

# The Key to Faith

How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? –**John 5:44**

This verse is a warning and an encouragement to you and me. The warning: if you and I do not make an attempt to receive the praise that comes from God rather than the praise of people, we too will find it impossible to exercise genuine faith. The encouragement: we are not required to have obtained the honor and praise of God, but only to make an effort to obtain it. God's commands are not burdensome (1 John 5:3).

He is not demanding that we perfectly repudiate the praise of people and absolutely receive His praise; He is only asking us to make an effort to obtain His praise. Nothing can be more reasonable than that.

What is so scary about this implication is that you and I could continue to miss what God may be up to in His church generally and in our lives in particular. If I choose the praise of people over God's approval, I will be a victim of unbelief. I will render myself incapable of believing God, as He wants me to. I will likewise miss whatever God has chosen to do at the moment. Jonathan Edwards taught us that the task of every generation is to discover in which direction the Sovereign Redeemer is moving, then move in that direction. But if I am found being enamoured with the praise of people during the time God is at work in my day or in my area, I will miss seeing His glory—even if it is right in front of me. That is what happened to the ancient Jews in Israel, and it can happen to us today. I can think of nothing worse than that.

This verse therefore contains an immense encouragement, namely, if I but seek—or make an effort to obtain—His honor, I will be able to believe and see what He is up to.

Excerpted from *Pure Joy* (Charisma House, 2006).