

## Sunday 19 July 2020

Good Morning, I greet you in the powerful name of Jesus.

We have really hit winter with a vengeance. I hope there are not many with any colds or flu.

We need to pray for our town as the Covid virus has hit us as well. Up to now we have been spared the virus for which we must be so grateful for. Please be so careful and look after yourselves.

### To Please God.

Colossians 1:1-14

What does it mean to live a life that pleases God? Like most people that question can leave us tongue tied. It is likely that we have never thought about the question in such a simple form. If we are pressed for answer, we would probably list a number of external behaviours as the things that please God:

Certain experiences (Manner of conversion, baptism etc.)

The absence of certain vices (Don't smoke or drink, don't watch porn etc.)

The affirmation of certain theological aspects. (The view of the virgin birth, the Trinity, adult or infant baptism etc.)

These are all externals. In fact if we listen closely to our list, what we are really saying is that our outward experiences are the most important, and we give very little thought to our inward self. I believe the reason that this is so, is because we want to live lives that please God. So we seek to define pleasing God by our experience and beliefs.

There are 4 characteristics that please God. They are bearing fruit, growing in knowledge, being strengthened, and giving thanks.

### 1.The life that please God bears fruit.

The idea of “bearing fruit” is not foreign to us. If we buy a fruit tree and plant it , take good care of it we would expect it to start bearing fruit within a certain number of years. If after many years it does not start yielding fruit we will chop it down. We may even tell the nurseryman of how bad the tree was that we had bought from him.

Jesus says the same is true of people who profess faith in Him. “Watch out for false prophets, they come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognise them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” Matthew 7: 15-17

How can we tell if someone is professing to be a believer but isn't. We can tell by

watching their lives. If there is not a change in their lives then we can conclude there is no change in their soul. Our hearts and our lives go together.

It is important that we remember that fruitfulness takes time. You don't get fruit the first year you plant a fruit tree. It takes time for the tree to mature. The same is true of followers of Christ. You may not see an immediate change but you should see it as they mature in Christ.

Paul says when you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness or lustful pleasures, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, fighting, jealousy, outburst of anger.... etc. These people will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce the following fruit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

The person who is living to please God will see a change in their values and in their behaviour. Those living together outside of marriage will get married, Those cheating others will start dealing honestly. Those who have used foul language will start minding their "p and q's. Those who were using others for their own gain will start serving. Those who have always been very critical of others will start building them up. Those who have hoarded will start sharing what they have.

Listen to Jesus when he says " Remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." Jesus is saying we don't go out to bear more fruit.... we seek to draw closer to him and the fruit will come naturally. It is not a matter of trying harder but drawing closer.

How do we know if our church is doing a good job? It is not how the people behave when they are in the Church building – its whether or not they are different in their day to day lives. The life that pleases God is the one that glorifies Him in our daily life. How we do our job, how we treat others especially our families and employees, are we honest in all we say and do. Do we get involved in the local scandal?

## **2.The life that pleases God keeps on growing.**

The life that pleases God is the one that "keeps growing in knowledge." We must continue to seek more of God. To understand this lets look at two negatives. First growing in the knowledge of God is not the same as looking to see how much more we can get from Him. There are so many who want to tap into God for their own goodwill. They want to know how to get God to answer their prayers and to meet their needs.

If our children came to us only when they wanted something, or they spent their time

getting to know us so as to manipulate us to get their way, would we feel loved? I don't think so-we would feel used and so does God.

Secondly, growing in the knowledge of God is not the same as growing in the knowledge ABOUT God. We can spend all our time getting information about God and not having a relationship with Him. Warren Wiersbe says “In my pastoral ministry, I have met people who have become so intoxicated with “studying the deeper truths of the Bible”. Usually they have been given a book or introduced to some teacher's tapes. Before long, they get so smart they become dumb! The “deeper truth” they discover only detours them from practical Christian living. Instead of getting burning hearts for devotions of Christ (Luke 24:32), they get big heads and start creating problems in their homes and churches”.

There is always a danger of substituting facts for a relationship. The life that pleases God is the one that yearns to know more about Him so they can know Him better. These people reads the Bible not just for factual information but to discern the heart of God. They look for direction not merely information. Their prayers are not only about requests, they take time to work on their relationship with God. They are eager to learn of God. They want to learn or be taught anything that might help them know God better.

### **3.The life that pleases God endures forever.**

Paul tells the Colossians that the life that pleases God is one that is “being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might...” The purpose of this power - it is given so we might “Have great endurance and patience.”

The word for endurance (or perseverance) literally means to “remain under” or we would say “hang in there” It is a strength that helps us to cope with the troubled times of life. The word patience I'm told has to do with dealing with difficult people. God gives the strength to deal with such people. So in hard times we don't complain- we trust. We don't walk away – we listen and try to learn. We don't give up – we hang on tighter.

Being strong in times of trouble is difficult. God teaches us patience with others by reminding us, that we are and can also be difficult That one needs to give the benefit of the doubt, that most difficult people are hurting. We sometimes think we have the right to judge others hearts and motives, that's God job not ours. God has a way of transforming people we would have written off.

### **4.The life that pleases God lives gratefully.**

Have you noted just how much we complain. We complain about the weather when we should be happy that we are alive. We complain about the taxes we have to pay when we should be grateful to be getting an income especially at the moment when

so many are losing jobs. We complain about the government and the restrictions we have at the moment. We should be grateful for the protection they are trying to give us. We complain about the traffic we should be grateful we have a car. I can go on and on about our complaints.

We thank God for what He has given while at the same time feeling He should have given us more. We seem to think if God really loved us we would have fewer problems, more money, more influence, less illness and more good times. I am certain He sees straight through us and must feel very hurt.

Gratitude begins when we realise we not deserve that which He has given us. We should spend more time being grateful that God, by His Spirit has pulled us away from the fire of hell. The Lord has taken our dead end life and set it on course for eternity. We must often think where we would have been had it not been for the Resurrection of Jesus.

An attitude of gratitude grows as we learn to open our eyes to the blessings we have taken for granted. I saw that this past week when we didn't have water for three days, how we realised how we had taken the water supply for granted. When was the last time you thanked God for the breath you breath, for the blue sky, for the birds that sing. When last did you thank Him for the Bible and fellow believers? When last did you thank Him for the warm home while others don't have a roof over their heads.

If we take what I have said and measure our own lives against it we might find that our life is not as pleasing to God as we thought it was. Instead of getting depressed remember two things. Firstly Paul is pointing to the goal. That is what we are working towards, not where we should already be. Secondly we must remember that we cannot bear fruit apart from Christ. The key is not to work harder it is to draw closer.

Before we can live a life that is pleasing to God, we must receive the salvation that He offers. Today I encourage you to acknowledge that Jesus died in you place. Tell Jesus that you trust Him for eternity. Let Him know that you are willing to surrender all to Him so that He can build you the new life that you were created to live.

This is a good time for us to profess our faith in Christ and at the same time to evaluate our lives too. We need to be shaken from our complacency and be moved to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus.

Amen

