



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

NOG: Pleasing People or Pleasing God

Bible Reading: Galatians 1:6-13

[Watch LIVESTREAM here at 10am](#)

[Join our post-sermon discussion on Zoom at 11am](#)

[Join our citKids Connect discussion at 11am](#)

Summary: Galatians 1:10 is often overlooked, yet it's a key statement of Paul's *modus operandi*—not to please people, but to be a God-Pleaser. These are mutually-exclusive options—you either please people, or God; you cannot do both. Today there's intense pressure to please people at school, work, & via social media. Too often we're governed by others' approval/disapproval; we aren't true to our own convictions. What's the solution? Some sermons advise—'be more assertive; define your boundaries; you're responsible for your own happiness.' That may be good advice, but *it's not the gospel!* The NT message is *not* to be an autonomous 'Self-Pleaser,' but to become a 'God-Pleaser,' serving Christ as Lord. We examine how to do that. Paul exemplifies God-pleasing and says 'imitate me.' He's clear about his divine commitment; he resists peer-pressure from influential people. Paul was not arrogant, or egotistical; rather he values God's approval over human acceptance or rejection. We should too!

I. People-Pleasing in Today's Society

A. Today there's intense pressure to please people at school, work, & via social media. Often we're governed by others' approval /disapproval; we aren't true to our convictions. What's the solution? Some sermons advise—'Be more assertive; don't be a 'push-over.' Define your boundaries; you're responsible for your own happiness.' These may be good advice; *they're not the gospel!*

B. The Gospel—Good News, Not 'Good Advice'

- "There's an unbridgeable difference between moralistic good advice and biblical good *news* [the gospel]"—Jeff Hatton
- Tim. Keller says, "Advice is counsel about what you must do. News is a report about what's already been done...Advice says it's all up to you to act. News says someone else has acted. Advice urges you to make something happen. News urges you to recognize that something has happened & respond to it. [The Gospel is *good news*; it contrasts with good advice.]"—T. Keller

II. Gal. 1:10 Various Translations

?“Am I now *trying to gain the approval of people*, or of God? Or am I *trying to please people*? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a *slave of Christ!*” (Gal. 1:10 NET)

III. Key Statement or Throwaway Line?

A. Role of Gal. 1:10 – Various Assessments

- “It’s...difficult to determine why Paul...included 1:10 in...*Galatians*”—Martin de Boer
- “Gal. 1:10 is...often explained as ‘*an emotional outburst*’ in [which] ‘*Paul speaks in fervor*’ ”—David Hester
- Gal. 1:10 “should *not* be isolated *merely* ‘*as an emotional outburst*’...[It’s] *an interpretive key*.”—Brian Dodd
- “Gal. 1:10 is *not a mere addendum to a rebuke, but a foundational element*...of Paul’s message.”—Debbie Hunn

B. Mutually Exclusive Options – Please God or People (Gal. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:2-4)

?“We’ve been...entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but rather God...” (1 Thess. 2:2-4)

- “Paul poses 2 *absolutely incompatible goals: pleasing man, or...God*. There’s no possibility of combining the two.” [ESV]
- Not ‘Pleasing People’ “*does not mean...one must be insensitive or offensive when dealing with people*”—D. Michael Martin

IV. Paul’s Fundamental Motivation—to ‘Please the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5:9-10; 1 Thess. 2:4)

? “*We make it our aim to please* [the Lord]. For we must all appear before [Christ’s] judgment seat” (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

A. The Basic Divine-Human Dichotomy

- Paul: “I did not receive my apostleship or my gospel *from any human source*...I received [them] *from God & Christ and* [they] *are the ones I want to please*.”—Paul Koptak

B. Paul’s self-identification – “Slave of Christ” (Gal. 1:10d; cf. Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1)

- Paul’s self-designation: “‘*slave of Christ*’ primarily communicates Paul’s desire...*to please his Master*”—Daniel Cole
- “‘*Christ’s slave*’ is emphatic...‘*Christ is my Master & I am controlled by no one & nothing else*’”—Brian Dodd

C. No longer pleasing People – “If I were *still* trying to please people...” (Gal. 1:10c)

V. Paul’s Autobiography shows he’s Pleasing God, not People

“Gal. 1:10 is an interpretive marker, [so] we...expect...*people-pleasing vs. God-pleasing*...in the autobiographical passage (Gal. 1:11-2:21)...We are not disappointed.”—Brian Dodd

A. Paul converted; he has a new center & focus (Gal. 1:12-17)

B. Paul called & commissioned; he didn’t directly consult the Apostles (Gal. 1:13-24)

- “As for the apostles, he neither competed with them nor inquired of them...but rather ignored them.”—Paul Koptak

C. Resisting ‘enslaving false brothers’ in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10)

- *Paul proves...he’s not a ‘man-pleaser’...in his recollection of the Jerusalem Council & the incident at Antioch.*—Michael Bird

D. Opposing Peter & Co. at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21)

- “Gal. 1:10...*explains why Paul...recounts his public confrontation with Peter. He’s modeling how to stand firm against the pressure of influential people. Peter...caved in to people-pressure.*”—Brian Dodd

VI. Who are the People-Pleasers? The Galatians? The ‘Agitators’?”

VII. Paul as Paradigm—an Example for us to Emulate

?“I beg you, brothers and sisters: *Become as I am*, for I also have become as you are.” (Gal. 4:12)

A. Paul as a Model (Gal. 4:12)

B. Our Response—*are you trying to Please People or God?*

- Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475–1530): *'If I had served God as faithfully as [I served] man, I [would have] been better rewarded, & not forsaken in my distress.'* ['Distress' came when he fell from King Henry VIII's favor]
- C. Three Kinds of People
1. Self-Pleasers
 2. People-Pleasers
 3. God-Pleasers
- D. People-Pleaser OR Christ's Servant/Slave?

VIII. Traits of God-Pleasers

1. God-Pleasers realize they must (first) be Christian-believers (Rom. 8:8-9)
2. God-Pleasers study Scripture to understand what pleases God—"Try to discern what's pleasing to the Lord." (Eph. 5:10)
3. They are conscious, in everything, of pleasing the Lord—"Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things" (Col. 3:2)
4. They are more concerned with what God sees in their hearts than what people see in their appearance (1 Sam. 16:17)
5. God-Pleasers program their conscience by the Bible, rather than by culture (Rom. 12:2)
6. God-Pleasers do not shy away from necessary conflict or confrontation (e.g. Gal. 2:11)
7. God-Pleasers don't worry or fret when they displease people if, *by so doing*, they please God (2 Cor. 5:9)

IX. Are we a 'People-Pleasing Church' or a 'God-Pleasing Church'?

A. People-Pleasing Churches?

- "The 'attractational church'...think[s] of people as consumers, reinforcing...'church shopping' & turning pastors into commodities paid to provide the religious goods, services, & experiences that congregants can consume." –Rick Richardson
- 'God-Pleasing Churches'—Join God in *His Mission* [CIT's messages on '*Mission of God*' 2020-21]