

Laboring to Be Pleasing to Him

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

Take your Bibles, if you would, go to 2 Corinthians 5, verse 9. We have a tremendous verse of Scripture tonight, forgoer, sender night. 2 Corinthians 5, verse 9, and we'll only have this one verse tonight.

2 Corinthians 5, verse 9. The Bible said, Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

And the Apostle Paul is headed down to tell us about the judgment, seat of Christ, and the fact that we'll be judged. He has talked to us about going to heaven. And Paul has this very strong desire to be pleasing to the Father, to be pleasing to God.

And I want to share that with you. So if you would, let's bow our heads for a word of prayer. And pray that we would learn tonight to have a hunger and a desire to please God with everything in us. Father, I love you. And I thank you for the wonderful opportunity of serving you.

[1 : 10] And I thank you, Lord, for the word of God. I thank you for how you gave us our Bible. And I pray, God, that tonight you might use it to bless us and to challenge us and to motivate us. And I pray, God, that you would work in Robert and Kelly's life.

And I thank you as a church family and as a church, Lord, you let us come together to be a blessing to each other. And I thank you for that, Lord. I praise you for all you're doing. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

You know, we often have a flippant attitude towards God and his word and work, God's work in his church. Sometimes we seem like we don't even take him seriously.

We don't show God often the same respect we would show people that we work with. Verse 9 is a verse that kind of goes to the opposite extreme of that. Paul said, I labor, I strive, I work at being pleasing to God, being acceptable where we may be accepted of him.

So if you got something or if you're going to write something down, the first thing I want you to look at is that word labored. Paul labored to be accepted of the Lord Jesus. That word means to have an ambition for something, to strive for something, to work at something.

[2 : 19] It's used other times in the Bible. In Romans chapter 15 and verse 20, the Bible said, yea, so have I strived to preach. That's the same word. I've labored to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.

Paul labored. Now he's going to work at something that you probably are sitting there thinking right now, well, I'm already accepted. I'm already accepted and I don't know why he's working at being accepted if he's already accepted. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 11, same word as study.

It says in there, and that you study to be quiet, that you work at being quiet and doing your own business and to work with your own hands as we can manage you. See, what Paul has is the first thing, labor.

Paul says, man, I have a goal of pleasing God. I'm going to work at pleasing God. It is what I want to accomplish in my life. I want to be pleasing to God. And then Paul says this.

He says in that verse, in verse 9, he says that whether present or absent. That's the second thing. And look at this, Paul said, it doesn't matter where I am. I want to be working towards the same goal.

[3 : 22] Paul said, it doesn't matter if I'm in front of you or away from you. It doesn't matter if I'm at church or I'm somewhere else. It doesn't matter if it's a secular day or a sacred day. I don't divide my life that way. Some of us almost act like, hey, you ought to be spiritual at church, but life is different when you're somewhere else.

It's like we put on our Sunday best clothes. You know, probably today in our society, maybe you don't have that distinction. But when I was a kid, we had Sunday clothes. We had school clothes.

We had work clothes. We had everyday clothes. And by the way, there was only about one set of each of those. And so you didn't wear Sunday clothes any other time. And when you got home from school, first thing you did was change.

It's almost like sometimes you and I don't have this attitude. I want to please Jesus. We could even come to a worship service and have in mind, I want to please Jesus at worship, but I don't really worry about that on Monday.

Paul said, I strive. I work at it. I study for it. I labor. I bust it to please God no matter where I am in front of you. Paul's goal was to be accepted of him.

[4 : 22] That word is to be pleasing, to do something that he likes. So just real quickly, go through some verses that you've already studied. Notice this. There's two kinds of accepted.

You see, I am accepted, but I want to be accepted. On August the 18th, 1973, Betty and I got married. Betty had accepted me back before that.

A few months before that, she decided that she would put up with me. She would accept me and she would marry me and she would give her life to me. And she would become Mrs. Gardner and not be Mrs. Ferguson.

And so she accepted me and I was accepted of her. And I praise God for that. And it's been all these years I've been accepted of her. But there's two sides of that equation.

I am accepted, but I want to work to be accepted. I am accepted, but I want to be pleasing. She is pleased with me, but I want to be pleasing to her. It's pretty logical that we ought to spend our...

[5 : 20] If you love somebody, you want to please them. Can you say amen right there? If you... Hey, you say, well, I know she loves me. Well, I didn't give you a right to act like a jerk just because she loves you. If she loves you, you don't go around and say, well, she loves me.

So I can be a jerk if I want to be a jerk. If she loves you, you work at pleasing her. First thing I want you to realize, Paul wanted to be accepted. But that... Paul knew he was already accepted. Here's some Bible verses. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 6.

Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 6. To the praise of the glory of his grace, where he has made us accepted in the beloved. He has, by his grace, made us accepted.

Everybody in this room, if you're a born-again believer, you are already made accepted. You are accepted by God. You ought to say amen right there. You ought to... You realize what that means? That means God is already pleased with you.

God is already happy with you. He's already got your name up in heaven. He already has a seat set for you. You're already seated in the heavenlies, according to the scriptures. We are justified. The Bible says in Romans 5, 1, therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

[6 : 19] I'm justified. I have peace with God. My sins are forgiven. 1 Corinthians 6 and 9 goes through there and it says, hey, do you know what? It names a whole list of people. It says, this is what a lot of people, what you were.

You were liars. You were adulterers. You were drunkards. But that's not who you are anymore. That's who you were. But that's not who you are now. So I'm accepted.

My sins are forgiven. I'm a new person. I've been washed. I've been sanctified. I've been justified. I am a new creature. 2 Corinthians 5, 17. I am a new creature.

So I am completely brand new. I'm accepted. I am justified. You name every good word in the world you can name for us. We got it. Boy, God has been good to us. So there's one side of it I am.

I don't have to worry about it. I do not have to go to bed tonight and say, I just hope he likes me still. He likes me. He likes me on my good days. He likes me on my bad days. He likes me when I do right.

[7 : 16] And he likes me when I don't do right. He likes me. He loves me. I'm accepted by him. But Paul said something interesting. Paul said, I know I'm accepted. By the way, Paul's one wrote both those verses about us being accepted.

And Paul said, I know I'm accepted. I know I'm pleasing, but I want to please him. Paul said, I know I am, but I labor. I know I am, but I labor everywhere I go. I know I am, but I labor to be accepted of him.

That's nothing that ought to surprise you. Look at Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holding acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable or pleasing and perfect will of God.

Romans 14, 18, Paul said, for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God. So tonight, can I just say to you that it would be silly for you to say, I know I'm pleasing and I will just relax.

[8 : 28] Now, you can relax in one sense. You can relax in one sense. You know, when Betty and I got married, I was very skinny and it didn't take very long for me to make up for being very skinny because for the first time in my life, I was accepted.

For the first time in my life, I was happy. For the first time in my life, I could completely relax because I found this person who liked me just like I was. But it would be very silly for me to say I am accepted and I don't have to work at it.

Paul wanted to be pleasing, acceptable to God. Take your Bible, if you would, and go with me to Ephesians chapter 5, or at least write this down and memorize it. I'd like you to read the verse with me, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 10.

I want you to read that verse with me out loud. And look, Paul's teaching the church and he says this, I want you to figure out what's pleasing to God. I want you to figure out what's acceptable to God. Would you all read that verse with me out loud, everybody?

It's on the screen. If you don't have it looked up, look out. Are you ready? Look what the Bible says. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. Say it again. What? Proving what is acceptable. I want to know what he likes.

[9 : 31] I want to know what's acceptable. By the way, you know, if you're going to a party, if you're going to an activity, if you're going to a banquet, you know what? The first thing you want to know is what is the right, acceptable way to dress?

How are we supposed to go to this? You don't want to show up in shorts and everybody else is in a tux. You just feel a little bit stupid if you did that. You know, and every one of us know this. You know that your parents, they got these certain things they like.

And so, you know, you just tend to try. If you love them, you're saying, I want to do what's pleasing to them. Paul said, hey, prove him. Paul said, I want you all to figure out what makes him happy.

What's he pleased with? Now, I know he already loves me. And I know he's already pleased with me. But I want to be pleasing to him. In Philippians chapter 4, verse 18. By the way, your missionary offering is pleasing to him.

See, if you go through the Bible, you can figure out what is pleasing to him. Did you know that when you give to your mission offering, it's pleasing? Philippians chapter 4, Paul's writing back about a missionary offering.

[10 : 30] They sent him and look what he said. I have all and abound. I am full. Having received of Aphrodite the things which were sent from you, an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

God liked your missionary given. God liked your missionary given. I want to please him, so I want to know what he likes. And so I want to give because I know that's what he likes. Can you say amen?

Do you want to please him? How many of you want to please him? One of the ways you can please him is by being a missionary giving, by giving a missionary offering. It pleased God when children obey their parents.

It pleases God when children obey their parents. I realize we don't have any kids in here. They take them out all the time. But it'd be a good verse somebody to remind them of. Children, obey your parents in all things. For this is well-pleasing.

