

You Can't Please All People

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[0:00] Lord God, we come before you this day and we praise you and thank you for your grace and your mercy. For those who you have called into your kingdom, that you will not always accuse or harbor your anger toward us, that you discipline us because we need that discipline and that discipline is gracious and kind, but that you do, in fact, separate our sin from us as far as the east is from the west.

We wish, Lord, to be separated from that sin today, that we could worship you all right. Lord, we ask you to come in this hour to all of the Sunday schools where your word is being declared from the youngest children, that they would hear it and it would go forth in power up through our class.

Be honored today. Please bring your presence to us. In Jesus' name, amen. I happen to have with me this morning some money, and I'm feeling tremendously generous.

I think I'll give some money out here. We got a five. We got a five.

I'll be able to go on. I gave my son a five. Anybody, especially those close to me, wish you would have gotten that five dollar bill?

[1:38] Well, you weren't close to me. Some of you might be thinking, sure, you gave five it away to your son. It's coming back to you. I will assure you that it probably won't.

Or my daughter sitting there probably thinking, I'm one of his kids. Why didn't I get one? Or only one of you got a one and one got a five. You see, no matter what we do, we can't please everyone.

Let's personalize it a little. Let's say, in your imagination, you went on a missionary, short-term missionary trip. We just had the Ellis' here. And you went over to the Philippines.

And as you're seeking to minister there, you happen to have a lot of one dollar bills in your pocket.

You are going to go to the store and get something. And you have eight of them in your pocket. And surrounding you on the streets are 12 children that are begging for money.

They see you're an American. You're rich. And they're begging for money. And feeling generous, you want to try to please them. Let me ask you, if you have eight dollars, eight dollar bills in your pocket, will you be able to please all of them?

[2:51] No. No. We cannot please all people. Who are we living to please? There's a cliché. I can please some of the people all of the time.

And all of the people some of the time. But I can't please all of the people all of the time. Well, Lou Priolo proposes a more biblical rendition of this cliché.

And it goes something like this. You can please some of the people some of the time. And all of the people none of the time. But you can please God most of the time.

Jason will be exploring that last phrase of pleasing God most of the time next week. Our duty this morning is to consider the fact that we can please some people only some of the time and all of the people none of the time.

And to look at why that is. But first, before we launch into our topic, I want to begin by being sure that we consider the topic with balance.

[4:00] The first point of the balance is that as a believer, we often can and do please people, even within the community of the wicked. And this happens as we go about our daily duties.

Think about the fact that for a Christian who's seeking to live for Christ, he does have Christian morality. He's honest.

He has integrity, gentleness, kindness, thoughtfulness, humility, a work ethic. These are all qualities that any employer, any saint employer would want to have on his staff.

And so we are going to please people as we exhibit these Christ-like attributes more and more. And so in this sense, the more like Jesus a believer becomes, the more the world is going to like him.

And when a Christian is exhibiting these characteristics with an eye on another's good and not on his own selfish gain, the world will generally be delighted with him.

[5:03] Nobody likes somebody who's proud, and we generally like people that are humble and that have our interest in mind. The second balancing point is to again remember that there is a good and biblically proper motive for pleasing people.

I am commanded to seek to please others selflessly for their good and for God's glory. That's an assumed fact. It is when I'm pleasing people for my own selfish gain and glory, it's when I'm doing it out of an extension for a love for myself rather than a love for Jesus that I get into trouble.

And it's its latter wrong motive that's going to be the focus and assumption of everything we talk about this morning. So we're not going to be going back on every point and considering that while there is a proper degree by which I can please people biblically, that's an assumed fact we're going to be focusing in on when we say people pleasing, of it being the sinful form of that people pleasing. So with no further ado, let's launch into eight follies of being a people pleaser. Eight follies of being a people pleaser. So if you're taking notes, I'll read each one twice.

These are very long. I've cut out the beginning part of each one to try to make them shorter. And the first is, Each person is different, and therefore by pleasing some, you will inevitably displease others.

[6:33] Our illustration attempted to show that. Each person is different, and therefore by pleasing some, you will inevitably displease others.

Paul asks the question in 1 Corinthians 4, 7, Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

And the assumed answer is that it's God that makes us different. I just want to open it up for a moment. How are we different? Anyone, how are we different? In an amoral sense.

