

Exhort: How we may please our Heavenly Father

Reading: 1st Corinthians 7

In our New Testament reading in **1st Corinthians 7 and at verse 32** we read the following words:

“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord”.

Now not all of us present are unmarried or even if we are, are possibly even capable of remaining so. Nevertheless brethren and sisters, the end of this verse, still carries instruction for each and everyone of us, whatever our status.

How may we please the Lord? A question we all need to ponder from time to time. Now the word rendered “*please*” in this verse only appears three times in this particular form in the Greek - and three being the number of fruit - and they are all in this chapter, in verses **32, 33 & 34**. So then from the immediate context we find that this “*pleasing*” then takes place within a relationship and particularly in an intimate relationship, as is evident from the other two uses of this word within the context of marriage.

We all have voluntarily entered, such an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father, through the one we are here to remember the Lord Jesus Christ.

For we read in Psalm 50 and at verse 5:

“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”.

Due to the weakness of our flesh we tend only to evaluate relationships on the basis of what is in it for me? That is why the people outside in the world today choose to cohabit rather than marry. All the benefits without any of the responsibilities and ties, so that if it no longer works for me, then I can go off and choose someone else.

Yet what about our relationship with our Heavenly Father through our beloved Master brethren and sisters. How pleasing is our personal relationship to the Father? Does he derive pleasure from the current situation and circumstances of our lives? Are we in any way taking the time to build that relationship into our lives through doing the reading, prayer, meditation and other worship and fellowship activities? In short, my dear brethren and sisters, how intimate are we each with the Father in Christ?

Taking the point from that verse in Psalm 50, which speaks of being called to account at the Judgment. Would the Father be pleased with us today, so that we would here these blessed words “*well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord*”.

Coming back to the 32nd verse in 1st Corinthians 7. It is apparent that as much as our individual circumstances allow, we need to sweep away all other distractions and consider how we might within our own specific circumstances please our God.

The word rendered “*please*” in this verse speaks of striving hard to so please another by accommodating one’s self to their interests desires and opinions. It also carries the idea of exciting the emotions of someone else through your actions of yielding and giving yourself to them.

In Luke Chapter 3 and at verse 22 we read these words concerning the Master:

“And the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased”.

The Father’s emotions were so excited by his son’s faithfulness that he broke silence and spoke. For here was our Master accommodating his Father’s desires and interests by presenting himself to John to be baptised. The Lord Jesus Christ both yielded and submitted his will to that of the Father.

The Scriptures teach us that fulfilment and pleasure are not to be had in their fullest sense in pursuing our own agendas, but in seeking to serve others, after the example of the Master. Who we read elsewhere “*pleased not himself*” - and the word “*not*” in that reference in Romans chapter 15 is the absolute negative. Clearly indicating to us that he never pleased himself in anything and the closest he came to doing so was undoubtedly in the garden of Gethsemane. Yet even there we find the refrain “*thy will be done*”.

The Lord Jesus Christ valued his relationship with his Father above all others; nothing came in the way of it. Not his disciples, not his incredible work schedule that is why we read of him often getting up early to pray or even to have spent all night in prayer to the Father.

The Master brethren and sisters invested heavily in that relationship, just as we have to do in our closest parallel relationship of marriage in order to make it work. He sought to know the Father intimately that is why he is called the word made flesh, yes he was the one the Father choose to make strong for himself. But the Master voluntarily allowed the Father to waken his ear morning by morning, because as we read in the psalms “*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day*” and “*I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart*”.

The Lord Jesus Christ sought out the Father’s will in order to perform it and give him pleasure and in doing so he gave completely of himself, even to the death of the stake. We brethren and sisters are called upon to do likewise in our relationship with the Father through the Master give our selves to the son.

In 2nd Corinthians Chapter 11 and at verse 2 we find the following:

“For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”.

How are we each doing brethren and sisters when we line up our lives with the example of our Lord with this concept of giving ourselves in faith to please him who has called us to be soldiers for him?

We all need to become like the Apostle Paul, as is recorded in Galatians.

In Galatians Chapter 2 and at verse 20 we read:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”.

Here was a man whose life now flowed with love and gratitude for the work of the Master. A man whose very being now was oriented to seeking the pleasure of his Lord at all costs. The thing that so overwhelmed the Apostle Paul was the love that the Lord Jesus Christ had for him. The Apostle saw the **love of Christ** as the motivating principle in his life.

Since the Apostle had been crucified with Christ, he no longer lived, but rather the Lord Jesus Christ lived in him. What we have here is a new motivating principle that appeared into his life impelling him to manifest his crucified lord.

Thus what we have here is a living principle at work motivating and energizing his life with new meaning and purpose. The question needs to be asked *what is this new principle at work in Paul?* Well it is twofold as we see from the later part of the verse **faith & love**. Paul can place his trust in Christ, because he was entirely faithful. Let us see clearly what the Apostle is saying here that his life is based upon the faithfulness of Christ in the first instance then his faith in Christ's faithfulness towards him in the second.

