

DOING THAT WHICH PLEASES GOD

"Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Psalm 143:10

Many believe that David sang this psalm when he fled from Absalom. For David it was a day of darkness. He said, "The enemy hath persecuted my soul." He was a fugitive, trying to preserve his life. For David it was a day of discouragement. Concerning his enemy David said, "He hath smitten my life down to the ground." On days when everything seems to be against us we are prone to despair. He said, "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate." Frequently when hope has gone out of the life and despair has come in activity ceases. For David this was a day when memory made its contrasts. He said, "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands."

When a child of God enters upon days of darkness, discouragement, and despair, and when he contrasts them with better days, he is concerned about how to get out of such dark days and such unpleasant moods and into good ones. Our text points the way, namely, through earnest prayer to God.

I. The Prayer.

"Teach me to do thy will." "Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee, for thou art my God." How much we need to pray this earnest prayer! Five of the prayers in the Psalms begin with the words, "Teach me." It would be well for us to pray the same prayers.

1. "Teach me thy paths." Psalm 25:4.

There is a different path for the child of God every day. One day it is a path of pleasure, another day it is a path of pain, but if it is God's path it will be the right one. What we should do is to spend the day just as God wants it spent, and to do each day just what He would like for us to do. "Teach me thy paths, Lord, thy path for me today."

2. "Teach me thy way, O Lord." Psalm 27:11.

This includes the whole road of life. What a beautiful and wonderful thing that we do not have to plan our own lives! What a mess we would make of them if we did the planning! It is our joyous privilege and duty to go to God and say, "I want to know if Thou wilt unfold to me the journey of my life, and teach me as much about it as Thou dost want me to see at a time." "Teach me thy way, O, Lord."

3. "Teach me thy statutes." Psalm 119:12.

This prayer occurs nine times in this one psalm. What David meant by the word "statutes" was the "scriptures." What do we need more than a personal knowledge of the Word of God?

4. "Teach me thy judgements." Psalm 119:108.

This word which is here translated judgements is a rather difficult one. Concerning Isaiah 30:18, which states, "God is a God of judgement," Dr. George Adam Smith said, "the word 'judgement' is our word 'method'." That makes it very simple, "Teach me thy methods" — Thy methods of salvation, of holiness, of peace, etc. How much we need this knowledge!

5. "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God."

"Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee; for thou art my God." Many of us know the things that please God, but we do not try to do them.

What a beautiful prayer! "Teach me." I am not thinking about anybody else. Teach me what? "Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee; for thou art my God."

What was the key-note of Christ's life? He did not hesitate to tell us the ruling principle of His life. He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). He also said, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). There was one motive in the mind of the Master, and that was to do in His life what His Father wanted Him to do. I do not know of anything that will help us more to make our lives like the life of the Master than our faithfully praying David's prayer, "Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee, for thou art my God."

This is the prayer of one who is saved, and who desires to do the will of God. Not knowing what to do, David cried, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God." Having come to a place where many roads met, and not knowing which one to take, David asked God to direct him into the one which was appointed for him. From this humble prayer it is quite clear that David realized his need of instruction and direction as to the way in which he should go. Those who do not want teaching are usually very stupid in the realm of learning.

This is the prayer of a teachable man. He prayed, "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God." It is an acquiescent prayer — "Teach me to do thy will," not mine. He did not ask God to teach him to do that part of the divine will which pleased him, but all of God's will. His prayer of resignation is appropriate for every Christian as he stands at wisdom's door. We must not be satisfied to know God's will, but we must conform to it or do it. An ounce of doing is worth a ton of knowing. It is well to think about God's will and to talk about it, but it is far better and more profitable to do His will. If those who talk about God's

will would only do His will, it would be wonderful, but with so many church members the talk is better than the walk.

How should God's will be done? It should be done thoughtfully. It should be done immediately. As soon as His will is known it should be done. God's will should be done cheerfully. He would have us delight in the doing of His will. His will should be done faithfully and persistently, and just as fully and completely as we can possibly do it. Practical conformity to the will of God requires the guidance of the Spirit of God. That is implied in David's statement, "Thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." It is the Holy Spirit who works in us the willing and doing of His good pleasure.

II. The Answer.

Let us now think about the answer to this prayer. Two men were talking, and one of them shocked the other by saying, "I believe not only in praying but I believe in answering your own prayer." The other said, "What do you mean by answering your own prayer?" He replied, "I mean just this. If you are asking God for a big collection for foreign missions, I believe in putting my own hand down into my pocket as deep as it will go, and giving as much as I can. I call that answering my own prayer."

There are three ways particularly in which we can please God. There are some things which cause God to be delighted. "He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). "Mercy means"forgiving sin". God delights in forgiving sin. The attitude of most people is to pay the other fellow back, if he does them an injury. It is expressed by an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, or you hit me and I will hit you back. In contrast with that attitude God delights to forgive sin when people truly repent of it. Many professing Christians are stumbling-blocks in the communities where they live because their lives are not right. Their profession is right, but their lives are not right. One of the greatest ways in which we can please God is by seeing to it that our lives conform to His will. It also greatly pleases the Lord when you influence somebody to repent toward God and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. James wrote, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20). It might also be said that he pleases God.

In Hebrews 11:6 we read, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." God delights in being trusted.

First Samuel 15:22 says, "Hath the Lord as great delight in sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Samuel was angry with Saul because he did not obey absolutely; he went out and did only a portion of what God told him to do. God wants us to do just as nearly as possible what He has commanded us.

Here then are the ways in which we, as God's children, can please Him, namely, by seeking his pardon, by trusting His promises, and by obeying His commands. How important is the prayer, "Teach me to do the thing that pleases Thee." And if we please Him, it does not matter whether we please others.