

**Date:** August 20-21, 2022

**Title:** *Clarity Everyday: Pleasing to God, Part 1*

**Scripture:** Psalm 19:12-14

**Speaker:** Kurt Bjorklund

Well, good morning, and welcome again to Orchard Hill. It is great to be here and to be together today. Sometimes when you come into a new season like fall, you ask some questions about what am I going to engage with this fall. And we're talking about being engaged in the life of the church this weekend.

And one of the questions that sometimes you ask rightly is, does it make a difference? Does it matter? And one of the sayings that we have around here from time to time is that the story of Orchard Hill will be told in the changed lives of people. And what we mean when we say that isn't Orchard Hill has this great story, that God's story is being told in people's lives and the story of life change.

And when we talk about serving teams or studies, you can rightly ask the question, will it make a difference if I invest in this? And every now and then we get a little glimpse into why it makes a difference. And earlier this year, in May, we had a baptism service at our Wexford campus. But this last weekend our Butler campus and our Strip District campus both had their baptisms. One was at Marine State Park, and one was in the parking lot downtown.

And it's just really cool to sometimes say God is at work changing people's lives and building into their stories through Orchard Hill. And for a lot of us, it's in places that we don't physically go to or people we don't know. And yet being a part of what God's doing here is a part of what God is doing there as well.

So, let's take a moment and pray. God, as we are gathered today, I thank you just for the stories of life change. And then the different campuses and places that Orchard Hill works and that we get a small chance to be a part of it. And God today, as we're gathered, I pray that you would speak to us through your Word, that my word would reflect your Word in content, tone, and emphasis. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, let me ask you a question today, and that is, can you please God? My guess is that there are a few different ways that those of us who are gathered would answer that. Some of us would say, well, I think so. Sure. And what we would say is that if I do the things that the Bible prescribed and avoid the things that it tells us not to do, that it forbids, then I can please God in some form, some way. Others would say, well, that's really religion at work, and that if you really understand the message of the gospel,

then you can't please God. That's what Jesus did on our behalf. And, some others would say, well, I can't please God so there's no point in trying. The standard seems so high. And so, I'm just going to do me. I'm going to do my life, and that's what I'm going to do.

And if you're a person who says, yes, I think I can please God, the challenge is that if you come to understand the Bible and that's what we've been talking about for the last several weeks, we've called this series *Clarity Everyday*, we've been looking at Psalm 19, and when you understand what the Bible says, what you realize is that if you try to please God, that you are constantly being retrospective and looking at everything that you do and saying, is it enough. How am I doing? And it becomes almost enslaving because there's always a standard, always something to evaluate it.

And what's further is if you really understand what Scripture says, you'd realize that all of our best efforts are ultimately, unless they are done to perfection, damnable. That's what Scripture teaches. And so, in a way it feels pointless. But on the other hand, if you simply say, well, no, I can't, please God, then what happens is you can very quickly degenerate into a place where you say, well, since I can't please God and I'm a sinner anyway, I might as well go ahead and sin because God is the one who will forgive. And what difference does it make in how I live my life?

And here's why this is important. You may say, okay, so it was a trick question. Can I please God? Which is it? Well, the answer is, in a sense, the Bible teaches both sides of this. Let me give you an example. Just because sometimes if we take a teaching from the Bible, and we take it to the end of where it takes us without considering the other parts of the Bible, we'll end up with a distorted view of how God works here.

Here's my example. So, in Ephesians two, it states that we are dead in our trespasses and sin. Theologians have called this kind of the idea of spiritual inability, the idea that we're dead to sin. And what the text says in Ephesians two is that it's God that makes us alive. And so, we here at Orchard Hill would be a church that stands in the reformed tradition, meaning that we believe that God is the primary actor in our salvation.

And so spiritual death means that I don't have the ability. I don't have the capacity to make some choices that make me pleasing to God, and that I need God to intervene on my behalf. And so, if I just take that to its end, then soon I say, there's no way to please God. I'm spiritually dead. That's all there is.