Well-pleasing. The Lord in heaven loves it when children obey their parents. God is pleased. When we do his will as he works in us. When we do his will as he works in us.

[11 : 29] In Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 21, the Bible says, 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 him be glory forever and ever. Do you know God's at work in my life? Do you know God's at work in Robert and Kelly's life tonight? And God's plan for Robert and Kelly wouldn't have been my plan for Robert and Kelly. God's plan might have been Robert and Kelly's plan for Robert and Kelly.

But God knows what he's doing. And you know what he says? He said, when you realize what I'm doing and you accept that and you work towards what I'm doing, it is well-pleasing in his sight. In Colossians chapter 1 and verse 10, it says, That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

Unto all pleasing. As a Christian, you know what you ought to have in your heart? You ought to be saying, See, sometimes Christians are like this. I want to know what I can get away with. I want to know what's right. What's almost wrong, but not wrong.

I don't want to do wrong, but I want to get right up to the borderline of doing wrong. And I'm always looking for just as far away from right as I can get. That's completely the opposite idea in the Bible. The idea in the Bible is this is what she likes.

[12 : 36] This is what he likes. This is what pleases him. In the morning is when I get up at my house. When I get up, my wife likes to sleep in the morning. She likes to sleep anytime.

I mean, my wife can sleep 25 hours out of 24. Amen. But my wife, not really. I'm teasing on that, but you ought to figure that out by now. But my wife loves that last few minutes. I mean, that sluggard button on the top of the alarm clock, that would be her favorite button.

That extra 10 minutes. And so when I get up in the morning, when I get up in the morning, I'm telling you, I am like a thief. I reach down and I unplug my phone and I make sure I try my best not to let it click even when the wire pops out.

And I make sure the light doesn't turn on because I got it face down on the floor. And I'm like sneaking out of the room. And the floors are creaking because I'm old and the house is old. And I'm fat. And so I'm walking out toward it.

And I get out there. And then I pull the door to. And I don't turn the light on until I'm outside. I don't even, after I get the door shut, I still keep on creeping until I'm far enough away. I think, whew, don't think she'd hear me. You say, why would you do that?

[13 : 35] Because she likes that sleep and I like her liking what she likes and I want to please her. Can you say amen right there? You say, well, that's ridiculous. You probably do something sweet for your spouse. Maybe. And if you don't, maybe you ought to start. Huh?

Maybe you ought to figure out something that you would do that would be pleasing them. And here's what he said. He said that you might walk worthy of the Lord and all pleasing. And it ought to be like I'd walk around and say, can you believe he named me Christian?

Can you believe he named me a son of God? Can you believe he put his name on me? Man, I want him to be happy with me. I want him to be happy with the way I manage my time. I want him to be happy with the way I manage my talents. I want him to be happy with the way I manage my treasure.

I just want him to be pleased with me. The way I walk, the way I treat my wife, I just want to do what's pleasing to him. Paul wanted to please God, not man or even himself. In 1 Corinthians 4, verse 3, he said, With me it's a small thing that I should be judged of you.

Or of a man's judgment. I don't even judge myself. He that judges me is the Lord. He that judges me is the Lord. And in verse 5, the last part of the verse, he said, Then shall every man have praise of God.

[14 : 36] Paul was like, I really don't care if y'all like me or not. I don't care if I like me, but I sure want to hear him like me. Him like me. Paul taught people to live pleasing God.

1 Thessalonians 4, verse 1. Furthermore, then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk and to please God.

So you would abound more and more. I'm just going to give you an illustration. I'm finished. I'll give you an illustration once you realize something. Everybody in this room understands that about everybody but God.

If you have a successful marriage, you do things that please your spouse. And often they are things that you don't necessarily like. You have, you, I don't know what they'd be with you.

Maybe you've eaten something. And she fixes it. And you eat it. And you say you like it when you didn't really like it. And, and, uh, and, and she goes right there.

[15 : 34] Oh, you like that. So she fixes it again to please you. And you're like, Oh Lord, help me. So finally you get honest with you. You heard what a famous pastor of the Senate, a chaplain of the U.S. Senate said.

He said, uh, he said, uh, honey, if you'll bless this food, because I could never be honest and tell God, thank you for what you've just fixed. So, but I've tried not to say that too often, uh, in marriage.

Uh, uh, but, but you work at pleasing each other. You work at pleasing each other at Christmas. You work at pleasing each other at birthdays. You work at pleasing each other on a regular basis. And I hope you, you can't even have friends if you don't do that.

You got to be careful. This friend, my friend gets insulted when I say that word. So I won't say that word. You work at that. You do it at what place you work. You show that same attitude towards your boss.