Don't point out each other's sinful traits. From an amoral sense, how are we different? How has God made us different? Okay, we have different interests.

So I hand over here. Okay, we grew up in different environments. So we're going to have a different perspective on the world.

[7:33] All right, different IQs. You know, I hadn't thought of that one, but that is very good.

Because sometimes our judgmentalism towards others can be because we're looking through our eyes and either because we happen to be slower or quicker of mind, we look down on others on the other side of the fence.

Different race. Different experiences. Different looks. Financially different.

Okay, we have different strengths and weaknesses or gifts that God has given us or talents. Okay, our level of our spiritual walk.

How mature are we in our knowledge of God and our walk with Him? We've covered a lot more than I thought of. Have you ever wondered why there are so many different restaurants?

I mean, if it were up to me, I think we could have two or three and I'd be good. Why so many varieties of cars, boats, clothing, jewelry? The list can go on and on.

[8:40] Why so many different flavors of ice cream? Recently, I was in a discussion with several members of my family and a suggestion was made about getting ice cream, certain kind of ice cream.

And I poo-pooed it because it was ice milk and I was willing to pay for ice cream. And horror of horrors, the suggestion was actually made that some people prefer ice milk over ice cream.

I had never conceived of such a thing before in my life. I mean, if money is no object to be able to have the rich, luscious, creamy ice cream versus ice melt.

But you see, we have differences on every front. And we judge our world through our own eyes of what we think is good or bad.

So we see that God in his infinite wisdom and profound imaginations not only created an indescribable amount of variety within his creation, he's also put that variety within his highest creation, man.

[9:47] And as we've said, the variety comes out in our personality, in our traits, and in our interests. So that means, by definition, to please me, you will likely not please the majority of other people and very possibly will displease most of them in the process of trying to please me.

When you add man's sinful heart into the equation, the statistical probability of pleasing even some men all of the time is infinitesimally small. This is what makes being a leader so difficult.

When you lead in a certain direction, inevitably, there will be a large contingent of people who will not like the direction in which you're going. I want to bring this to home with this being our second week in this church building.

Decisions were made by people, in most cases, by other people than ourselves, regarding the color, the style, the type of carpet, the fixtures.

The list goes on and on. Decisions that had to be made about what this church building would end up looking like. Would you have chosen the exact same combination? I'm sure not.

[10:58] I would not have either. And probably none of us would have. However, as soon as the choice is made, it's only natural for others controlled by their sinful flesh to begin complaining and questioning the rightness of that choice.

And the measurement I use for judging rightness is my own unique view of the world. The next time you look at something and wonder why someone did something a certain way, remember that each one of us would likely do things differently if we were given the responsibility.

Recognize that your own critique of the world around you comes from your own unique personality, likes, and abilities. For areas in which the Bible or biblical principles are silent, to think your view is right is really the epitome of pride and arrogance.

But our God-given differences are only the tip of the iceberg on this subject of pleasing people. The second folly of trying to please people is that selfishness distorts their thinking and raises their expectations above that which you can reasonably fulfill.

Again, selfishness distorts their thinking and raises their expectations above that which you can reasonably fulfill. Get all that, Chuck? I'm going to not spend much time on this point.

[12:24] I'll allow Richard Baxter to expound it. He says, Remember that men are so selfish that their expectations will be greater than you will be able to satisfy. They will not consider those things that might prevent you from giving them what they desire such as your ministry to others or your job or your necessary diversionary activities.

They want you all to themselves as though you had no one else to care for but them. Frequently, when I was under tremendous time pressure, a multitude of people each thought that I should have spent all of my time with them.

When I visited with one, there were ten offended that I was not visiting them at the same time.

When I was speaking with one, many more were offended that I was not rather talking with them.

If those with whom I am speaking consider me to be courteous and attentive, those with whom I could not converse except maybe for a brief moment or two, consider me to be discourteous and inattentive.

How many have been upset with me because God in conscience commanded me to spend my time on greater and more important things? It's the pathetic character indeed who has yet to figure out that living to meet others' expectations is really a futile exercise.

[13:50] The third folly of trying to please people is that most of them are unregenerate and believe you to be foolish and strange. Most of them are unregenerate and believe you to be foolish and strange.

Unbelievers view Christians as strange, a bit off their rocker because they can't understand their ways or their God. I once saw a movie that was based on a true story about a genius and Nobel Prize winner who was also a schizophrenic.