But there's another image that's used in the Bible for the relationship between people and God, and it's the image of marriage. In fact, you see this in Revelation 19,

where the church is the bride of Christ and Jesus is the groom, and he's prepared the church for this wedding. And this is an image that's used in other places in the Bible.

Jesus uses it in a parable and it's taught in the epistles, and it's even in the Old Testament, this idea of God's people being like a lover or like a bride to God. And one of the places where you see this is in the book of Hosea, where the prophet is told to take a wife who then chases other lovers.

And the prophet then chases his wife down and buys her back, even though she has given herself to somebody else. And the idea of this is in part to see God's love that even when we run from God, God pursues us. But there's also a sense in which it breaks the heart of God. And so, can we please God?

Well, in one sense, not at all. But in another sense, our choices still matter. They matter to us, and I think they matter to God. And so, over this series, we've been looking at Psalm 19 and we've talked about Scripture, the Bible, and we've talked about its authority. The idea is that basically, the Bible is God's Word in such a way that if we disbelieve or disobey the Word of God, then we disbelieve or disobey God.

To disbelieve or disobey the Bible is to disbelieve or disobey God. And we've talked about four characteristics of the Bible. We've used the acronymic scan, which is an old way to remember this, but we talked about the sufficiency of the Bible, clarity, authority, and the necessity of the Bible how all of these come together. And we took a week on each of these, and today we come to verses 12 through 14, and here we actually have the phrase, let my words and my meditations, the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my rock, my redeemer.

But here's what we read right before this. Verse 12, "But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. <sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression." And what we see in this text, I believe, are four types of sin. Four ways that you and I can say I maybe recognize the Bible or maybe I don't recognize the Bible, but we can still choose a path that's counter to what God has for us. And so, I'd like to look at these today. Here's the first.

I'm just simply going to say that this is ignorant sin and this is in verse 12 where he says, who can discern their own errors? And the word that's used here for errors in the original language is a word that means faults or errors. And according to one lexicon from Harris, Wauke, and Archer, which is one of the better Old Testament lexicons, they say that this word is tied to a root because in Hebrew, the consonants, there are three consonants and pointed differently with vowels, and so words often

have an extension and then a root. And so, the root word, they say, has a primary emphasis of being a sin that's done unintentionally. It's like straying from something.

In fact, Proverbs Chapter 19 uses this word, verse 27, this root word, it says, "Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." So, to stray, is the same idea as to unintentionally move away from something. And so, the idea of an ignorant sin is saying that there are some things that you and I don't even understand are offensive to God and not helpful for us. And yet they're part of our lives and sometimes it takes something happening for us to see it because we don't naturally see it.

You've heard it said if you've been around this church for a while, that if you're not the biggest sinner, you know that you don't know yourself very well. Because what happens when we come to understand ourselves is we start to see that there are patterns and there are choices and there are things within us, desires that don't please God and aren't good for us. And the more we grow spiritually, the more we'll see this.

And so, one of the reasons that sometimes we're ignorant spiritually of our own sinfulness is because what we're doing is we're just living with a sense of, kind of oblivion. And sometimes it's even planned to oblivion. It's like, well, if I don't read or study the Bible, then I don't have to understand what might be offensive to God or troublesome. And so, I just will plan not to read then I don't have any greater accountability. But again, what he's talking about here is the thing that you just don't fully see. So that's one type.

Here's the second type. And I'm going to say this is concealed sin. And we see this in verse 12 as well. He says, forgive my hidden faults. So, a different Hebrew word, the Hebrew word for errors was one that means unintentional sin. Here, the word means exactly what you think it would mean, something that's concealed. And when we conceal something, we tend to want to conceal it from God, from others, and from ourselves. So, to conceal something from God is in essence to say, I don't want God to see it.

