

Pleasing God

Scripture Reading: Galatians 1:1-12

At the time of the New Year, we often make resolutions. They usually are vows of better behavior that are good and beneficial, especially to ourselves. Very few people ask others to give them New Year's resolutions for them to do. What if God would offer to give you a list? You don't have to cancel your plans to lose weight or pursue better habits. Rather, put everything in this context: "In 2016 will I aim to please myself, or to please God? Thinking of the New Year beginning, we are tempted to ask, "What will happen to me; and to those I love; and to our nation; and to our world?" Perhaps we should also ask, "What will happen to please and honor God?" This message offers three basic areas that, the Scriptures say, bring pleasure to God. Let's see if we can make some God-pleasing resolutions for 2016.

Gospel – Are we dedicated to the Gospel that pleases God or that pleases men?

Galatians 1:1-12 (vs. 10). There is only one gospel that can save men's souls. There is only one gospel that honors and pleases God. There are many imitation and counterfeit gospels that are contrived by men.

- Do you believe a "popular" gospel or one that is mocked / ignored by men? See John 12:42-43; I Corinthians 1:18-25.
- Why do you believe the gospel? See I Thessalonians 2:13.
- Why and how do you share the gospel? See I Thessalonians 2:1-12 (vs. 4).
- How important is the gospel to you? See Galatians 1:6-9; Romans 1:1, 9, 14-17
(note Romans 1:17 ~ "...the just shall live by faith.").

Faith – Do we live by faith? Does our Faith please God?

Hebrews 11:1, 6. We cannot please God without faith.

- Faith is a matter of hope, trust and confidence in who God is and what He promises (Hebrews 11:1 "...the substance of things hoped for...").
- Faith is the persuasion – the conviction of things invisible, that are more real than things visible (Hebrews 11:1, 27 cp. II Corinthians 4:18 [vs. 6-18]).
- Faith, not only believes **in** God, but also **believes God** and seeks Him diligently (Hebrews 11:6 [read whole chapter]).
- Faith is what Jesus wants to see on this earth (Luke 18:1-8).
- Faith is not just a belief system. It is not just a set of actions and accomplishments we do in the name of faith. Faith is about **why** you do things and **for whom** you do things (II Timothy 1:7-12).
- Faith must be based on a relationship with Christ through His Spirit and through His Word (Matthew 7:21-27; John 15:1-8; Romans 10:17; 14:16-23; I Corinthians 3:10-15; Galatians 5:22-26; Hebrews 10:35-39).

Sacrifices – Do we offer God that which pleases Him?

Hebrews 13:15-16. Does our worship and service please God, or are we just trying to please ourselves? See Psalm 51:10-19; Hosea 6:6 (cp. Matthew 9:10-13; 12:1-7); Micah 6:6-8.

Hebrews 13:15-16 tells us to be praising, serving and giving.

- **We are to offer the sacrifice of worship and praise “by Him”** (*i.e. by Jesus ~ Hebrews 13:12*). See John 15:1-8; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:11, 21.
- **We are to offer the sacrifice of worship and praise to God continually, thankfully, humbly and submissively with a pure heart and a clean life** (Hebrews 12:28-29; Psalm 29:1-2; 32:11; 33:1; 34:1-3).
- **We are to sacrificially minister to others by doing good to them: giving and sharing of ourselves with others** (Acts 2:42-47; 4:31-35; 20:33-35; Romans 12:1, 9-21; Galatians 6:1-10; Ephesians 4:28-32; Philippians 2:17; I Timothy 6:17-19; Hebrews 10:22-25).
- **Does the work of the Gospel and our life of faith cost us anything?** See Hebrews 13:10-13 cp. II Samuel 24:18-25; Luke 14:25-35; II Corinthians 4:6-18; 6:1-10; II Timothy 2:1-13; 3:10-12.

Why is it a sacrifice to praise and glorify the Lord?

- **It requires the discipline of your mind, heart and body.** See Romans 12:1-2 cp. Philippians 4:4-9; I Thessalonians 5:23; II Timothy 1:7.
- **It requires the intentional and cheerful giving of time, attention and resources.** These are things that you would otherwise have given to your personal profit or leisure activities. See Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 12:6-8, 13; II Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-7; Galatians 1:10; I Timothy 4:13-16; Hebrews 10:24-25.
- **It requires cooperation with others.** You must work for unity among people who are diverse. You can't have everything just the way you want. [*Note: uniformity is a cheap imitation for unity.*] See Romans 12:1 (“*bodies*” is plural. “*a living sacrifice*” is singular), 3-5, 15-16; 15:1-7; Ephesians 4:1-15; Philippians 2:1-4, 14-16; Colossians 3:12-17.
- **It requires facing an unbelieving world** – which doesn't care and is hostile to God's values. See John 15:18-21; 16:1-3, 33; 17:14-18; Romans 12:17-21.

Consider your worship and praise a form of evangelism. See Isaiah 12:1-6 (*note vs. 4 “declare His doings among the people / nations”*); Psalm 117; 107:1-8; 145:10-12 cp. 31:19; I Peter 2:5, 9).

Consider people an offering or sacrifice given unto the Lord – people that we lead to Christ and help to follow Christ (Romans 15:8-12, 15-18). Do we bring God an acceptable offering of true disciples? Or are we just filling churches with “religious” people? See Malachi 1:6-14; Colossians 1:25-29; I Thessalonians 2:19-20; 3:8-18.