

Pleasing God in Word and Thought

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight." – Psalm 19:14

Summary:

Everyone lives under a governing aim: some seek to please themselves, others seek human approval, and a faithful few seek, above all, to please God. David's prayer reaches beyond outward conduct to the words of his mouth and the hidden meditations of his heart. It reveals humility, because even our best service needs forgiveness and acceptance through Christ; affection, because love for God delights in obeying his commands; and duty, because our Creator, Redeemer, Father, Master, and King has an unquestionable claim upon us. Seeking God's approval also serves our highest welfare. Human favour is uncertain and limited, but God can meet every need. His pleasure protects us from sin, brings peace even with enemies, answers prayer, and ultimately grants entrance into the joy of the Lord.

Outline:

1. **Every life has a governing aim**
 - People seek to please themselves, other people, or God; only the last aim can rule life safely.
2. **God examines words and thoughts**
 - True devotion reaches beyond visible conduct to speech and the secret meditations of the heart.
3. **The prayer expresses humility and love**
 - Our best works need grace through Christ, while love gladly pursues what pleases God and avoids what offends him.
4. **Pleasing God is an undeniable duty**
 - Creation, providence, redemption, and God's rightful authority bind us to serve him.
5. **God's approval secures our true welfare**
 - His favour protects from sin, grants peace, answers prayer, and brings his people safely home.

Text

Everyone needs a governing aim, though not everyone has a proper one. All seek to please, falling into three classes. Some please themselves: others must indulge them, and they insist on their own way regardless of others' claims.

Some strive to please people, which is not always wrong. A kind, obliging manner is lovely and commanded: "Let every one of us please his neighbour." But we must do so "for his good to edification," and only in lawful things; otherwise, "if I seek to please men, I shall not be the servant of Christ." Others strive to please God. Though comparatively few, we hope their number is growing. Paul and his companions did so: "We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." So did David: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight."

Authors often use a part to represent the whole. David seeks to devote all his powers and actions to God, walking blamelessly in His commandments. While David's piety goes further, he here examines his words and thoughts and prays that they please God.

- **The prayer reveals his humility:** "When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants." Examining our holiest deeds undermines confidence in them, showing they need forgiveness, not reward. "My performances are so poor, so imperfect, so unworthy, that it must be an act of grace in Thee to regard them."
- **The prayer shows his affection.** Everyone must acknowledge the importance of loving God, but what best proves it? "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." The Christian delights in God's law, pursuing what pleases him and avoiding what offends him. David wished that neither word nor thought would displease God.
- **The prayer shows a sense of duty:** gratitude and justice make pleasing God our indispensable obligation. Who gave us life, sustained us, sought and redeemed us? We belong to Him, bought at a price; He is our Father, Master, and King. Can we be good children, servants, or subjects without seeking to please Him? Earthly authorities may demand what is unreasonable or unjust, ending our duty

to obey. But God's perfect will requires only what is wise, holy, just, and good.

- **The prayer reflects self-interest.** David was not mercenary, but knew he could not serve God for nothing. Serving God best serves our welfare, and since Scripture presents this benefit as both truth and motive, it is proper to consider it.

Many seek a prince's favour, and everyone befriends those who give gifts. Yet even if we gain his uncertain approval, what is it worth? Pleasing God brings not only certain success but glory. A monarch's friendship can do little in our greatest need, beyond human help; God, however, can supply all our needs and do far more than we can ask or imagine.

It would be endless to list the benefits of pleasing God.

- Is preservation from sin a blessing? "Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her." If we provoke our Defender to withdraw, nothing is too vile for us to fall into.
- Is safety and peace a blessing? "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Is answered prayer a blessing? "And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."
- Is removal to heaven desirable? "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Though Enoch went in a chariot of fire, an apoplexy, accident, dropsy, or fever may likewise carry us from this vale of tears into our Lord's joy.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, Morning and Evening Exercises (January 24, Evening), first published in 1854.