



RICHARD BAXTER

**THE SIN OF  
MAN-PLEASEING**



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**The Sin of Man-Pleasing**  
**or that overvaluing the Favour and**  
**Censure of Man,**  
**which is the Fruit of Pride, and a great**  
**cause of Hypocrisy;**  
**or, Directions against Idolizing Man.**  
**by Richard Baxter**

**Introduction:**

**Directions Against Inordinate Man-  
pleasing**

As in other cases, so in this, iniquity consisteth not simply in the heart's neglect of God, but in the preferring of some competitor, and prevalence of some object which standeth up for an opposite interest. And so the obeying man before God and against him, and the valuing

the favour and approbation of man before or against the approbation of God, and the fearing of man's censure or displeasure more than God's, is an idolizing man, or setting him up in the place of God. It turneth our chiefest observance, and care, and labour, and pleasure, and grief into this human fleshly channel, and maketh all that to be but human in our hearts and lives, which (objectively) should be divine. Which is so great and dangerous a sin, partaking of so much impiety, hypocrisy, and pride, as that it deserveth a special place in my directions, and in all watchfulness and consideration to escape it.

As all other creatures, so especially man, must be regarded and valued only in a due subordination and subserviency to God. If they be valued otherwise, they are made his enemies, and so are to be hated, and are made the principal engine of the ruin of such as overvalue them. See what the Scripture saith of this sin: Isa. ii. 22, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Matt. xxiii. 9, "And call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father which is in heaven." ver. 8, "And be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master even Christ: but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" Jer. xx. 15, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Psalm cxviii. 6, 8, 9, "The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man,-yea, in princes." Job xxxii. 21, 22 "Let me not accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man: for I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." Job xxi. 4, "As for me, is my complaint to man?" Gal. i. 10, "Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be a servant of Christ." I Cor. iv. 3, "But with me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Luke xiv. 26, "If a man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life

also, he cannot be my disciple." "Blessed are ye when man shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven," Matt. v. 11-12. "Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers," Eph. vi. 6; Col. iii. 22. I Thess. ii. 4, "So we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth our hearts." Jude 16, "Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage." This is enough to show you what Scripture saith of this inordinate man-pleasing, or respect to man: and now I shall proceed to direct you to escape it.

## **Direction I. Do Not Run to the Opposite Extreme**

Understand well wherein the nature of this sin consisteth, that you may not run into the contrary extreme, but may know which way to bend your opposition. I shall therefore first show you, how far we may and must please men, and how far not.

### **The Proper Respect We are to Have Towards Men**

1. Our parents, rulers, and superiors must be honoured, obeyed, and pleased in all things which they require of us, in the several places of authority which God hath given them over us; and this must be not merely as to man, but as to the officers of God, from whom, and for whom, (and not against him,) they have all their power, Rom. xiii.; Exod. xx. 12; Titus iii. 1; I Pet. ii. 13; 2 Pet. ii. 10.

2. We must in charity, and condescension, and meekness of behaviour, seek to please all men in order to their salvation. We must so thirst for the conversion of sinners, that we must become all things (lawful) to all men, that we may win them. We must not stand upon our terms, and keep at a distance from them, but condescend to the lowest, and bear the infirmities of the weak; and in things indifferent not take the course that pleaseth ourselves, but that which, by pleasing him, may edify our weak brother. We must forbear and forgive, and part with our right, and deny ourselves the use of our christian liberty, were it as long as we live, if it be necessary to the saving of our brethren's souls, by removing the offence which hindereth them by prejudice. We must not seek our own carnal ends, but the benefit of others, and do them all the good we can.

3. As our neighbour is commanded to love us as himself, we are bound by all lawful means to render ourselves amiable to him, that we may help and facilitate this his love, as it is more necessary to him than to us: for to help him in obeying so great a command must needs be a great duty. And therefore if his very sin possess him with prejudice against us, or cause him to distaste us for some indifferent thing, we must as far as we can lawfully, remove the cause of his prejudice and dislike; though he that hateth us for obeying God, must not be cured by our disobeying him. Wee are so far from being obliged to displease men by surliness and morosity, that we are bound to pleasing gentleness, and brotherly kindness, and to all that carriage which is necessary to cure their sinful hatred or dislike.

4. We must not be self-conceited, and prefer a weak, unfurnished judgment of our own, before the greater wisdom of another; but in honour must prefer each other: and the ignorant must honour the knowledge and parts of others that excel them, and not be stiff in

their own opinion, nor wise in their own eyes, nor undervalue another man's reasons or judgment; but be glad to learn of any that can teach them, in the humble acknowledgment of their own insufficiency.

5. Especially we must reverence the judgment of our able, faithful teachers, and not by pride set up our weaker judgment against them, and resist the truth which they deliver to us from God. Neither must we set light by the censures or admonitions of the lawful pastors of the church: when they are agreeable to the word and judgment of God, they are very dreadful. As Tertullian saith, If any so offend as to be banished from communion of prayer, and assembly, and all holy commerce, it is a judgment foregoing the great judgment to come. Yea, if the officers of Christ should wrong you in their censures by passion or mistake, while they act in their own charge about matters belonging to their cognisance and judgment, you must respectfully and patiently bear the wrong, so as not to dishonour and contemn the authority and office so abused.

6. If sober, godly persons, that are well acquainted with us, do strongly suspect us to be faulty where we discern it not ourselves, it should make us the more suspicious and fearful: and if judicious persons fear you to be hypocrites, and no sound christians, by observing your temper and course of life, it should make you search with the greater fear, and not to disregard their judgment. And if judicious persons, especially ministers, shall tell a poor, fearful, doubting christian, that they verily think their state is safe, it may be a great stay to them, and must not be slighted as nothing, though it cannot give them a certainty of their case. Thus far man's judgment must be valued.

