasing to God

1. Pleasing God is mentioned surprisingly often in the NT

Several different terms in NT: *euarestos* ("pleasing, acceptable"), *eurasteō* ("to please"), *areskō*, *arestos*, *apodektos*, *euprosdektos*, *eudokia*, *eudokeō*

a. Verses about Christians in general

Rom 8:8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

1Co 7:32 I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord.

2Co 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Gal 1:10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Eph 5:10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.

Phi 2:13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Phi 4:18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

Col 1:10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

1Th 2:4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts.

1Th 4:1 Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.

1Ti 2:1 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people,² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,

1Ti 5:4 But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.

Heb 13:16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Heb 13:21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

b. all of Paul's life and ministry:

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (2 Corinthians 5:9)

so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:4)

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)

c. Jesus' own life:

and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17)

And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." (John 8:29)

d. What kinds of things please God? → every sort of obedience, large and small

Presenting our bodies as sacrifice Rom. 12.1-2; Not putting stumbling block before a brother by what we eat Rom 14:18; Sending a gift to Paul Phil 4.18; Obeying parents Col 3.20; Doing God's will Heb. 13.21; Offering to God acceptable worship w/ reverence and awe Heb. 12:28; Having faith Heb. 11:6; Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord Col. 1:10; Speaking the true gospel Gal. 1:10; Not speaking to please man 1 Thess. 2:4; Keeping his commandments 1 John 3:22; Praying for civil rulers 1 Tim. 2:3; Giving support to needy parents and grandparents 1 Tim. 5:4

2. Pleasing God by obedience is complementary, not contradictory, to justification by faith alone

We are not justified by works but we are called to do "good works" (Eph 2:8-10)

Justification by faith alone does not imply

sanctification by faith alone (we also put in effort); or pleasing God by faith alone

3. Pleasing God by obedience is a skill that can be learned

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable (*euarestos*, “pleasing”) and perfect. (Romans 12:2) and try to discern what is *pleasing* to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:10) → you get better at this over time
Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

4. Pleasing God by obedience must flow from faith in God and must rely on the power that comes from God

Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23; John 15:5; Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 15:10; Phil 2:13

5. Pleasing God by obedience is the opposite of displeasing him by our disobedience

(→ so avoid conscious, willful sin!)

Eph. 4:30; Rev. 3:19; Heb. 12:5-11; Westminster Confession of Faith: God’s “fatherly displeasure”; 1 John 1:9

6. Pleasing God by obedience will lead us to experience more of his favor (or “grace”) on our lives

a. there is a close relationship between pleasing God and experiencing his favor

b. In OT, “grace” often means God’s “favor” on someone

Gk. *charis* in LXX is the ordinary translation of Heb. *khēn*, “favor”

Gen. 6:8 Noah; Ex 33:12, 17 Moses; Prov. 3:34; 12:2; 18:22

c. In NT “grace” translates *charis*: “a beneficent disposition toward someone, favor, grace, gracious care/help, goodwill” (BDAG)

d. Several NT examples of receiving more grace (more “favor”)

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. (2 Peter 1:2)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5)

Also see: 2 Cor. 9:8; Rom 12:6; Acts 4:33; 6:8

Also: The greetings and closings of all of Paul’s epistles wish more grace for readers

e. But how can God be pleased with our obedience? Can there be any value in it?

→ these are not “bad works” but “good works”

they are never perfect, but neither are they totally evil, 100% worthy of condemnation -- they are mixed “walk worthy” verses:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (Ephesians 4:1)

so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:10)

we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. (1 Thessalonians 2:12)

f. What kind of rewards/ blessings does God give for obedience?

more answers to prayers 1 John 3:22

We bear more fruit Col 1.10

God draws near to us James 4.8

We will love life, see good days: 1 Pet. 3:8-10

God will care for us, hear our prayers 1 Pet. 3:8-10

Caring for our material needs 2 Cor. 9.8

He rewards those who seek him Heb 11:6

7. However: Pleasing God by obedience may lead us along a path of suffering in this life

Phil 1.29-30; 1 Pet. 2:19-20; many other NT verses

8. Pleasing God by obedience gives us the joy of thinking that God is pleased with us most of the time!

All of the class lessons and outlines are posted on the class website www.christianessentialsbc.com.