I think it was Dallas Willard who told the story about a little girl who was staying with her grandmother and the one day that she was with her grandmother, she went out and it had rained and she decided to make chocolate out of the mud. And so, she got all dirty and made everything dirty. And the grandmother did what grandmothers do and it was like, that's beautiful, that's awesome. Let's not do it tomorrow. And so, she told her not to do it the next day, and the little girl was outside playing. The grandmother was sitting on the porch kind of watching. And the little girl said,

Grandma, don't look at me because she wanted to make chocolate again out of the mud. So, there's a little piece of us that wants to be unobserved in the things that we know are not right.

And so sometimes what happens is we will hide our sins in foolishness, thinking we can hide them from God because God is obviously everywhere and sees everything. So sometimes we want to hide our stuff from other people. Certainly, we don't need to share everything that we've ever done with everybody.

But here's the issue with concealing our sin from other people. And that is your secrets lead to shame. And what I mean by this is our secrets, things that that we keep to ourselves lead to a thought that says, if you really knew what I was like, if you knew what I had done, if you knew what I had thought, then you would think less of me.

And so, when we hide things sometimes from friends, sometimes from a spouse, sometimes from our parents, whoever it is, what we're doing is we're thinking they don't need to know. But what we're really doing is we're producing shame in ourselves. And so, we end up thinking that we're hiding our sin. But what we're really doing is we're creating in us a burden of shame.

Now, again, I'm not suggesting that you walk up to strangers and say, hey, let me tell you about what I did in 1999. What I'm saying, though, is that there are appropriate places where confessing our sins to one another brings life, and sometimes we hide our sins from ourselves.

I saw an article recently and it's about an actor who is very big in funding green sources of energy and trying to eliminate fossil fuels from our world. And I'm not going to tell you his name because that's not the point of this. But they did a little research on him and found that he had logged some ridiculous number of miles in private jets going back and forth to all these things. And the article I read said basically if he cared at all about green energy sources, maybe he would ride a bike once in a while.

And my point isn't as much about where you are on the energy issue, as much as to say there's something in us that says, If I donate to a cause, then I don't have to personally care about it. Or if I take care of something in one area, then I don't have to worry about it in another. And what happens is sometimes we can conceal even from ourselves the reality of what's going on.

And here's what happens when we conceal from ourselves or from God or from others our sin. And that is, it brings something into us that causes us in our own

hearts, our own souls, to wither. Here's why I say this. This is Psalm 32 verses one through three, it says, "Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>2</sup> Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit." But then listen to this. Verse three, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long."

So, not bringing your sin to light, not bringing my sin to light, is a cause for groaning, a cause for our bones wasting away. Because what we're doing is we're rationalizing our sin and hiding our sin, and as we do that, what we end up doing is we end up causing ourselves to waste away. You've maybe heard this, but how do you know if you have a drinking problem? Well, what a lot of people have said is you know you have a drinking problem if somebody close to you tells you, you have a drinking problem.

Now, that may not always be true, but the point of that is sometimes what we tend to do is want to distance ourselves from something that somebody says. We don't want to bring it to light. And sometimes what we need are people around us, close to us, who will be willing to tell us the truth. I've heard it said that your best friend is somebody who's willing to tell you the most truth, that what we need in our lives are people who will say, you know what, the way that you're parenting, the way that you're loving your spouse, the way that you've felt, falling away from following Jesus, the choice you're making in that relationship, the thing that you're doing that is not ideal for you, that's not God's best for you.

But what we tend to do instead is somebody comes and says, hey, you might have a drinking problem. What we do is, it's like, well, you have a drinking problem, by the way, that's gaslighting. That is the definition of gaslighting. But what we tend to do is we tend to say, hey, somebody else has this issue. It's not me or you think I have an issue. You should see so-and-so. And so, we're constantly trying to position ourselves in a place where it's like we don't have to actually deal with the words of people close to us. But again, your best friends are people who are willing to tell you the most truth. And sometimes that truth will not be what you really want to hear. So, there's a sin that's ignorant, there's a sin that's concealed.