7. A good name among men, which is the reputation of our integrity, is not to be neglected as a thing of nought; for it is a mercy from God for which we must be thankful, and it is a useful means to our successful serving and honouring God. And the more eminent we are, and the more the honour of God and religion is joined with ours, or the good of men's souls dependeth on our reputation, the more careful we should be of it; and it may be a duty sometimes to vindicate it by the magistrate's justice, against a slander. Especially preachers (whose success for the saving of their hearers depends much on their good name) must not despise it.

8. The censures of the most petulant, and the scorns of enemies, are not to be made light of, as they are their sins, which we must lament; nor as they may provoke us to a more diligent search, and careful watchfulness over our ways. Thus far man's judgment is regardable.

## **Consider the Nature of Man in General**

But, 1. We must know how frail, and erroneous, and unconstant a thing man is; and therefore not be too high in our expectations from man. We must suppose that men will mistake us, and wrong us, and slander us, through ignorance, passion, prejudice, or self-interest. And when this befalls us, we must not account it strange and unexpected.

2. We must consider how far the enmity that is in lapsed man to holiness, and the ignorance, prejudice, and passion of the ungodly, will carry them to despise, and scorn, and slander all such as seriously and zealously serve God, and cross them in their carnal interest. And therefore, if for the sake of Christ and righteousness,



we are accounted as the scorn and offscouring of all things, and as pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people and such as are unworthy to live and have all manner of evil spoken of us falsely, it must not seem strange or unexpected to us, nor cast us down, but we must bear it patiently, yea, and exceedingly rejoice in hope of our reward in heaven.

3. Considering what remnants of pride and self-conceitedness remain in many that have true grace, and how many hypocrites are in the church, whose religion consisteth in opinions and their several modes of worship; we must expect to be reproached and abused by such, as in opinions, and modes, and circumstances do differ from us, and take us therefore as their adversaries. A great deal of injustice, sometimes by slanders or reproach, and sometimes by greater violence, must be expected, from contentious professors of the same religion with ourselves: especially when the interest of their faction or cause requireth it: and especially if we bring any truth among them, which seemeth new to them, or crosseth the opinions which are there in credit, or would be reformers of them in any thing that is amiss.

4. No men must be pleased by sin, nor their favour preferred before the pleasing of God. Man's favour as against God, is to be despised, and their displeasure made light of. If doing our duty will displease them, let them be displeased; we can but pity them.

5. We must place none of our happiness in the favour or approbation of men, but account it as to ourselves to be a matter of no great moment, neither worth any great care or endeavour to obtain it, or grief for losing it. We must not only contemn it as compared to the approbation and favour of God but we must value it but as other transitory things, in itself considered; estimating it as a means to

some higher end, the service of God, and our own or other men's greater good: and further than it conduceth to some of these, it must be almost indifferent to us what men think or say of us: and the displeasure of all men, if unjust, must be reckoned with our light afflictions.

6. One truth of God, and the smallest duty, must be preferred before the pleasing and favour of all the men in the world. Though yet as a means to the proving of a greater truth or duty, the favour and pleasing of men must be preferred before the uttering of a lesser truth, or doing a lesser good at that time: because it is no duty then to do it.

7. Our hearts are so selfish and deceitful, naturally, that when we are very solicitous about our reputation, we must carefully watch them lest self be intended, while God is pretended. And we must take special care, that we be sure it be the honour of God, and religion, and the good of souls, or some greater benefit than honour itself, that we value our honour and reputation for.

8. Man's nature is so prone to go too far in valuing our esteem with men, that we should more fear lest we err on that hand, than on the other, in undervaluing it. And it is far safer to do too little than too much, in the vindicating of our own reputation, whether by the magistrate's justice, or by disputing, or any contentious means.

9. We must not wholly rest on the judgment of and, about the state of our souls, nor take their judgment of us for infallible; but use their help that we may know ourselves.

10. If ministers, or councils called general, do err and contradict the word of God, we must do our best to discern it; and discerning it, must desert their error rather than the truth of God. As Calvin, and

after him Paraeus on I Cor. iv. 3, say, "We must give an account of our doctrine to all men that require it, especially to ministers and councils: but when a faithful pastor perceiveth himself oppressed with unrighteous and perverse designs and factions and that there is no place for equity and truth, he ought to be careless of man's esteem, and appeal to God, and fly to his tribunal. And if we see ourselves condemned, our cause being unpleaded, and judgment passed, our cause being unheard, let us lift up our minds to this magnanimity, as despising men's judgment, to expect with boldness the judgment of God;" and say with Paul, "With me it is a small matter to be judged of you, or of man's judgment, I have one that judgeth me, even the Lord."

11. God must be enough for a gracious soul, and we must know "that in his favour is life," and his "loving-kindness is better than life itself," and this must be our care and labour, that "whether living or dying" we may be accepted of him, and if we have his approbation it must satisfy us, though all the world condemn us. Therefore having faithfully done our duty, we must leave the matter of our reputation to God, who, if our ways please him, can make our enemies to be at peace with us, or be harmless to us as if they were no enemies. As we must quietly leave it to him what measure of wealth we shall have, so also what measure of honour we shall have. It is our duty to love and honour, but not to be beloved and honoured.

12. The prophecy of our Saviour must be still believed, that the "world will hate us," and his example must be still before our eyes, who submitted to be spit upon, and scorned and buffeted, and slandered as a traitor or usurper of the crown, and "made himself of no reputation," and "endured the cross," and "despised the shame;" leaving us an example that we should follow his steps, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when he was reviled,

reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed all to him that judgeth righteously." This is the usage that must be the christian's expectation, and not to be well spoken of by all, nor to have the applause and honour of the world.

13. It is not only the approbation of the ignorant and ungodly that we must thus set light by; but even of the most learned and godly themselves, so as to bear their censures as an easy burden, when God is pleased this way to try us; and to be satisfied in God alone, and the expectation of his final judgment.

**Direct II.** Remember that the favour and pleasing of man is one of your snares, that would prevail against your pleasing God: therefore watch against the danger of it, as you must do against other earthly things.