You show that same attitude towards your coworkers. You show that attitude everywhere you go, except this somewhere, somewhere in the mix. Somebody told you, God loves you just like you are.

[16 : 29] So just tell him to drop dead. That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever thought of. But some of you seem to have that attitude. It's like I got saved and I'm saved by grace. Thank God.

And we don't believe in rules around here. No rules around here. Since there's no rules around here, I'll do what I want to do. But here's what it is. No, there's no rule, but I want to please him. There's no rule, but I want to please him.

You say, we don't, you don't have to, boy, you can go to vision. You can skip church service and nobody cares. Nobody cares. But you're not worried about what everybody cares. You're worried about what he cares. Huh?

You see, you can go to vision and never read your Bible, but who cares what everybody thinks of vision? Does he know what you do? Yes, he does. Does he care? Well, he'd like to, there are things that please him. I could easily go to your children and say, look, you're saved by grace.

You don't have to obey your parents. And y'all say, wait a minute now. I was taking that just a little bit too far. I say, hey, brother, don't be legalistic. Why y'all looking for rules?

[17 : 27] Y'all like rules, don't you? But you only like rules. Man, you men love Ephesians 5.22, don't you? Wives, submit. You love that verse. You hate Ephesians 5.21 where it says, submit you, eat one to one another.

We don't like that verse. That one doesn't even belong in the Bible. Say amen right there. Well, that one about women, that belongs. But you see what happens is I'm saved. I'm accepted. And Paul says something so simple.

Paul said, I labor. I work at it. I strive. I fight. I study. I figure out what is it I can do that pleases him. And I do it everywhere I go.

I do it every day. I do it in the morning. I do it at night. I do it everywhere. I do it when I'm with you, when I'm not with you. I want to please him. I want to be accepted to him. And you could easily say, Paul, aren't you accepted?

And he'd say, yeah, I am. That's why I want to be accepted to him. But you don't like me. I don't care what you think of me. But if you like me, I'm going to work at trying to be your friend.

[18 : 26] You see what's happening? How many of you are born again? Say amen. And let's labor everywhere. You see, you're a sinner. See, somewhere along the way, it's almost like, well, I'm not called to be a missionary.

So God doesn't expect as much of me. The truth of the matter is that, hey, he knows you're not much. He loves you just like you are. But the truth of the matter is you ought to labor. That's a pretty strong word.

Labor. That's a pretty strong. That's like, that's like a labor intensive word. That's like a work intensive. Let's like the Bible translate that word study. And by the way, study is hard.

And the Bible translate that word strive and striving. That's like men being in it. And it's labor. That's a super strong word to be accepted. I am accepted.

I am accepted. And I just tell you that any of us that just take for granted what we have will soon lose what we have. Thank God that won't happen with our salvation. But a man who's like, well, when I married her, I told her I loved her.

[19 : 29] And if I ever change my mind, I'll tell her. A pastor who would come up here and say, I really don't care what they think. You know, I'm the pastor, bless God.

And they voted on me being the pastor. And that settles it. And bless God, I'll just act like I won't. That guy won't be a pastor long. Not your pastor. He may even stay at the church, but you won't. Everything works the same way.

So why don't you apply that to the one who loves you most of all? And the one that loves you most of all is Jesus. The one that loves you most of all is Jesus. You ought to wake up tomorrow morning studying on how you could please him.

You ought to wake up tomorrow morning and say, it's going to be a little bit hard for me, but I'll strive to please him. You ought to wake up tomorrow and say, hey, man, I'm telling you, it takes a lot of work to please him, but I'll labor to please him.

Amazing. It takes that with everybody else, doesn't it? How long have you been married? You know, it takes work to keep bringing a check home. It takes work to keep a marriage together.

[20 : 29] It takes work. And guess what? Paul said, I labor. Whether I'm with you or whether I'm away from you, I labor to be acceptable to him.

Tonight, decide. Man, I love Jesus. And I want to do some pleasing things. I went through some of them. In the Bible, so you'd see them labor to be pleasing. Father, I love you.

And I magnify you. And I praise you. And I pray, God, you'd help your people to choose to be pleasing to you. To labor for it. Strive for it. Study for it. Work at it.

We want to please you. We love you. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church. For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to www.visionbaptist.com.

Good night. Water, church. The Bible, task of it. It's very sweet. It seems to have occurred in our lives. It's very beautiful.

[21 : 34] It must be in the sight of even though it's the■■■. It's very L Also. It's very sweet. Today we're going to be reasons for open and open. At the sign of Period permeation ■■■■ CAN Dear ult \$20 tide.