

James Rafferty Q1-L3- 2025-A Worthy Goal-Jan 16

Lesson 3: To Be Pleasing to God (Thursday)

January 11-17

Thursday *January 16*

A Worthy Goal

Under the umbrella of God's mercy and mediation, God takes pleasure in even the smallest positive response to His love. Through the One who alone is worthy of love and is Himself perfectly righteous, each one of us can be counted righteous and counted among God's beloved who will live with Him in perfect love for eternity. This is the great hope of the redemption, which involves Christ's work for us in heaven.

But, you might wonder, can this include even me? *What if I am not good enough? What if I am afraid that I do not have enough faith?*

Read Mark 9:17–29.

“And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto

him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

1. **Straightway-when confronted with your weaknesses don't wait to make yourself better. Don't wait until your faith is stronger. Don't wait until all doubt is swept away. Act straightway.**
2. **Cried out-cry out to Jesus. Don't whisper. Speak in muffled tones. Don't act all polite and dignified. Cry out and shout thou inhabitant thou inhabitants of Zion for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.**
3. **With tears- life is tough. This world is evil. Our loved ones deserve our tears. Or our religious clichés.**
4. **Lord I believe. I do. I really do believe. I believe that You are good. I believe that You are all powerful. I believe that this is my Fathers world. I believe that though the wrong seems Oh so strong that God is the ruler yet.**
5. **Help. Please help. I can't do this without You. Help me. Help my son. Help us all. Help.**
6. **My unbelief. It's palpable. It's suffocating. It's debilitating. Please don't let my son be lost because of my unbelief.**

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no

more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

Mark 9:17-29 KJV

How does God respond to the man in the story? How much faith is enough faith?

The disciples could not cast out the demon; all hope seemed lost. But Jesus came and told the father, “ ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes’ ” (*Mark 9:23, NKJV*).

And the father tearfully replied,

“ ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’ ” (*Mark 9:24, NKJV*).

Notice, Jesus did not say to the man, “Come back to me when you have more faith.” Instead his cry, “ ‘Help my unbelief,’ ” was enough.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God (*Heb. 11:6*), and yet Jesus accepts even the smallest faith and, by faith (through the mediation of Christ), we can be pleasing to Him. Through faith and because of Christ’s work on our behalf, we can respond in ways that please God, similar to the way that a human father is pleased when a child brings him a gift that is otherwise worthless.

Thus, we should follow Paul’s counsel to make it our goal to “be well pleasing to” God (*2 Cor. 5:9, 10, NKJV; compare with*

Col. 1:10- **10** That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

1 Thess. 4:1- **1** Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

Heb. 11:5- **5** By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

And we should ask God to transform our interests to include the best interests of those whom we love, and to expand our love so that it reaches out to others. “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality” (*Rom. 12:10–13, NKJV*).

If God accepts us through Christ, how much more should we accept others? What light does the command to love your neighbor as yourself (*Lev. 19:18, Matt. 22:39*) and the golden rule to treat people the way you want to be treated shed on this idea?