**Direct. III.** Remember how silly a creature man is and that his favour can be no better than himself. The thoughts or words of a mortal worm are matters of no considerable value to us.

**Direct. IV.** Remember that it is the judgment of God alone, that your life or death for ever doth depend upon; and how little you are concerned in the judgment of man.

## **The Judgement of God Compared to that of Man**

1. An humbled soul, that hath felt what it is to have displeased God, and what it is to be under his curse, and what it is to be reconciled to him by the death and intercession of Jesus Christ, is so taken up in

seeking the favour of God, and is so troubled with every fear of his displeasure, and is so delighted with the sense of his love, as that he can scarce have while to mind so small a matter as the favour or displeasure of a man. God's favour is enough for him, and so precious to him, that if he find that he hath this, so small a matter as the favour of a man will scarce be missed by him.

2. God only is our supreme Judge, and our governors as officers limited by him but for others, if they will be usurpers, and set themselves in the throne of God, and there let fly their censures upon things and persons which concern them not, why should we seem much concerned in it? If a beggar step up into a seat of judicature, and there condemn one and fine another, will you fear him, or laugh at him? Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master doth he stand or fall. Men may step up into the throne of God, and there presume to judge others according to their interests and passions: but God will quickly pull them down, and teach them better to know their places. How like is the common censure of the world, to the game of boys, that will hold an assize, and make a judge, and try and condemn one another in sport! And have we not a greater Judge to fear?

3. It is God only that passeth the final sentence, from whom there is no appeal to any other: but from human judgment there lieth an appeal to God.' Their judgment must be judged of by him. Things shall not stand as now men censure them. Many a bad cause is now judged good, through the multitude or greatness of those that favour it: and many a good cause is now condemned. Many a one is taken as a malefactor because he obeyeth God and doth his duty. But all these things must be judged over again, by him that hath denounced a "woe to them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness," Isa. v. 20. "He that saith to the wicked,

Thou art righteous, people shall curse him, nations shall abhor him," Prov. xxiv. 24. It were ill with the best of the servants of Christ, if the judgment of the world must stand, who condemn them as fools, and hypocrites, and what they list: then the devil's judgment would stand. But he is the wise man that God will judge to be wise at last; and he only is the happy man that God calls happy. The erring judgment of a creature is but like an ignorant man's writing the names of several things upon an apothecary's boxes; if he write the names of poisons upon some, and of antidotes on others, when there are no such things within them, they are not to be estimated according to those names. How different are the names that God and the world do put upon things and persons now! And how few now approve of that which God approveth of, and will justify at last! How many will God judge heterodox and wicked that men judged orthodox, and worthy of applause! and how many will God judge orthodox and sincere! that were called heretics and hypocrites by men! God will not verify every word against his servants, which angry men, or contentious disputants, say against them. The learning, or authority, or other advantages of the contenders, may now bear down the reasons and reputations of more wise and righteous men than they, which God will restore and vindicate at last. The names of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, and many other excellent servants of the Lord, are now made odious in the writings and reports of papists, by their impudent lies; but God judgeth otherwise, with more righteous judgment. Oh what abundance of persons and causes will be justified at the dreadful day of God, which the world condemned! And how many will be there condemned, that were justified by the world! O blessed day! most desirable to the just, most terrible to the wicked and every hypocrite. How many things will then be set straight, that now are crooked! and how many innocents and saints will then have a resurrection of their murdered names, that were buried by the world in a heap of lies, and their enemies

never thought of their reviving! O look to that final judgment of the Lord, and you will take men's censures but as the shaking of a leaf.

4. It is God only that hath power to execute his sentence, to our happiness or misery. "There is one lawgiver that is able to save and to destroy," James iv. 12. If he say to us, "Come ye blessed," we shall be happy, though devils and men should curse us; for those that he blesseth shall be blessed. If he condemn to hell, the applause of the world will fetch no man out, nor give him ease. A great name on earth, or histories written in their applause, or a gilded monument over their bones, are a poor relief to damned souls. And the barking of the wicked, and their scorns on earth, are no diminution to the joy or glory of the souls that shine and triumph with Christ. It is our Lord that "hath the keys of death and hell," Rev. i. 18. Please him, and you are sure to escape, though the pope, and all the wicked of the world, should thunder out against you their most direful curses. Woe to us if the wicked could execute all their malicious censures! Then how many saints would be in hell! But if it he God that justifies us, how inconsiderable a matter is it, who they are that condemn us, or what be their presences! Rom. viii. 33.

**Direct. V.** Remember that the judgment of ungodly men, is corrupted and directed by the devil and to be overruled by their censures, or too much to fear them, is to be overruled by the devil, and to be afraid of his censures of. us. And will you honour him so much? Alas! it is he that puts those thoughts into the minds of the ungodly, and those reproachful words into their mouths. To prefer the judgment of a man before God's, is odious enough, though you did not prefer the devil's judgment.

**Direct. VI.** Consider what a slavery you choose, when you thus make yourselves the servants of every man, whose censures you fear,

and whose approbation you are ambitious of. I Cor. vii. 23, "Ye are bought with a price. Be not ye the servants of men:" that is, do not needlessly enthrall yourselves. What a task have men-pleasers! they have as many masters as beholders! No wonder if it take them off from the service of God; for the "friendship of the world is enmity to God;" and he that will thus be "a friend of the world, is an enemy to God," James iv. 4. They cannot serve two masters God and the world. You know men will condemn you, if you be true to God: if, therefore, you must needs have the favour of men, you must take it alone without God's favour. A man-pleaser cannot be true to God, because he is a servant to the enemies of his service; the wind of a man's mouth will drive him about as the chaff, from any duty, and to any sin. How servile a person is a man-pleaser! How many masters hath he, and how mean ones! It perverteth the course of your hearts and lives, and turneth all from God to this unprofitable way.

