

What Happens When You Opt for the Praise of Men Instead of God's Approval

Joshua was keen to know whether God was on his side or the side of the enemy. This came up when he saw an imposing, awesome figure all of a sudden after the Israelites crossed the Jordan and were waiting on a divine signal what to do next.

He saw a man standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and asked, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" The reply: Neither. "No; but I am the commander of the army of the lord. Now I have come" (Josh. 5:13-14, ESV).

Joshua would have known that the true God is a God of glory, a jealous God. Moses was his tutor. But now that Moses is gone and Joshua has no peer to turn to, he must discover God for himself—as if this were a new revelation. The sight of this stunning man—an angel—was going to be Joshua's next lesson in the principles of the glory of God.

Joshua may have thought God owed Joshua assurance that God was on Israel's side. The truth is, God *was indeed* on Israel's side. But God deemed it was more important *at that time* for Joshua to learn more about God than to be reassured that He was on Joshua's side. Sometimes God delays answering our prayers in order that we may learn more about His ways first. God lamented that the children of Israel did not know His "ways" (Heb. 3:10). Here is a principle I put to you which I guarantee will lead you safely throughout your lifetime: Esteem God's ways as being more important than anything else you wish for.

Seeing the glory of God for yourself—not second hand—will help

eliminate the fear of man. You will be enamored with His glory—His will. The glory of God is the dignity of His will. Joshua needed to see this. It prepared him to conquer Jericho! Seeing the glory of God for yourself—that is, when you see how real He is, will enable you to stand alone and disregard the opinions of people. To put it another way: the glory of God is His own opinion. God has an opinion on everything; if you get to honor His opinion it is a guarantee you will be safe and victorious in all you do! Wisdom is getting God's opinion—and honoring it.

Most relevant is Jesus' diagnosis of the Jews as to why they did not believe in Him and consequently missed their Messiah: "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). When you *choose* the praise, honor and glory that comes from God rather than the praise of people, you are in good stead—I would say brilliant stead—for what God will do for you in the future. Two things follow: 1) you learn you made the greatest choice you will ever make and 2) you have found the best way to live.

When you opt for the honor of God vis-a-vis the praise of man, it is losing your life. The promise of Jesus follows: when you lose your life for the Gospel's, you find it; if you try to save it you will lose it (Mark 8:35).

The fear of man is basically selfish. We can be consumed with the fear of what people think about us, what they might do to us or say about us. But when you are fully consciously on God's side—wanting only what He wants, fear is eventually removed! It leads you to perfect love which casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

Most of us have a question like this when we think of obeying God's word: What's in it for us? We are in the "me" generation, as I said above. Consequently, too much Bible teaching today—whether in the pulpit or in Bible colleges and

seminaries—basically leaves this question in the back of our minds: What's in it for us? Most theology is anthropology—man-centered. It is time to ask the question: What's in it for God?

When we become convicted and convinced that the proper question is, what's in it for God? and we find out what that is and follow through with it, the fear of man is on the way out.

The Joy of Pleasing God

When God answers prayer, He pleases us. When He supplies our need, He pleases us. When things are smooth and not rough for us it is because God chooses to please us. We love it. And hopefully are thankful.

I put this question to you: which gives you more satisfaction—when God is pleasing you or when you are pleasing God?

Is this an unfair question?

Of course, we all prefer for God to please us. Paul said he knows what it feels like to abound and also what it feels like to be abased, how to cope with plenty and to be in need (Phil.4:12). Which do you suppose Paul would prefer? Easy answer: to have plenty, to be without want or in any pain. Of course!

But I put this challenge to you: learn to get your satisfaction from knowing you please God.

Let's back up: Do you *want* to please God? Would the knowledge that you please God thrill you? As we observed above, Enoch had the testimony before he was taken to heaven that he pleased God (). I would challenge you, dear reader, to get satisfaction more and more that you please Him.

You will ask: how can we *know* that we please God? Yes. It is

by trusting Him when things around you are not what you want them to be. For example, sometime ago I went through a period when nothing was going right—when I was low and feeling that God was certainly hiding His face. I was pleading with the Lord for a breakthrough when it suddenly came to me, “R. T., you preach that people should get their satisfaction from knowing that they please God. Now is a time for you to practice what you preach by knowing you please the Lord at this very moment—*by accepting things as they are*”.

Hebrews 11:6 says that we please God by faith; that without faith it is impossible to please Him. That means that when I keep my eyes focused on the Lord—and not circumstances around me—I may safely conclude I am pleasing the Lord! And when I see this, it gives me satisfaction. God knows everything I am thinking. He knows all that is going on around me. So, when things are adverse, it is as if God is handing me the privilege of knowing I please Him on a silver platter.

 My point is this: When I embrace the privilege of pleasing God by sheer faith, and esteem pleasing Him more than pleasing people, the fear of man vanishes. {eoa}

*The preceding is an excerpt from Chapter 6 of **R.T. Kendall's** book Fear (Charisma House, 2022). For more information or to order the book, visit .*

R.T. Kendall was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. Born in Ashland, Kentucky, he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (.) and Oxford University (.). Kendall is the author of numerous books, including Total Forgiveness, More of God, Word and Spirit and We've Never Been This Way Before.

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