Thirdly, there's a sin that's willful. We see this stated directly in verse 13, "Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me." And willful sins are presumptuous since it's where you know that something's wrong, but you choose it anyway.

See, sometimes an ignorant sin is something you don't understand, and then you realize it and you say, I'm going to cover this. Or, I made a mistake and I got into this.

A willful sin is where you say, I know this is wrong, but I'm going to do it because God's a God of grace, God's a God of forgiveness, and so what difference does it make? God will forgive me anyway.

The Hebrew word for this in this text is the word, zed. And it means to be proud or arrogant, entitled, or to presume basically upon God's forgiveness. And so, this is the idea of just saying, I'm going to do what I want to do.

And you understand this in other arenas, if you've ever tried to do it, you know how there are different iterations of kind of offenses in the diet. One of the things that most diets have is this thing that you need to reduce sugar. What is it? Americans consume something like 71 grams of sugar a day, which is a lot of sugar. And so, if you want to be healthier, you want to eat less sugar. Well, there's ignorance, right, with sugar, which is I had no idea there was that much sugar in that.

Then there's concealing it. I'm going to sneak some and not let my spouse see or I'm not going to tell myself that that has sugar. I'm not going to count it in whatever I'm doing. You get this right? Am I the only one who's ever done this? Because we're all sitting here stone-faced, like, yeah, you must have an issue.

And then there's willful, where you just say, you know what, it's cheat day, let's go. Now, when you're dieting, a cheat day is a glorious thing. But when it comes to our spiritual well-being, a cheat day is spiritually destructive because of the line that you see right here in the text. What does he say? Don't let me be given basically to willful sins. Why? So that they won't rule over me.

What happens when you give in to willful sin? It gets harder and harder to say no in the future. So, every time that you say, hey, it's cheat day, it's my day, I'm doing it anyway, what happens is it has a little more power, a little more sway, and it becomes harder and harder to break the habit.

And it usually starts with things that seem to be fairly small, inane, and inconsequential. God will forgive. There will be no consequence. And then people end up down a path where they say, how did I get here? Well, you got here because you said cheat day, woo hoo, along the way.

I love how the Book of Common Prayer puts this because it isn't just things that the Bible forbids, but it's also things that it instructs. The Book of Common Prayer and those of you in our Chapel service say this often in our liturgical section of the prayer of confession, and the prayer says, "Father, we confess to you the things that we've

done and the things that we've left undone, the things that you've commanded, that we've just ignored willfully." So, there's ignorance and there is concealed sin, and there's willful sin.

And then I would say that the lesson that we see here is a rebellious sin. And I say that because verse 13 says, "Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression." And this little phrase, great transgression, it's a Hebrew word, *pasa*. And transgression means, *pasa* means a rebellious action. This is where you don't just willfully say, well, I'm going to do this, I know it isn't right, and God will forgive me because he's a God of grace. But this is where you say, I don't care, this isn't wrong. I'm doing what I want to do anyway. And the problem with this, again, is that this puts us into a place where we become hard-hearted. Listen to the words of Hebrews chapter three verses 12 and 13.

<sup>12</sup>See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup>But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." Sin's deceitfulness is where you and I come to a point where what we do is say, what's right in God's sight doesn't matter, or what God says is wrong, it doesn't matter because I have this dialed in. I know better. And that is rebellion. And it's rebellion against what God wants.

A lot of times we tend to think of God as some kind of cosmic cop that's trying to draw boundaries around anybody having a good time or anybody doing anything that's good. But the truth is, he's a loving father who knows how we were created and wants our best and has called us to something through his Word that respects the way in which we were made.

And you can see in these words, kind of the idea of ignorance to concealed, willful to rebellious, that there's a progression, that we move in a pathway through this sometimes. And when we do, what happens is we put ourselves in a place where our hearts can get hard from what God has for us.