**Direct. VII.** Remember what a pitiful reward you seek. "Verily," saith our Lord, concerning hypocrites and man-pleasers, "they have their reward," Matt. vi. 25. O miserable reward! The thought and breath of mortal men, instead of God-instead of heaven; this is their reward! Their happiness will be to lie in hell, and remember that they were well spoken of on earth! and that once they were accounted religious, learned, wise, or honourable! and to remember that they preferred this reward be fore everlasting happiness with Christ! If this be not gain, your labour is all lost, which you lay out in hunting for applause. If this be enough to spend your time for, and to neglect your God for, and to lose your souls for, rejoice then in the hypocrite's reward.

**Direct. VIII.** And remember that honour is such a thing as is found sooner by an honest contempt of it, than by an inordinate affection of it, and seeking it. It is a shadow which goeth from you if you follow it,



and follows you as fast as you go from it. Whose names are now more honourable upon earth, than those prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and preachers, and holy, mortified christians, who in their days set lightest by the approbation of the world, and were made the scorn or foot-ball of the times in which they lived? Those that have been satisfied with the approbation of their heavenly Father, who saw them "in secret," have been "rewarded by him openly." It is, even in the eyes of rational men, a far greater honour to live to God, above worldly honour, than to seek it. And so much as a man is perceived to affect and seek it, so much he loseth of it: for he is thought to need it, and men perceive that he plays a low and pitiful game, that is so desirous of their applause! As they would contemn a man that should lick up the spittle of every man where he comes, so will they contemn him that liveth on their thoughts and breath, and honour him more that lives on God.

**Direct. IX.** If nothing else will cure this disease, at least let the impossibility of pleasing men, and attaining your ends, suffice against so fruitless an attempt. And here I shall show you how impossible it is, or, at least, a thing which you cannot reasonably expect.

## **The Folly of Trying to Please Men**

1. Remember what a multitude you have to please; and when you have pleased some, how many more will be still displeased, and how many displeased when you have done your best. Alas! we are insufficient at once to observe all those that observe us and would be pleased by us. You are like one that hath but twelve pence in his

purse, and a thousand beggars come about him for it, and every one will be displeased if he have it not all. If you resolve to give all that you have to the poor, if you do it to please God, you may attain your end, but if you do it to please them, when you have pleased those few that you gave it to, perhaps twice as many will revile or curse you, because they had nothing. The beggar that speeds well will proclaim you liberal, and the beggar that speeds ill will proclaim you niggardly and unmerciful; and so you will have more to offend and dishonour you, than to comfort you by their praise, if that must be your comfort.

2. Remember that all men are so selfish, that their expectations will be higher than you are able to satisfy. They will not consider your hinderances, or avocations, or what you do for others, but most of them look to have as much to themselves, as if you had nobody else to mind but them. Many and many a time, when I have had an hour or a day to spend, a multitude have every one expected that I should have spent it with them. When I visit one, there are ten offended that I am not visiting them at the same hour: when I am discoursing with one, many more are offended that I am not speaking to them all at once: if those that I speak to account me courteous, and humble, and respectful, those that I could not speak to, or but in a word, account me discourteous and morose. How many have censured me, because I have not allowed them the time, which God and conscience commanded me to spend upon greater and more necessary work! If you have any office to give, or benefit to bestow which one only can have, every one thinketh himself the fittest; and when you have pleased one that hath it, you have displeased all that went without it, and missed of their desires.

3. You have abundance to please that are so ignorant, unreasonable, and weak, that they take your greatest virtues for your faults, and

know not when you do well or ill; and yet none more bold in censuring than those that least understand the things they censure. Many and many a time my own and others' sermons have been censured, and openly defamed, for that which never was in them, upon the ignorance or heedlessness of a censorious hearer; yea, for that which they directly spoke against; because they were not understood: especially he that hath a close style, free from tautology, where every word must be marked by him that will not misunderstand, shall frequently be misrepresented.

4. You will have many factious zealots to please, who being strangers to the love of holiness, christianity, and unity, are ruled by the interest of an opinion or a sect; and these will never be pleased by you, unless you will be one of their side or party, and conform yourself to their opinions. If you be not against them, but set yourselves to reconcile and end the differences in the church, they will hate you as not promoting their opinions, but weakening them by some abhorred syncretisms. As in civil, so in ecclesiastical wars, the firebrands cannot endure the peaceable: if you will be neutral, you shall be used as enemies. If you be never so much for Christ, and holiness, and common truth, all is nothing, unless you be also for them, and their conceits.

5. Most of the world are haters of holiness, and have a serpentine enmity to the image of God, being not renewed by the Holy Ghost; and will not be pleased with you, unless you will sin against your Lord, and do as they do. I Pet. iv. 3-5, "Walking in lasciviousness lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead." You must be counted as Lot among the Sodomites, a busy fellow that comes

among them to make himself their judge, and to control them, if you tell them of their sin. You shall be called a precise, hypocritical coxcomb, (or somewhat much worse,) if you will not be as bad as they, and if by your abstinence (though you say nothing) you seem to reprehend their sensuality and contempt of God. Among insane you must play the insane, if you will escape the fangs of their revilings. And can you hope to please such men as these?

6. You shall have satanical God-haters, and men of seared and desperate consciences to please, that are malicious and cruel, and will be pleased with nothing but some horrid iniquity, and the damning of your own souls, and drawing others to damnation. Like that monster of Milan, that when he had got down his enemy, made him blaspheme God in hope to save his life, and then stabbed him, calling it a noble revenge, that killed the body and damned the soul at once. There are such in the world, that will so visibly act the devil's part, that they would debauch your consciences with the most horrid perjuries, perfidiousness, and impiety, that they may triumph over your miserable souls. And if you think it worth the wilful damning of your souls, it is possible they may be pleased. If you tell them, we cannot please you, unless we will be dishonest, and displease God, and sin against our knowledge and consciences, and hazard our salvation, they will make but a jest of such arguments as these, and expect you should venture your souls and all upon their opinions, and care as little for God and your souls as they do. Desperate sinners are loth to go to hell alone; it is a torment to them to see others better than themselves. They that are cruel and unmerciful to themselves, and have no pity on their own souls, but will sell them for a whore, or for preferment, and honour, or sensual delights, will scarce have mercy on the souls of others: Matt. xxvii. 25, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

7. You will have rigorous, captious, uncharitable, and unrighteous men to please, who will "make a man offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought, and watch for iniquity," Isa. xxix. 20, 21. That have none of that charity which covereth faults, and interpreteth words and actions favourably, nor none of that justice which causeth men to do as they would be done by, and judge as they would be judged; but judging without mercy, are like to have judgment without mercy. And are glad when they can find any matter to reproach you: and if once they meet with it (true or false) they will never forget it, but dwell as the fly on the ulcerated place.