And as the beginning of the movie went along, it showed the world from his perspective. And it was only as you got into the movie and at one stage he was having an animated argument with, I believe, an FBI agent or CIA agent that out on the front lawn of the school where he was teaching, the university where he was teaching, that they switched the perspective to the onlookers of this crowd that had gathered around them.

And as they did, the FBI agent or CIA agent disappeared. And now what you saw was this raving lunatic speaking and carrying on this conversation with thin air.

And you realized this was a very troubled, sick man. But I want you to think for a moment how the godless views the Christian.

[15:26] He talks, the Christian, talks into thin air to some being he supposes exists. Rather than buying better houses and better vehicles, he gives away a significant amount of money as an offering of worship to this being that again he nor anyone else has ever seen.

He wastes an entire day every week praying to, singing to, and worshiping this being that he's never seen. He orders his life around the words of a book that claims to be the commands of this being.

And on and on we could go about the strange behavior of the believer. Would not the world consider the Christian to be very strange and foolish indeed? The man without the spirit does not accept the things that come from the spirit of God for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2.14 and in 1 Peter 4.3 and 4 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousings, and detestable idolatry.

They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation and they heap abuse on you. Well if only the difficulty with the world ended with the fact that they looked on us is strange and peculiar but the fourth folly of trying to please people is that unbelievers must inevitably be convicted by a Christian's words and actions.

[17 : 04] Unbelievers must inevitably be convicted by a Christian's words and actions. There's numerous examples of this in scripture. Consider the reaction of the Sanhedrin to the testimony of Peter and the apostles apostles.

In Acts 5 29-33 Peter and the other apostles replied we must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.

God exalted him to his own right hand as prince and savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses to these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.

When they heard this they were furious and wanted to put them to death. And then of course there's Stephen. When they heard this Stephen giving a sermon basically about historically what had happened in Israel they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him but Stephen full of the Holy Spirit looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Look he said I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. At this they covered their ears and yelling at the top of their voices they all rushed at him dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

[18 : 33] Of course Jesus gave the reason behind this hatred reaction that the world has towards the righteous. John 3 19 and 20. This is the verdict.

Light has come into the world but men love to darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

That's it. The more evil a person or the more darkness in which a person wishes to live the more they're going to be repelled by the light and therefore the more the light shines upon them the more of a reaction you will receive from them.

It's like when I'm trying to sleep in the morning and my wife gets up and opens the bathroom door and the bright light comes in. I'm repelled by that light and I grab her pillow and put it over the top of my head.

I don't want the light at that time. And so it is with unbelievers. Let us turn our attention from the strangeness of the believer to the corruption of the unbeliever with the ultimate consequence being that by living for the pleasure of people you must alienate yourself from God.

[19 : 52] This is our fifth folly of trying to please people. By living for the pleasure of people you must alienate yourself from God. Please turn to Ephesians 4.17.

Ephesians 4.17 and 18. So I tell you this and insist on it in the Lord that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Again remember our point is by living for the pleasure of people you must alienate yourself from God.

God says that fallen man's heart and mind has been affected by the fall. Depravity has permeated every aspect of our being. Depravity or total depravity doesn't mean that I'm as bad as I might be but it means that this depravity that this corruption has affected every faculty of my being.

This includes our appetites, desires, expectations, motives, judgments, and short our entire reasoning ability. God says that they are ignorant and darkened in their understanding.

[21:16] If this is the state of man, is it a sane pursuit to attempt to please someone whose ability to reason properly has been corrupted? To further elaborate the thought through example, if a man's appetite is for the things of this world, if his desire is for sensual fulfillment in his own honor, if he's motivated by lust and greed, if he judges according to what he thinks is right in his own eyes, then why would I want to trust him to determine the standard by which he accepts or rejects me?

You see, when I'm living as a people pleaser, what I'm really doing is I'm making that other person the standard by which I live. If I'm to be liked by him, I must be and do what brings him pleasure. Essentially, when around him, I must become like him. That's my only hope of pleasing him. This is why the subculture, within the subculture of young people, they're so much alike.

They dress alike. They listen to the same kinds of music. They sound alike. Why is that? Because they desperately want to please those that are around them.

but what we so quickly forget is that to gain the approval of this wicked and adulterous generation, one must voluntarily choose to enslave himself to their waves, effectively alienating himself from God and selling his soul to the devil.