The other day I got up, and I often will spend the first few moments of my day reading Scripture and reflecting on it. Sometimes I'll journal a prayer. And I got up, and I was thinking about how much I don't always prioritize loving God, loving others, but I love myself more than God or others. And I ended up having a moment where I wrote a prayer in my journal, and for me, it was a really sweet moment. It was a moment of genuine, God, I don't want that to be true of me today. I want to love you more than I love myself. I want to love others more than I love myself. And if you've ever had a moment like this where you're sincere, you know you're sincere, you're just saying, God, that is what I want to do today.



Okay, so I finish that, and I start on my to-do list, and I had a lot of stuff I wanted to get done. One of the things I wanted to get done was a haircut. And where I go to get my haircut is you can register online once the place opens and try to time it so that you can go up and you don't have to sit there for a half hour waiting for the next stylist to be available.

But if you go right when the place opens, the online portal isn't open. And so, the way to get in and out as fast as possible is to be there before everyone else is there. But you want to time that right as well because you don't want to stand there for 15 minutes before the place opens. So, you want to get there at just the right time, walk in, get a stylist, be done, and not have to wait. Do you understand what I'm saying here? Right.

So, I'm driving over to this place now after I've had this great moment with God, I want to love others better than myself today. And I get behind this person who's driving really slowly and I'm thinking, come on, I want to get there. I don't want to have to be in the second wave and give up 15 minutes of my day because I'm really important. I have things to do. Ignorance at this point. Okay. Not aware. So, I pulled into the place. The guy pulls in ahead of me. He has a nicer car than me, so he pulls out about four or five spaces and pulls in where no one can dent his car. I have the scratch and dent car. That's okay.

And so, I pulled in closer to the place. I look over and I see if I get out right now and move, I'm going to beat him to the counter. I beat him to the counter. I get my name in. He sits down, and I go to the stylist immediately and get my hair done. He's still sitting there when I'm making my way out and I'm thinking, sweet. I saved 15 minutes. Now, you get where I'm going with this right now. I don't think it's sinful inherently to size up an opportunity and say, I'm going to go in line before somebody else gets there. But at that moment, I think it was for me because I had had this moment with God, I want to love others more than myself today.

And I had one thought when I got in that car behind that guy, and that was I hope he's not going where I'm going. I want to get in line before him because I'm more important than him. And at some point, the reason I tell you this is because you and I, no matter how much we say I want to please God, even after our best moments, will inevitably blow it.

And that's why this text is beautiful, because what does it say at the end? That we'll be blameless, we'll be innocent. It's not that I'm blameless or innocent because I never sin. It's because of what Jesus has done. And the evidence in the text is right here

where he says this about my rock and my redeemer. "Let the words of my mouth, the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, my rock and my redeemer."

Well, what's a redeemer? A redeemer is one who buys somebody back from the slave market. This is the story in Hosea that we started with. Hosea goes and he finds his wife, who had been sold probably into a degrading place, and he buys her back. And it's a picture of God buying us back. And it's about our inability, and it's about His capacity. It's about the value that God assigns to us.

And this is the message of Jesus Christ for you and me. And so, the issue ultimately is to say, I understand that even if I won't please you, you're my redeemer. But because you've redeemed me and called me blameless and innocent, there is more for me to aspire to and more that you have for me than simply to be a sinner.

I love the Ministry of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous in this sense. And that is when people have struggled, they bring people together, and you don't have to have ever gone to a meeting to know, but when they bring people together, what's the first thing they do? They say, hi, my name is and I'm an addict or an alcoholic.

And the idea is to say, we want to break down the barrier that says, I don't have an issue. Now, I think that's a good thing to start but have you noticed that sometimes when people are in it for 30-40 years, they still say, I'm an addict or I'm an alcoholic? And maybe that's helpful for some people.