8. You will have passionate persons to please, whose judgments are blinded, and are not capable of being pleased. Like the sick and sore that are hurt with every touch; and at last, saith Seneca, with the very conceit that you touched them. How can you please them, when displeasement is their disease, that abideth within them, at the very heart?

9. You will find that censoriousness is a common vice, and though few are competent judges of your actions, as not being acquainted with all the ease, yet every one almost will be venturing to cast in his censure. A proud, presumptuous understanding is a very common vice; which thinks itself presently capable of judging, as soon as it heareth but a piece of the ease, and is not conscious of its own fallibility, though it have daily experience of it. Few are at your elbow, and none in your heart, and therefore know not the circumstances and reasons of all that you do, nor hear what you have to say for yourselves, and yet they will presume to censure you, who would have absolved you, if they had but heard you speak. It is rare to meet even with professors of greatest sincerity, that are very

tender and fearful of sinning, in this point of rash, ungrounded judging, without capacity or call.

10. You live among unpeaceable tattlers and tale carriers, that would please others by accusing you. Who is it that hath ears that hath not such vermin as these earwigs busy at them? Except here and there an upright man, whose angry countenance hath still driven away such backbiting tongues. And all shall be said behind your backs, when you are incapable of answering for yourselves. And if it be a man that the hearers think well of, that accuseth or backbiteth you, they think it lawful then to believe them: and most that are their friends, and of their party, and for their interest, shall be sure to be thought so honest as to be credible. And it is not strange, for a learned, ingenious, yea, a godly person to be too forward in uttering, from the mouth of others an evil report, and then the hearer thinks he is fully justified for believing it, and reporting it again to others. David himself by the temptation of a Ziba, is drawn to wrong Mephibosheth the son of his great deserving friend, 2 Sam. xvi. 3. No wonder then if Saul do hearken to a Doeg, to the wrong of David, and murder of the priests. Prov. xviii. 8, "The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds." Prov. xxvi. 20, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer the strife ceaseth." And when these are still near men, and you far off, it is easy for them to continue the most odious representation of the most laudable person's actions in the world.

11. The imperfection of all men's understandings and godliness is so great, that the differences of judgment that are among the best, will tend to the injury and undervaluing of their brethren. One is confident that his way is right, and another is confident of the contrary: and to how great contendings and injuries such differences may proceed, he that knoweth not in this age, shall not know for me. We need not go to Paul and Barnabas for an instance (that was a far

lighter case); nor to Epiphanius, Jerome, and Chrysostom; nor to those ages and tragedies of contending bishops, that in the eastern and western churches have been before us: every one thinking his cause so plain, as to justify himself, in all that he saith and doth against those that presume to differ from him. And surely you may well expect some displeasure, even from good and learned men, when the church have felt such dreadful concussions, and bleedeth to this day, by so horrid divisions, through the remnants of that pride and ignorance which her reverend guides have still been guilty of.

12. You have men of great mutability to please; that one hour may be ready to worship you as gods, and the next to stone you, or account you as devils, as they did by Paul, and Christ himself. What a weathercock is the mind of man! especially of the vulgar and the temporizers! When you have spent all your days in building your reputation on this sand, one blast of wind or storm at last doth tumble it down, and all your cost and labour are lost. Serve men as submissively and carefully as you can; and after all, some accident or failing of their unrighteous expectations may make all that ever you did forgotten, and turn you out of the world with Wolsey's groans, "If I had served God as faithfully as man, I had been better rewarded, and not forsaken in my distress." How many have fallen by the hands or frowns of those whose favour they had dearly purchased, perhaps at the price of their salvation! If ever you put such confidence in a friend, as not to consider that it is possible he may one day prove your enemy, you know not man; and may perhaps be better taught to know him, to your cost.

13. Every man living shall unavoidably be engaged by God himself, in some duties which are very liable to misconstruction, and will have an outside and appearance of evil, to the offence of those that know not all the inside and circumstances. And hence it comes to pass, that

a great part of history is little worthy of regard; because the actions of public persons are discerned but by the halves by most that write of them. They write most by hearsay; or know but the outside and seemings of things, and not the spirit, and life, and reality of the case. Men have not the choosing of their own duties, but God maketh them by his law and providence: and it pleaseth him oft to try his servants in this kind: many of the circumstances of their actions shall remain unknown to men, that would justify them if they knew them, and account them as notorious, scandalous persons, because they know them not. How like to evil was the Israelites' taking the goods of the Egyptians! and how likely to lay them open to their censure! So was Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son: and so was David's eating the shew-bread, and dancing almost naked before the ark; Christ's eating and drinking with publicans and sinners, Paul's circumcising Timothy and purifying in the temple; with abundance such like, which fall out in the life of every christian. No wonder if Joseph thought once of putting Mary away, till he knew the evidence of her miraculous conception; and how liable was she to censure, by those that knew it not! Oh, therefore, how vain is the judgment of man! And how contrary is it frequently to the truth! And with what caution must history be read! And oh how desirable is the great day of God, when all human censure shall be justly censured!