Now we have the reasoning for the Apostle Paul's implicit faith and trust in Christ for we read *“who loved me, and gave himself for me”* in the final part of this 20th verse. **Note carefully** the personal nature of the link between Paul and Christ with the word *“who”*, which stresses the living relationship he has with the Master.

Now it is this motivating principle of love that will provide the means of our being strengthened to invest in our relationship with our Heavenly Father through Christ. Just as our beloved Master's love for his Father enabled him to overcome and do always those things, which pleased the Father.

Thus as the Master had faith in the faithfulness of Almighty God, so the Eternal Spirit through the Apostle Paul appeals to the brethren present to follow his example and place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore proving to all that Christ's death on their behalf has indeed been and is efficacious.

This 20th verse ends with the outcome of this tremendous love shown towards the Apostle Paul in that the Master “*gave himself for me*”. Again with the use of the word “*me*” we see the impact that this living relationship had upon the Apostle Paul. It is evident in the way he speaks of the Master here that values that relationship before all others.

The word “*gave*” in this 20th verse means “*to yield oneself into the power of another*” and in this case the Lord Jesus Christ did so in two senses.

Firstly he yielded himself to his Heavenly Father’s will in Gethsemane and **secondly** he lay down his life submitting it to the Jewish and Roman authorities that crucified him.

Now in the Greek these two important words “*love*” and “*gave*” are both Aorist (continuous) active participles. Thus they are still a daily principle in the everlasting life of the Master as he continually gives of himself in love to those in him, as he daily works to bring many sons unto glory.

Do you see brethren and sisters, just what this verse is saying that as the Father who in his good pleasure has promised to us a place in the kingdom? The Lord Jesus Christ is daily working to fulfil his Father’s pleasure in bringing it to pass, as even yet he is investing himself in our lives through giving and manifesting the Father’s love to us in his providential care.

Thus the love of Christ constrained the Apostle Paul to seek the Master’s pleasure, so ought we brethren and sisters.

Indeed in 1st Thessalonians Chapter 4 and at verse 1:

“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more”.

Are we so thronged by the love of our Heavenly Father and of our beloved Master for us that we too desire to emulate the great Apostle and seek to abound more and more in living a life pleasing to our God.

The word “*abound*” here speaks of tremendous abundance, the amount, how far we are willing to go. How much, what percentage (*30%, 60% or 100%*) of our lives are you willing to give over to seeking the Father’s pleasure?

Whereas the second word “*more*” given twice speaks of our attitude and desire in that it means “*more readily, more willingly and sooner*” to bring about this abundance of a life pleasing to the Father. Thus the Apostle Paul counted all things of his past but loss that he may win Christ And be found in him.

Now if truth were told brethren and sisters this overwhelming desire to please that motivated both the Master and his great understudy Paul is not readily present in us. For we read in the gospels “*the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*”, to which, we can add from Galatians.

In Galatians Chapter 5 and at verse 17:

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”.

We need to develop brethren and sisters the mindset of the Apostle Paul who as we read in **verse 25 of 1st Corinthians chapter seven** thought of himself in these terms: *“as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful”*. **Notice carefully** how the Apostle saw his faithful obedience, as a direct outworking of the Father’s mercy and compassion in calling him into the truth.

The key in this verse is two little words *“to be”*, we are not just called too something, but to become something, even faithful sons and daughters of the Living God. Visible manifestations of his character obedient in keeping all the commands of God, as the Eternal Spirit exhorts through the Apostle in **verse 19**.

In 1st Timothy Chapter 1 and at verse 16:

“Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting”.

Now brethren and sisters, we are not to despair, because the task of becoming faithful is in its self, a difficult and tremendous undertaking, which will take a lifetime of preparation and probation. No, neither are we to lament brethren over our seemingly apparent lack of progress or even backsliding towards a life of holiness, because we are not on our own in our work of being conformed to this pattern.

For as we elsewhere like the Apostle we are to be *“confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”*. Yet not only that we have the faithful examples of others both that great cloud of dead witnesses in the pages of scripture who yet speak to us and an equally great cloud of living witnesses in one another. That through their example we each may be provoked unto love and to good works by considering one another.

All of this, as powerful as it is in helping to motivate us in the right direction brethren and sisters and giving us a means to draw strength from is incidental to what we read elsewhere in Philippians and Ephesians.

In Philippians Chapter 2 and at verse 13 we read:

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”.

In Ephesians Chapter 2 and at verse 10:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”.

This work of bringing our lives into such a focus, so that they are eminently pleasing to our Heavenly Father is a work of the Father performed through his Beloved Son whom we shall shortly remember. Being assisted by those ministering servants sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Also that providence working in the lives of one another that we too assist in this work, as nourishment for the body flows down from the head impacting all the joints and bands together.

Yet in that 13th verse of Philippians two brethren and sisters we see how the Father impacts each of our lives directly through those providential means in that he provides the will to be faithful and then the strength to carry his commands faithfully out in our lives.

