

Articles by George Goodman

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Things that Glorify God

There is a distinction to be drawn between pleasing God and glorifying Him. "We ought to walk and please God" (1 Thess. 4:1), and we should "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31), for thereto have we been chosen in Christ that we should be "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6).

Pleasing

God is giving Him satisfaction, so that it draws out special manifestations of His love and approval (John 14:21-23), even as the obedience of Christ "unto the death of the cross" drew out the love of the Father (John 10:17).

Glorifying

God has reference rather to the effect of our conduct on others. It is so living and acting that His excellencies are seen and His grace manifested, and others are led to praise Him. For example, if we let our light shine before men they see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Thus our works glorify Him. It was so with the liberality of the Corinthians, it was "abundant by many thanksgivings unto God" (2 Cor. 9:12).

We should be ambitious of both these things, to obtain witness (as did Enoch) that we please God, and also to show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

It is said even of inanimate objects that they do this latter, for "the heavens declare the glory of God, the

firmament showeth His handiwork." Since all our good works are "wrought in Him," and "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," all manifestations of the new life glorify Him as being His own work in us. This honor we may have, not in some things only, but in everything. We may do all to His glory and find in even the smallest duty an occasion of pleasing and glorifying God.

At a young people's conference, the question was raised, "Is God easy to please?" After some discussion, two thoughts were approved: (1) God as a gracious Father is easily pleased in the sense that every desire and effort made to do so is met with His love -- "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:18); (2) It is not always easy to the flesh to do God's will. It is those who "have suffered in the flesh" who cease from that which displeases God (1 Peter 4:1).

There are many things that especially please and glorify God. We need not distinguish between these in naming them, for all that glorifies God in our lives must please Him -- though the same is not true of the wicked, for God makes even "the wrath of man to praise Him" (Ps. 76:10). We may perhaps group them under seven heads.

1. Praise and Thanksgiving

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Ps. 50:23). When the Samaritan leper turned back and fell on his face at the Lord's feet giving Him thanks, Jesus described it as "giving glory to God." Contrast this with the words of the wicked and slothful servant who insulted his lord thus: "I knew thee that thou art a hard master!" We sometimes forget as children of God that to complain, murmur, and wear a discontented look is in effect to do

indignity to our Lord, as the slothful servant did. Onlookers might be excused if they said, "Surely these people have a hard master."

The glorious language of the Psalms teaches us how to magnify God in praise. "I will extol Thee my God, O King. I will bless Thy Name for ever and ever" (Ps. 145:1). A praising people, singing and making melody to the Lord with the heart is a wonderful testimony to the glory of God.

2. Faith and Confession

"Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). This is described in detail thus: "who against hope believed in hope," that is, he hoped in a hopeless case, because God had promised, "so shall thy seed be." He considered the difficulties and yet "staggered not." To look our difficulties boldly in the face and go on in faith glorifies God.

Faith laughs at impossibilities,
And says it shall be done.

So we are told he was "fully persuaded" that the promises would be performed, and this both pleased and glorified God.

To step out in faith, especially when a bold confession accompanies it, as when David faced Goliath with an open confession of his faith in God and a bold confidence in triumph, is well pleasing to God and glorifying to His Name (1 Sam. 17:45-47).

3. Good Works and Fruit-Bearing

These are spoken of in the Word as bringing glory to God. The verses are well-known. We have already quoted that men see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Shining here evidently has reference to good works. Our works should shine, that is, give evidence of the grace and power of God that is with us.

Fruit-bearing is expressly named as glorifying God. "Herein is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). From the words that follow, "So shall ye be My disciples," we gather that the fruit is not "winning souls" merely, as so often suggested, but character -- "the fruit of the Spirit" -- whereby the likeness of the Master is seen in the disciple.

4. Unity and Love

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). This is pleasing to God, for there He commanded the blessing (v. 3). Our Lord's prayer recognizes the same truth: "That they may be one in Us that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). A manifestation of unity in a world of strife will convince men that Christ has come and that He is with and in His people. The Lord emphasizes the same thing in the oft-quoted words, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Lack of unity and mutual love in an assembly is dishonoring to God, disastrous to the assembly, and gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

5. Giving and Sacrifice

"To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). The Holy Spirit often strikes this note. We recall the beautiful words: "God loveth a cheerful giver." The widow giving her two mites drew out the Lord's approval and commendation. Such sacrifices as hers, though unobserved by the crowd, still please Him who sat that day over against the treasury.

He

"who pleased not Himself," whose earthly walk is summed up in the words, "who went about doing good," set us the example. He washed the disciples' feet and at last gave Himself for us. Love never counts the cost; it is enough that the object is attained, the other blessed.

6. Suffering Wrongfully

"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Peter 2:20). The example of Christ is set before these words, with the reason: "that ye should follow His steps" (v. 21). So Paul adds: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (4:16).

The manifestation of grace is a new thing in the world. Real genuine love shown to those who are unlovable, who are fierce and cruel enemies; who hate, despise, and persecute; this is unknown in a revengeful world. But what a powerful testimony it is, how pleasing to God, because it is Christ-like.

7. Obedience of Faith

"Doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph. 6:6) is perhaps the best definition of the obedience that pleases God. It has been pointed out that that is not obedience that is done by constraint. To do the will of God outwardly, while the heart resents having to do it is not obedience. It is rebellion under the cloak of submission.

Such feigned obedience gives no pleasure to God's heart, and brings no glory to Him. It is that obedience that the Lord Jesus yielded to His Father that pleases God. "I delight to do Thy will. Thy law is within My heart" (Ps. 40:8).

It is this obedience that is promised in the New Covenant when the law is put into the mind (and so rightly understood) and written on the heart (and so gladly and willingly done). This obedience pleases God and without it nothing does.