14. The perverseness of many is so great, that they require contradictions and impossibilities of you, to tell you that they are resolved never to be pleased by you. If John use fasting, they say, "he hath a devil," if Christ come "eating and drinking," they say, "Behold a gluttonous person, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," Matt. xi. 18, 19. If your judgment and practice be conformable to superiors, especially if they have admitted of a change, you shall be judged mere knaves and temporizers: if they are not, you shall be judged disobedient, refractory, and seditious. If you



speaking fair and pleasingly, they will call you flatterers and dissemblers: if you speak more freely, though in a necessary case, they will say you rail. If I accept of preferment, they will say, I am ambitious, proud, and worldly: if I refuse it, (how modestly soever,) they will say, I am discontented, and have seditious designs. If I preach not when I am forbidden, I shall be accused as forsaking the calling I undertook, and obeying man against God: if I do preach, I shall be accounted disobedient and seditious. If a friend or kinsman desire me to help him to some place or preferment which he is not fit for, or which would tend to another's wrong, if I should grant his desire, I shall be taken for dishonest, that by partiality wrong another; if I deny it him, I shall be called unnatural or unfriendly, and worse than an infidel. If I give to the poor as long as I have it, I shall be censured for ceasing when I have no more: they that know not whether you have it to give or not, will be displeased if you do not; and if many years you should maintain them freely, it is all as nothing as soon as you cease, either because your stock is spent, or because some other is made the necessary object of your charity. If you be wronged in your estate, if you go to law, they will say, you are contentious; if you let go your estate to avoid contention, they will say, you are silly fools or idiots. If you do any good works of charity to the knowledge of men, they will say, you are hypocrites, and do it for applause; if you do it secretly, that no one know of it, they will say, you are covetous, and have no good works, and though you make a greater profession of religion, you do no good; and others shall be censured so also for your sakes. If you be pleasant and merry, they will censure you as light and vain: if you be more grave and sad, they will say, you are melancholy or discontent. In a word, whatever you do, be sure by some it will be condemned; and do or not do, speak or be silent, you shall certainly displease, and never escape the censures of the world.

15. There is among men so great a contrariety of judgments, and dispositions, and interests, that they will never agree among themselves; and if you please one, the rest will be thereby displeased. He that you please is an enemy to another; and therefore you displease his enemy by pleasing him. Sometimes, state differences divide kingdoms into parties, and one party will be displeased with you if you be of the other, and both if you are neuters, or dislike them both; and each party think their cause will justify any accusations they can charge you with, or odious titles they can give you, if not any sufferings they can bring upon you. Church differences and sects have been found in all ages, and you cannot be of the opinion of every party; when the world aboundeth with such variety of conceits, you cannot be of all at once. And if you be of one party, you must displease the rest; if you are of one side in controverted opinions, the other side accounteth you erroneous: and how far will the supposed interest of their cause and party carry them! One half of the christian world, at this day, condemneth the other half as schismatical at least, the other half doing the like for them. And can you be papists, and protestants, and Greeks, and every thing? If not, you must displease as many as you please. Yea, more; if mutable men shall change never so oft, they will expect that you change as fast as they, and whatever their contrary interests require, you must follow them in; one year you must swear, and another you must unswear all again: whatever cause or action they engage in, be it never so devilish, you must approve of it and countenance it, and all that they do you must say is well done. In a word, you must teach your tongue to say or swear any thing, and you must sell your innocency, and hire out your consciences wholly to their service, or you cannot please them. Micaiah must say with the rest of the prophets, "Go, and prosper," or else he will be hated, as not prophesying good of Ahab but evil, I Kings xxii. 8. And how can you serve all interests at once? It seems the providence of God hath, as of purpose, wheeled about the affairs

of the world, to try and shame man-pleasers and temporizers in the sight of the sun. It is evident then, that if you will please all you must at once both speak and be silent, and verify contradictions, and be in many places at once, and be of all men's minds, and for all men's way. For my part, I mean to see the world a little better agreed among themselves, before I will make it my ambition to please them. If you can reconcile all their opinions, and interests, and complexions, and dispositions, and make them all of one mind and will, then hope to please them.

16. If you excel in any one virtue or duty, even that shall not excuse you from the contrary defamation, so unreasonable are malicious men. Nothing in the world can secure you from censorious, slanderous tongues. The perfect holiness of Jesus Christ could not secure him from being called a gluttonous person and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners. His wonderful contempt of worldly dignities and honours, and his subjection to Caesar, could not secure him from being slandered and crucified as Caesar's enemy. The great piety of the ancient christians excused them not from the vulgar calumny, that they met together for filthiness in the dark, nor from the cry of the rabble, *Tollite impios*, "Away with the ungodly," because they were against the worshipping of idols. I have known those that have given all that ever they had to the poor except their food and necessaries, and yet (though it was to a considerable value) have been reproached as unmerciful, by those that have not had what they expected. Many a one hath been defamed with scandalous rumours of uncleanness, that have lived in untainted chastity all their lives. The most eminent saints have been defamed as guilty of the most horrid crimes, which never entered into their thoughts. The principal thing that ever I bent my studies and care about, hath been the reconciling, unity, and peace of christians, and against unpeaceableness, uncharitableness, turbulency, and division;

and yet some have been found, whose interest and malice have commanded them to charge me with that very sin, which I have spent my days, my zeal, and study against. How oft have contrary factions charged me with perfectly contrary accusations! I can scarce remember the thing that I can do in all the world, that some will not be offended at; nor the duty so great and clear, that some will not call my sin; nor the self-denial so great, (to the hazard of my life,) which hath not been called self-seeking, or something clean contrary to what it was indeed. Instead therefore of serving and pleasing this malicious, unrighteous world, I condemn their blind and unjust censures, and appeal to the most righteous God.

17. If you have a design for a name of honour when you are dead, consider what power a prevailing faction may have to corrupt the history of your life, and represent you to posterity perfectly contrary to what you are; and how impossible it is for posterity to know whose history is the product of malicious, shameless lies, and whose is the narrative of impartial truth. What contrary histories are there of particular persons and actions written by men of the same religion: as of Pope Gregory VII and the emperors that contended with him; and about Pope John, and many the like cases, where you may read scores of historians on one side and on the other.

