

Sermon Series: Living a Godly life in an ungodly world

To be used with: Pursue Godliness

Sermon Title Possibilities: Beautiful in the sight of God; In the eye of the beholder

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 14:1-8

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Living a Godly Life in an Ungodly World*, this sermon communicates is necessary for a person to live a life that is pleasing to God. Though the cost is high, receiving God's positive evaluation is worth the cost.

Introduction: What would you sacrifice? How important would it be? How much joy would it provide for someone of significance to give a positive assessment of your life? It is possible.

God called David a man after His own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Solomon had a nickname expressing what God thought of him: Jedidiah. The name means "beloved of the Lord" (1 Sam. 12:24-25). Asa, the sixth king of Judah, enjoyed this evaluation; he "did what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God" (1 Chron. 14:2). Each of these and many more like them had God's affirmation.

Though these men were imperfect, they were attractive to God. It wasn't their physique, personality, wealth, or position that drew God to them. Their actions and character made them beautiful. That statement should encourage you. It means you too can be pleasing in God's eyes. Here's how.

1. **Sever what is ugly.** *"he took away the altars of the strange gods" (v. 3, 5)*

During the reign of Solomon, God's people once again began a dangerous journey into idolatry. It wasn't difficult to sway the populace toward evil. The worship practices—many of which were gratifying to the flesh—were attractive to man's sinful nature. They still are.

Humans are drawn to evil. It appeals to us. It is beautiful...to us. But to God, evil actions are repugnant. They are ugly, gross, even sickening. And when God sees them in us, they cause Him to turn away in disgust.

Thankfully, Asa shared God's perspective. He saw the evil, and he did everything he could to eradicate it from the land. Asa didn't wait until he had earned the people's trust; he did not ask for anyone's permission. Like a physician dealing with a gangrenous limb, without mercy, delay, or regret, he amputated the diseased portions of the land.

If you want to be desirable to God, you must eradicate what repulses Him. Jesus said it this way: "If your eye offends you, pluck it out" (Matt. 18:9). Repentance is not easy. It hurts. It may create some level of hardship. But the amputation will remove the evil which has badly scarred the image of God in you.

2. **Seek what is good.** “*seek the Lord...do the law*” (v. 4)

“Good,” like beauty, is often based on acquired tastes. Good food, a good haircut, good music, a good word—each evaluation is determined by the participant. Most don’t recognize an objective standard for good other than what benefits them. However, there *is* a standard.

God is the measure of what is good because good emanates only from Him (Mark 10:18). What is attractive to our culture (and to us) is often repugnant to God. And what God sees as good offends the world (Is. 5:20).

There was little apparent opposition to Asa’s reforms. For a short time and in this small area, good was popular. But that won’t always be the case. Seek good—seek God and His way—regardless of whether it is pleasing, simple, or immediately rewarded. The only way to keep evil out is to fill your life with good.

3. **Strengthen what is weak.** “*walls and towers, gates, and bars*” (v. 6-7)

Due primarily to their preoccupation with carnal pursuits, the people had put little effort into their defenses. Their walls, physical and spiritual, were weak. Rot and decay had overtaken them. No one had paid attention. If an enemy attacked in their present condition, God’s people were in danger of horrible loss.

Now, no matter how tall the towers or how well guarded the gates, both were powerless to protect Judah without God’s help. Asa did not trust wood and stone to stop his enemies. This was a spiritual battle. Asa knew his only protection came from God. But just as it would be foolish for us to persistently drive the interstate with bad brakes and bald tires trusting God to keep us safe, so Asa wisely made physical preparations to compliment his spiritual ones (cf. Neh. 4:9).

What are your weaknesses? Instead of making excuses for why you can’t change them, learn from Asa’s example. Strengthen *what* you can *while* you can. Be warned. The enemy will not ignore you forever.

4. **Celebrate what God has given.** “*the Lord had given him rest*” (v. 7)

God’s people from any century are famous for complaining. What is your inclination when you find yourself among a group of whiners? Run away! How about when you see a festivity occurring? If you’re not bold enough to crash the party, you at least get close so you can discover the cause for rejoicing. Celebrations draw a crowd. A thankful spirit is beautiful.

Asa and Judah experienced an extended period of rest from their enemies. They rejoiced in it. Even more attractive was that they recognized the source of their rest. Their military did not provide peace. Stronger, larger, and better-equipped armies surrounded them. The calm, the rest, came from the Lord, and they knew it.

God has given you much to celebrate as well. Yes, at this moment, you may be enduring a terrible struggle. Rest seems like a distant memory. You can make it a present reality (Jer. 6:16; Matt. 11:28-30). The first step is to focus on

what is positive in your life right now and acknowledge God's good hand in providing that for you.

Conclusion: Beautiful to God? Pleasing to Him? It seems an impossible dream, and without God's help, it would be. We are sinners after all. But God is gracious enough, and His mercy is vast enough to enable Him to look down on His children and smile. Every time we choose good instead of evil, every time we recognize our weaknesses and work to overcome them, and every time we humbly acknowledge God's good hand in our blessings, we make our Father proud.

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