But sometimes in the church, what happens is people say, I'm so-and-so and I'm a sinner. And the way that they use it is to say, oh, well, I can't help it. I'm just a sinner. And God's just a forgiver. And there's truth to that. But in the Bible, you're not just called a sinner. If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, you're also called a saint.

And what that means is that you've been given a new disposition. And so, yes, God's law is demanding in such a way that it demands perfection and faithfulness. And you and I will never meet it. But the gospel message is God declares that it's His faithfulness on our behalf through Jesus Christ that gives us standing. But now He says, live as one who is invited into something more.

I mentioned earlier that sometimes our perception is that God is a God in such a way that we think of Him as a cosmic cop, drawing boundaries for us to stay within. I think it's way better to think of him not as a cosmic cop, but as a loving father. And the reason that I say this is because what happens for some of us is we believe that our

way of seeing things is better than God's way. And this goes back to the whole authority of Scripture and all that. We've been talking about clarity every day.

And so, when we're confronted with the choice where we say, the Bible says this, and I say or believe this or I want this, we think certainly God's out to keep me from happiness. But what I would say and this if you're listening, not watching, is a computer and this is a board with nails. And what I would say happens to many of us is what we end up doing is we end up saying, well, I'm going to take what God has given me and I'm going to use it for the purpose that I want, not for the purpose that God has.

And so, this computer was not designed to pound nails. It was designed for something else. There's a perfectly good tool for pounding nails. It's a hammer. So, if I use this computer to pound nails, what happens pretty quickly? It shatters.

When you and I say, I'm going to do life the way I want to do life, and I don't honor or respond to what God says, it's like I'm using my one and only life to say I've got a better purpose than what God has. But when I say God, you have told me as a loving father the best way for me to live, and I arrange my life around that, and I say, not only am I a sinner, but I'm called to be a saint, then what happens is God works in my life in a way, and in your life in a way, that He can help us to be who he created us to be.

Listen to these words of Psalm 19 again, starting in verse seven, <sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. <sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous."

And I don't know where you're at today, but I would guess for some of us who are gathered here that during this time God has highlighted an area of your life that you have not surrendered to Him. It might be something in your thoughts, it might be something in your habits, or it might be something in a relationship. And you've been having a little internal dialog during this time saying, well, it's not that bad, it doesn't hurt anybody. And yet God has highlighted that and I purposely during this talk did not give a lot of tangible examples because I did not want to thwart the work of the Holy Spirit in you to highlight an area.

And so, can I just encourage you, if God has highlighted an area for you today, or maybe there was some willful sin, maybe concealed sin, maybe it's been rebellion to just say, God, I don't want to try to take my one and only life and use it in a way that

you did not intend that's ultimately destructive to me, but I want to honor you with all parts of my life. I want my words and my meditations to be pleasing to you.

Because, again, the Bible does say in a sense, it'll never be enough. There's perfection. That's why Jesus died. But it caused you and me at the same time to say I will arrange my life in such a way as to be pleasing to you. And the prayer that you and I can simply offer is to say, God, please keep me, and arrange my life in such a way that I don't make choices that are damaging to me. You'll be amazed how many times God arranges things in that way.

Let's pray together, God, as we're gathered here today, I would imagine that there are a lot of scenarios represented. Some of us come here and we think that our efforts have been enough and that we're better than others. God, I pray that your convicting work would show us our need for a savior, for a substitute, and then we'd come to you.

God, some of us have used the knowledge that you're our savior and you forgive, and you're a God of grace as a covering for willful, presumptuous sins. I pray that you will bring to light the areas of our lives that we've been excusing, rationalizing, and hiding, and convict us as well of our need to surrender that area to you. Not because you somehow need that from us, but because you, as a loving father have shown us the best way and invited us to live a life that is full of refreshment, joy, guidance, and clarity. And that is the life that we really long for and want. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great week.