18. Remember that the holiest saints or apostles could never please the world, nor escape their censures, slanders, and cruelties, no, nor Jesus Christ himself. And can you think by honest means to please them better than Christ and all his saints have done? You have not the wisdom that Christ had to please men, and to avoid offence. You have not the perfect innocency and unblamableness that Christ had, you cannot heal their sicknesses and infirmities, and do that good to them to please and win them, as Jesus Christ did; you cannot convince them, and constrain them to reverence you by manifold

miracles, as Jesus Christ did. Can you imitate such an excellent pattern as is set you by the holy, patient charitable, unwearied apostle Paul? Acts xx.; 1 Cor. iv. ix.; 2 Cor. iv. v. vi. x. xi. xii. If you cannot, how can you please them that would not be pleased by such unimitable works of love and power? The more Paul "loved" some of his hearers, "the less he was beloved," 2 Cor. xii. 15. They used him "as an enemy for telling them the truth," Gal. iv. 16. Though he "became all things to all men," he could "save but some," nor "please but some," I Cor. ix. 22. And what are you that you should better please them?

19. Godliness, virtue, and honesty itself will not please the world, and therefore you cannot hope to please them by that which is not pleasing to them. Will men be pleased by that which they hate? and by the actions which they think accuse them and condemn them? And if you will be ungodly and vicious to please them, you sell your souls, your conscience, and your God, to please them. God and they are not pleased with the same ways. And which do you think should first be pleased? If you displease him for their favour, you will buy it dearly.

20. They are not pleased with God himself; yea no man doth displease so many and so much as he. And can you do more than God to please them? Or can you deserve their favour more than he? They are daily displeased with his works of providence: one would have rain, when another would have none. One would have the winds to serve his voyage, and another would have them in a contrary end. One party is displeased, because another is pleased and exalted; every enemy would have his cause succeed and the victory to be his, every contender would have all go on his side. God must be ruled by them, and fit himself to the interest of the most unjust, and to the will of the most vicious, and do as they would have him, and be a

servant to their lusts, or they will not be pleased with him. And his holy nature, and his holy word, and holy ways, displease them more than his ordinary providence. They are displeased that his word is so precise and strict, and that he commandeth them so holy and so strict a life, and that he threateneth all the ungodly with damnation: he must alter his laws, and make them more loose, and fit them to their fleshly interest and lusts, and speak as they would have him, without any difficulties, before they will be pleased with them (unless he alter their minds and hearts). And how do you think they will be pleased with him at last, when he fulfils his threatenings? when he killeth them, and turneth their bodies to dust, and their guilty souls to torment and despair?

21. How can you please men that cannot please themselves? Their own desire and choice will please them but a little while. Like children, they are soon weary of that which they cried for: they must needs have it, and when they have it, it is naught, and cast away; they are neither pleased with it, nor without it. They are like sick persons that long for every meat or drink they think of, and when they have it they cannot get it down; for the sickness is still within them that causeth their displeasure. How many do trouble and torment themselves by their passions and folly from day to day! And can you please such self-displeasers?

22. How can you please all others, when you cannot please yourselves? If you are persons fearing God and feel the burden of your sins, and have life enough to be sensible of your diseases, I dare say there are none in the world so displeasing to you, as you are to yourselves. You carry that about you, and feel that within you, which displeaseth you more than all the enemies you have in the world. Your passions and corruptions, your want of love to God, and your strangeness to him and the life to come, the daily faultiness of your

duties and your lives, are your daily burden, and displease you most. And if you be not able, and wise, and good enough to please yourselves, can you be able, and wise, and good enough to please the world? As your sins are nearest to yourselves, so are your graces; and as you know more evil by yourselves than others know, so you know more good by yourselves. That little fire will not warm all the room, which will not warm the hearth it lieth on.

**Direct. X.** Remember what a life of unquietness and continual vexation you choose, if you place your peace or happiness in the good will or word of man. For having showed you how impossible a task you undertake, it must needs follow that the pursuit of it must be a life of torment. To engage yourselves in so great cares, when you are sure to be disappointed; to make that your end, which you cannot attain; to find that you labour in vain, and daily meet with displeasure instead of the favour you expected; must needs be a very grievous life. You are like one that dwelleth on the top of a mountain, and yet cannot endure the wind to blow upon him; or like him that dwelleth in a wood, and yet is afraid of the shaking of a leaf. You dwell among a world of ulcerated, selfish, contradictory, mutable, unpleasable minds, and yet you cannot endure their displeasure. Are you magistrates? The people will murmur at you, and those that are most incompetent and incapable will be the forwardest to censure you, and think that they could govern much better than you. Those that bear the necessary burdens of the common safety and defence, will say that you oppress them, and the malefactors that are punished, will say you deal unmercifully by them; and those that have a cause never so unjust, will say you wrong them, if it go not on their side. Are you pastors and teachers? You will seem too rough to one, and too smooth to another; yea, too rough to the same man when by reproof or censure you correct his faults, who censureth you as too smooth and a friend to sinners, when you are to deal in the

cause of others. No sermon that you preach is like to be pleasing to all your hearers; nor any of your ministerial works. Are you lawyers? The clients that lost their cause, behind your backs will call you unconscionable, and say you betrayed them; and those that prevailed, will call you covetous, and tell how much money you took of them, and how little you did for it: so that it is no wonder that among the vulgar your profession is the matter of their reproach. Are you physicians? You will be accused as guilty of the death of many that die; and as covetous takers of their money whether the patient die or live; for this is the common talk of the vulgar, except with some few with whom your care has much succeeded. Are you tradesmen? Most men that buy of you are so selfish, that except you will beggar yourselves, they will say you deceive them, and deal unconscionably and sell too dear: little do they mind the necessary maintenance of your families, nor care whether you live or gain by your trading; but if you will wrong yourselves to sell them a good penny-worth, they will say you are very honest men: and yet when you are broken, they will accuse you of imprudence, and defrauding your creditors. You must buy dear and sell cheap, and live by the loss, or else displease.