[22:56] Why, then, would a Christian ever want to seek the approval of darkness? For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common, or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6.14. The professing Christian really only has two choices. Hide his walk in his relationship with God so that unbelievers won't think he's weird and strange, and they won't speak evil of him, or live his life of faith and honor to God for all to see, and suffer the scorn and ridicule that must come from those that are without understanding.

Can we see that being a people-pleaser is the antithesis of true Christianity? Mark 8.38, If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with his holy angels.

I'm not suggesting that just because I may succumb to the fear of man, I should immediately conclude myself to be a non-believer, any more than succumbing to any sin turns me into a non-believer.

If this were the case, not a single one of us in this room could claim true Christianity. We must all deal with remaining sin, and a significant expression of that sinful nature is the propensity to live for the pleasure of others.

[24:19] But at the same time, there is no true conversion where there has been no crucifixion, no true repentance, of the vice of living for the approval of man. Mark 8, 34 and 35, then he called the crowd to him, along with his disciples, and said, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. We must daily confess our people pleasing failures and rise anew with renewed determination by God's power and grace to live for the glory and name of our blessed Savior, Jesus.

The sixth folly of trying to please people is that even among Christians, judgmental attitudes and critical spirits are all too prevalent. Even among Christians, judgmental attitudes and critical spirits are all too prevalent.

judgmentalism is one of the most expressed attitudes of the sinful heart. It's so prevalent because it's really just an expression, an outward indicator of the pride that's the root of it all.

Judgmentalism makes me the standard by which everyone else is to be measured. Prejudice is a classic example of it, isn't it? Somebody brought it out already, the fact that we have different color skin, we're of different gender, my ethnic background, where I grew up, where I went to school.

[25:55] I can make any and all of these things the criterion by which I judge entire categories of people as inferior to myself.

Just think of the arrogance of the attitude. Who do I think I am to judge others by me? How great do I think I am that my views and opinions become the standard of right and wrong?

does this critical judgmental spirit go away once I become a Christian? We know that it doesn't. We must still wrestle with the old man until the day we die.

And that means that the community of believers will continue to have the remnants of this hostility raising its ugly head within our midst. Let's take it from the hypothetical to the practical by doing a simple exercise as Prioli suggests.

I want you to be brutally honest with yourself. Rate yourself from 1 to 10. 1 being I regularly make very unloving critical comments about others.

[26:58] And 10 being I hardly ever make uncharitable judgments in my heart about others. So 1 is I am so judgmental that regularly that judgmental spirit is coming out in criticism towards others.

It's coming out of my mouth. The other being the other end of the spectrum every once in a while I sense a critical spirit towards someone but it's in my heart.

How would you rate yourself on that scale of 1 to 10? But before you do so consider Solomon's words do not pay attention to every word people say or you may hear your servant cursing you for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

I want you to think about your last drive to work. So how did you do in your rating? I don't want any don't call it out.

so if we struggle with this sin to one degree or another can we see the difficulty that it presents in being able to please others even part of the time?

[28:05] people misunderstand us. They hear one sentence from a conversation and draw negative conclusions from it without knowing the whole picture. Richard Baxter summarizes it this way few people know the circumstances and reasons for what you do.

They will presume to criticize you before they hear what you have to say. Had they done so they would have absolved you of all charges in their own mind. It is rare to meet even among professing believers who are sincerely committed to Christ.

Those who are fearful and sensitive about sinning in this area of rash ungrounded judgment. An application that would be good for us to remember as we often assume the role of people destroyer is that we need to redevil our efforts as individuals to put the best face the best possible motive on what we see coming out of others.

We need to stop judging the motives of the heart. Something that only God can do. In the middle of the love chapter we get this rapid fire caricature of love. It is not rude.

It is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

[29:29] Love doesn't keep record of wrongs. It doesn't delight in the dirt that we might be able to dig up on others. Rather, it always protects. It will defend others rather than condemn them.

It is the spirit by which we see Jesus acting over and over through the Gospels. While he never excused and he didn't whitewash over it, he also didn't come with a condemning judgmental attitude.

It always trusts, always hopes. It puts the best possible face on something that someone else says or does before we know the full truth. It doesn't assume the worst.

So then, the seventh folly. The seventh folly of trying to please people compares ourselves with Jesus Christ, the perfect man. And it is this.