Yet sadly brethren and sisters as we sit here Sunday by Sunday the last thing we often feel is strengthened by his might in our inner man. Rather we often feel very weak, despondent and sometimes ashamed of ourselves. If this is your current state of mind you need to refocus yourself upon God, look up, dust yourself down and reconnect with the source of all strength.

To become so strengthened with all his might in our inner man we need brethren and sisters to use the weapons at our disposal. The word we have in our laps, our time of fellowship together and in particular in our prayers. Undoubtedly of these three weapons we have to strengthen the things that remain it is this last one of prayer that we as Christadelphians are most lacking in.

The reasons for this are many, but primarily they revolve around the following three things. Firstly the speed and pace of our lives which overwhelms us with daily cares, shutting out time for prayer. Secondly the lack of focus within the truth upon the weapon of prayer in our warfare against the flesh and as a means of bringing our lives into conformity with the Father's will, which is one of the chief goals of prayer.

Finally because prayer in its self is an eminently private affair and to speak too personally of it exposes us to one another in a way that makes us on one hand very vulnerable and on the other hand makes others uncomfortable and often embarrassed.

Yet prayer is without a doubt the key means of developing intimacy with our Heavenly Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. We need brethren and sisters to follow the Master's example and personally spend more time in prayer. We need brethren and sisters to spend more time talking to one another about prayer. Not just in exposition of the word, but also about how we personally pray and the content of those prayers.

Do we not read in 1st John 3 and at verse 22 the following:

“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Prayer does make a difference one only needs to look at the Master who was the very word made flesh. Yet he needed to constantly pray and nowhere is the impact of prayer more profound than in the garden of Gethsemane brethren and sisters. When the Master poured out his feelings and his incredible struggle at the most crucial point

in the whole of history. As he obtained victory over the flesh and was finally and fully able to submit it to the stake in fulfilment of his Father's will. Do we not read in Isaiah's prophecy that "*it pleased Yahweh to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*".

The pleasure of the Father in the chastening of our lives, just as with our Lord is not in the pain and the suffering, but in the fruit that comes from these necessary chastening experiences. Let us finish that verse in Isaiah 53 – "*he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand*". The same is true in our lives brethren and sisters for he chastens us "*for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness for afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them, which are exercised thereby*".

Let us take heart here brethren and sisters for as the Master was in the midst of his greatest struggle, he was not alone for we read in **John eight and at verse 29** the following:

"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him".

Indeed the Master took his three closest disciples, his friends into that garden, but they could not comfort him, rather they slept, we too will find times when our brethren and sisters are sadly no comfort to us due to the weakness of the flesh. But in the midst of the Lord Jesus Christ's great distress we read in the Eternal Spirit's account through Luke that "*there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him*". The Father was there and we too have that promise "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*".

If you feel all alone and that your brethren and sisters do not understand then rest assured that our Lord was in a similar position and understands and even the Father knoweth our frame we read that he remembereth that we are dust. Like our Lord then no matter what your situation and trials we are not on our own, no matter how isolated we may feel from one another at times.

Having briefly considered the Almighty's part in aiding us to bring our lives in conformity with his will and his good pleasure; we need to remember that we are called upon to do our part too.

In 1st Corinthians Chapter 7 and at verse 37:

"Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will".

The Father will if we employ those three weapons at our disposal give us both the will and the strength to walk in a manner that is pleasing to his sight, but it requires brethren and sisters that we allow him to work in our lives. Like the one we are here to remember we need to submit and yield ourselves to his will and as the verse I have just quoted said we need to stand steadfast, unmoveable in aligning our will with his.

We have been given authority over our own will, we have the choice every day like our beloved Lord to pursue that which is pleasing to our God or to pursue our own desires. Let us remember that they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

We know that our Heavenly Father has no pleasure in those that draw back through unbelief. If we are to be accounted just in that day we must live by faith and in faithfulness coming to God daily, recognising he rewards those that diligently seek him.

In Psalm 149 and at verse 4 we read:

“For Yahweh taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation”.

It is hard to grasp brethren and sisters that the Almighty, the Supreme Being of the universe takes pleasure in us mortals, who spend most of our time behaving like toddlers if the truth were told. Yet He does and not only that the Hebrew here indicates that this *“taking pleasure”* is not a once only momentary experience, such as when we were baptised, but it is a continuous daily principle the Father lives by.

Surely the least each one of us could do in return is to take his example and return it to him in a life not finding our own pleasure, but taking pleasure in him, reciprocating the love shown to us.

As we now focus upon the emblems upon the table we firstly see the bread which strengtheneth man’s heart. Even the example of our Lord the word made flesh given for us that we might learn what the revealed will and pleasure of the Father is and how it applies to each one of us today.

Then we see in this wine that maketh glad the heart of man; the example of the Master pouring out his soul unto death, giving us that motivation we should follow in steps pleasing not ourselves and laying down our lives for the brethren. Let us then brethren and sisters as it say’s in Ecclesiastes *“eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works”*.

In Hebrews Chapter 13 and verses 20 & 21

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

Bro Wayne Marshall