**Direct. XI.** Remember still that the pleasing of God is your business in the world, and that in pleasing him your souls may have safety, rest, and full content, though all the world should be displeased with you. God is enough for you; and his approbation and favour is your portion and reward. How sweet and safe is the life of the sincere and upright ones, that study more to be good than to seem good, and think if God accept them that they have enough! O what a mercy is an upright heart! which renounceth the world, and all therein that stands in competition with his God; and taketh God for his God indeed even for his Lord, his Judge, his Portion, and his All: who in temptation remembereth the eye of God, and in all his duty is



provoked and ruled by the will and pleasure of his Judge, and regardeth the eye and thoughts of man, but as he would do the presence of a bird or beast, unless as piety, justice, or charity, require him to have respect to man, in due subordination to God: who when men applaud him as a person of excellent holiness and goodness, is fearful and solicitous lest the all-knowing God should think otherwise of him than his applauders: and under all the censures, reproaches, and slanders of man, yea, (though through temptation good men should thus use him,) can live in peace upon the approbation of his God alone; and can rejoice in his justification by his righteous Judge and gracious Redeemer, though the inconsiderable censures of men condemn him. Verily I cannot apprehend, how any other man but this can live a life of true and solid peace and joy. If God's approbation and favour quiet you not, nothing can rationally quiet you. If the pleasing of him does not satisfy you, though men, though *good* men, though *all* men should be displeased with you, I know not how or when you will be satisfied. Yea, if you be above the censures and displeasure of the profane and not also of the godly, (when God will permit them, as Job's wife and friends, to be your trial,) it will not suffice to an even, contented, quiet life. And here consider

## **The Advantages of Pleasing God Rather than Men**

1. If you seek first to please God and are satisfied therein, you have but one to please instead of multitudes; and a multitude of masters are hardlier pleased than one.
2. And it is one that putteth upon you nothing that is unreasonable,

for quantity or quality.

3. And one that is perfectly wise and good, not liable to misunderstand your case and actions.

4. And one that is most holy, and is not pleased in iniquity or dishonesty.

5. And he is one that is impartial and most just, and is no respecter of persons, Acts x. 34.

6. And he is one that is a competent judge, that hath fitness and authority, and is acquainted with your hearts, and every circumstance and reason of your actions.

7. And he is one that perfectly agreeth with himself, and putteth you not upon contradictions or impossibilities.

8. And he is one that is constant and unchangeable; and is not pleased with one thing to-day, and another contrary to-morrow; nor with one person this year, whom he will be weary of the next.

9. And he is one that is merciful, and requireth you not to hurt yourselves to please him: nay, he is pleased with nothing of thine but that which tendeth to thy happiness, and displeased with nothing but that which hurts thyself or others, as a father that is displeased with his children when they defile or hurt themselves.

10. He is gentle, though just, in his censures of thee; judging truly, but not with unjust rigour, nor making your actions worse than they are.

11. He is one that is not subject to the passions of men, which blind their minds, and carry them to injustice.

12. He is one that will not be moved by tale-bearers, whisperers, or false accusers, nor can be perverted by any misinformation.

## **The Benefits of Seeking to Please God**

Consider also the benefits of taking up with the pleasing of God. 1. The pleasing of him is your happiness itself; the matter of pure, and full, and constant comfort, which you may have continually at hand, and no man can take from you. Get this and you have the end of man; nothing can be added to it, but the perfection of the same, which is heaven itself.

2. What abundance of disappointments and vexations will you escape, which tear the very hearts of man-pleasers, and fill their lives with unprofitable sorrows!

3. It will guide and order your cares, and desires, and thoughts, and labours to their right and proper end, and prevent the perverting of them, and spending them in sin and vanity on the creature.

4. It will make your lives not only to be divine but this divine life to be sweet and easy, while you set light by human censures which would create you prejudice and difficulties. When others glory in wit, and wealth, and strength, you would glory in this, that you know the Lord, Jer. ix. 23, 24.

5. As God is above man, thy heart and life is highly ennobled by having so much respect to God, and rejecting inordinate respect to man: this is indeed to walk with God.

6. The sum of all graces is contained in this sincere desire to please thy God, and contentedness in this so far as thou findest it attained. Here is faith, and humility, and love, and, holy desire, and trust and the fear of God joined together. You "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and make him your fear, and dread, and sanctuary," Isa. viii. 13, 14.

7. If human approbation be good for you and worth your having, this is the best way to it; for God hath the disposal of it. "If a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," Prov. xvi. 7. God does this by appeasing their wrath, or

restraining them from intended evil, or doing us good by that which they intend for hurt.

## **Signs of Living to Please God**

See therefore that you live upon God's approval as that which you chiefly seek, and will suffice you: which you may discover by these signs.

1. You will be most careful to understand the Scripture, to know what doth please and displease God.
2. You will be more careful in the doing of every duty, to fit it to the pleasing of God than men.
3. You will look to your hearts, and not only to your actions; to your ends, and thoughts, and the inward manner and degree.
4. You will look to secret duties as well as public and to that which men see not, as well as unto that which they see.
5. You will reverence your consciences, and have much to do with them, and will not slight them: when they tell you of God's displeasure, it will disquiet you; when they tell you of his approval, it will comfort you.
6. Your pleasing men will be charitable for their good, and pious in order to the pleasing of God, and not proud and ambitious for your honour with them, nor impious against the pleasing of God.
7. Whether men be pleased or displeased, or how they judge of you, or what they call you, will seem a small matter to you, as their own interest, in comparison to God's judgment. You live not on them. You can bear their displeasure, censures, and reproaches, if God be but pleased. These will be your evidences.

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