

Week of August 26-Sept 1

PEOPLE-PLEASERS

Scripture Reading: Read Galatians 1

Yup. I admit it. For much of my life and early ministry, I was a people-pleaser. Oh, don't misunderstand. I wanted to please the Lord with my life. Unfortunately, under the surface, I also wanted to please people. I wanted them to like me. It's why I hesitated, at times, to deal with folks or situations when correction was needed. I didn't want people to be angry with me. It's also why many times I said "yes" when I really wanted to say "no" when someone asked me to volunteer to do a project or serve on a committee. I didn't want people to be disappointed with me. If you're a people-pleaser like I was, then you know what I'm talking about.

Sadly, people-pleasing comes at great personal cost. We forever live our lives for others while neglecting our own legitimate needs in the process. What makes it worse is that we often attempt to justify our actions and self-sacrifice as service to others for the cause of Christ! However, it is not for Christ that we are sacrificing but for our need to be accepted and affirmed. We please people because we need people. We need them to affirm us, to accept us and to make us feel safe. We are afraid of being rejected because our worth would be affected or so we believe. So we say "yes" when we want to say "no" to people. We give when we should really rest. We please and enable when we should challenge and empower. We keep giving and giving and feel guilty or selfish when we say "no" to people. Tragically, we end up becoming like a marionette on strings, a puppet under the control of others, living someone else's life and not the one God has given us.

The apostle Paul, on the other hand, understood the danger of being a people-pleaser and resisted its pull. Notice what he says in verse 10: *"Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."* Paul's response is swift and to the point. He was not a people-pleaser. Rather, he was a God-pleaser. He was not afraid of people nor did he feel obligated to please them when truth or principle was at stake. This didn't mean he was rude or brusque in his approach. He was more than willing to sacrifice himself and his needs for the gospel but it was out of a healthy motivation of love rather than the unhealthy motive of people-pleasing.

While Paul's declaration is in response to a charge by false teachers that he had watered down the gospel to make it more acceptable to the Galatians, the underlying principle still applies. We can either revere and please God or fear and please people. We can either be free in Christ to serve God or we can be a puppet on the end of a string and be under the control of others. I think it's time to cut the strings. How about you?

Action Step & Prayer Focus: When you examine your life, do you see any unhealthy people-pleasing tendencies? How often have you said "yes" when you really should have said "no" to someone's request? Have there been times when you have failed to address a situation because you were afraid of disappointing someone or having someone mad at you? Pray for the Lord to set you free from ungodly people-pleasing tendencies and to empower you to be a God-pleaser.

Take-a-way: *Be a God-pleaser rather than a people-appeaser.*