The seventh folly, it is futile to try to please people because even Jesus Christ, the perfect man, did not please everyone. It is futile to try to please people because even Jesus Christ, the perfect man, did not please everyone.

[30:39] How did Jesus do it pleasing people? Listen to a few examples and as you do, be thinking about how God, or how Jesus, responded to the criticisms he received, both in these passages and just in general of your knowledge of the Gospels.

Luke 7, 34, Luke 15, 2, Luke 19, 5-7, John 8, 45-48, may may prove me guilty of sin?

If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says.

The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

The Jews answered him, Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?

Think of the virtues of our Savior as he walked the earth.

Just stop and think about who this one is that was receiving all of this criticism. He was blameless.

He was good. He was wise.

[32:18] He was compassionate. He didn't show partiality. He was able, powerful, to bring unthinkable good to multitudes of people through healing and even the raising of their dead.

So if this Jesus could only please a small minority of people, how do you suppose you will fare with all of your sin and flaws and impotence?

If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household? Matthew 10.25. But there's a powerful lesson in how Jesus responded or didn't

respond to these criticisms.

So let me get your feedback, your response. What did Jesus do when he didn't please people? How did he respond to it?

Roger. Let him know that he was there to only please his father. He was there to only please his father. He was there to only please his father. Okay. Very good.

[33:21] He told them, he let them know that he was there to only please his father. Chuck. He prayed for them. He prayed for them. Very good.

Let me read another verse. Matthew 15.12-14. Then the disciples came to him and asked, Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?

I love this verse. He replied, Every plant that my heavenly father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them. They are blind guides.

If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit. What was his response there to the fact when he was given the revelation that he in fact offended some as if he didn't already know that?

What was his response? Dale? He just let them go. He left the judging to his father.

[34:23] Very good. Did he try to go back and patch it up? Not at all. And to me, that is a very powerful lesson as I apply this to my own heart and thought about times I have said things that should have been said that were right and proper, but the result was a broken relationship.

The result was somebody being offended and finding myself lying on my bed mauling over how can I make this right? How can I patch it up?

Boy, if that isn't convicting, that's a symptom that I'm a people pleaser. It really doesn't matter whether or not I did what was right in God's eyes. What's really of concern to me is I lost a relationship that I desperately want to get back.

Now again, there is nothing wrong with wanting to have good relationships with people as we began the lesson. But Jesus' example, I think, is powerful for us to be able to detect when we're crossing that line from it being a proper response of just desiring good relationships and when we have an inordinate desire for the pleasure of others.

Lastly, the eighth and final folly that we're going to consider today of trying to please people is that they are fundamentally incapable of being pleased by anyone or anything other than Christ.

[36:01] They are fundamentally incapable of being pleased by anyone or anything other than Christ. What's the only thing that's going to satisfy the restless craving heart?

Man's going to never cease in his efforts to satisfy his insatiable appetites and his idolatrous ways. But in the end, only God can satisfy that God-sized hole in every man's heart.

Proverbs 27.20 Death and destruction are never satisfied and neither are the eyes of man.

Ecclesiastes 1.8 The eye never has enough of seeing nor the ear is full of hearing.

Jeremiah 31.14 I will satisfy the priests with abundance and my people will be filled with my bounty declares the Lord. So do you really want to please people?

The only way ultimately to please people is by introducing them to the only one who can truly please and satisfy them the Lord Jesus Christ.

[37:11] Romans 1.16 I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes first for the Jew then for the Gentile.

If the gospel is the power of God to bring salvation and ultimate peace and pleasure for the people who receive it then why would I ever be ashamed of it? Well because as we've already spoken the same gospel that can transform lives and produce eternal relationships and friendships will also generate much opposition and produce many enemies.

So in conclusion it all boils down to this who do you live to please? Who do you live to please? Who do I want to please most?

People or God? No one can serve two masters either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. We could easily substitute you cannot serve both God and people. When I live to please people I have made them my master.

[38:24] When I live to please God I have made him my master. When I am ashamed of the gospel I'm declaring that my master is people rather than God. It's my prayer that God would grant us a heart and grace to live for his pleasure rather than for the pleasure of people.

for we've seen that you can please some people some of the time and all of the people none of the time. Next week we're going to explore the blessed truth that you can please God most of the time.

We're dismissed. Please may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
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