



The Pleasures of God:

Meditations on God's Delight in Being God

Course Outline



- I. How the Book was Born.
- II. An Overarching Statement of God's Happiness
- III. God's Specific Pleasures We See in Scripture
 - A. God's Pleasures in Himself and His Work
 - B. God's Pleasures in Us and Our Response
- IV. Almost Too Good To Be True—A Final Word of Hope (Luke 12:32)

A. God's pleasures in himself and his work

1. God's pleasure in himself reflected in his Son
2. God's pleasure in the display of his glory, overflowing from his Trinitarian delight
3. God's pleasure in all that he does.

A. God's pleasures in himself and his work (cont)

4. God's pleasure in his work of creation
5. God's pleasure in election—the choice of unworthy sinners to share his joy in his Son
6. God's pleasure in bruising his Son—in sending and sacrificing his Son to vindicate his righteousness in saving God-belittling sinners



B. God's pleasures in us and our response

1. God's pleasure in doing good to those who hope in him
2. God's pleasure in the obedience of his people—especially their public acts of love

I. How the book was born

The Life of God in the Soul of Man (1677)

- 27 years old
- At age 15, University of Aberdeen
- At 19, appointed instructor in philosophy
- Four years of teaching

I. How the book was born (cont)

The Life of God in the Soul of Man (cont)

- Left for a one year pastorate in Auchterless
- Called back to Kings College, Aberdeen to teach divinity
- Died of tuberculosis on June 13, 1678
- Not yet 28 years old.

Pause

It's one of the dark strains in the melody of God's Providence that the likes of Henry Scougal (27 years) and David Brainerd (29 years) and Henry Martyn (31 years) and Robert Murray McCheyne (29 years) should all die at such an early age.

Pause (cont)

Isaiah 57:1-2

“¹ The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; ² he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness.”

Unpause

Yet all these who died so young did more for God's kingdom in their short lives than most others have done with three score and ten. Note God's ways!

With his unusual blessing we can do more in five minutes than we can in five years without him.

Scougal's Achievement



- Beyond all his expectations
- *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* was not written for publication.
- It was a letter to a friend in spiritual need.
- The friend began to circulate it privately, until Bishop Gilbert Burnet published it.
- For 300 years it has been reprinted at the request of God's hungry people, and today ranks as a classic of Christian devotion.

Key Passage from Scougal



- On page 68 of the Christian Focus edition in the section titled "The Excellency of Divine Love," one sentence riveted my attention.
- It took hold of my thought life in early 1987 and became the center of my meditation for about three months.

Key Passage from Scougal



- What Scougal said in this sentence was the key that opened for me the treasure house of the pleasures of God. He said, "The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love."

Key Passage from Scougal



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In the context he means the human soul.

Question: if this is true for man, may it not also be true for God?

Is it true that the worth and excellency of GOD'S soul is to be measured by the object of his love?

Key Passage from Scougal



Objection: God is not a soul/body combination the way we are (Matthew 10:28). Can we think this way about God?

Jeremiah 32:41 – “I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.”

Key Passage from Scougal



- How else might we assess the beauty of an invisible heart or soul than by what it loves?
- By what it thinks?
 - But clear and accurate thought is beautiful only in the service of right affections.
 - The devil himself is quite an able intellect. But he loves all the wrong things.
 - Therefore his thinking serves evil and his soul is squalid.

Key Passage from Scougal

- By what it wills?
 - Yes, but there is half-hearted willing and whole-hearted willing.
 - You don't judge the glory of a soul by what it wills to do with lukewarm interest, or with mere teeth-gritting determination.

Key Passage from Scougal

- By what it wills? (cont)
 - To know a soul's true excellence you need to know its passions.
 - Not what we dutifully will but what we passionately want reveals our excellence or evil.

Key Passage from Scougal



Is this what Scougal meant?

"The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love,"
(that is, its passion, its delight, its treasure).

Key Passage from Scougal

Yes. Keep in mind he has man's soul—man's love for God—in mind.

The love of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto him, desiring above all things to please him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with him, and being ready to do or suffer any thing for his sake or at his pleasure.

Key Passage from Scougal

Therefore when love is well-placed, the soul's pleasures are unsurpassed:

The most ravishing pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights that human nature is capable of, are those which arise from the endearments of a well-placed and successful affection.

Key Passage from Scougal



- And when the “substantial delights” of a “well-placed affection” are unsurpassed, its excellency is revealed.
- For “the excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.”
- **This is clearly true for man.** For him the “well-placed and successful affection” is when that affection is in GOD. And that is the excellency of man’s soul.

Key Passage from Scougal



- **It is also true with God.**
 - If we think of God's love as his powerful and prevalent passion—the omnipotent energy of his approval and enjoyment and delight—then "the pleasures of God" are the measure of the excellency of his soul.
 - I don't mean that this is the only way to discern the excellency of God's soul. But it is one. Why might we want to focus on this way of seeing his excellencies?



**Why It Matters That
God's Excellency
Consists in His
Well-Placed Pleasures**

Why It Matters

This truth satisfies and unites two great passions of our lives:

1. To be deeply and lastingly happy.
2. To glorify God—that is, reflect and make much of his greatness and beauty

God's happiness answers both and in the end unites them.

Why It Matters

1. Our passion for joy (his pleasures become ours!)

Matthew 25:23 (parable of the talents)

“His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”

Why It Matters

1. Our passion for joy (cont)

John 15:11 “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

John 17:26 “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Why It Matters

2. Our passion to glorify God (seeing his excellency in his pleasures transforms us into reflectors of his excellency)

Scougal: *“He who loveth mean and sordid things doth thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the spirit unto a conformity with the perfections which it loves.”*

Why It Matters

2. Our passion to glorify God (cont)

Therefore, seeing the worth and excellency of God more clearly in the greatness and the focus of his pleasures, will increasingly conform us to his likeness and therefore glorify him (show him to be great and beautiful).

Why It Matters

2. Our passion to glorify God (cont)

2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

Why It Matters

2. Our passion to glorify God (cont)

1 John 3:2 “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is

Why It Matters

Romans 8:18–21 “¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with **the glory that is to be revealed to us.** ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of **the glory of the children of God.**”

Why It Matters

Do you see now why the next two texts are saying the same thing?

Habakkuk 2:14 “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

Numbers 14:21 “But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”

Why It Matters

- True knowledge of God's glory causes the knower to reflect his glory.
- This is our aim in meditating on the pleasures of God.

How will we approach this?



- I. How the Book was Born.
- II. An Overarching Statement of God's Happiness
- III. God's Specific Pleasures We See in Scripture
 - A. God's Pleasures in Himself and His Work
 - B. God's Pleasures in Us and Our Response

Why the order A-B matters

If we reversed this order and put B before A, the ground of God's delight in us would be flimsy sentimentalism, rather than mile-deep God-centeredness. So for his glory and our firm and unshakable joy, we put him first.



II. An Overarching Statement of God's Happiness

1 Timothy 1:8-11

“⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient... liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with **the gospel of the glory of the blessed God** (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ) with which I have been entrusted.”

1 Timothy 1:8-11

God: “Yahweh” the one who absolutely is:
“I am who I am” Exodus 3:14

Blessed: (*μακαριου*) happy; profoundly satisfied; content; God is self-sufficient; he has no deficiencies and no needs. He is full and without defect (See 1 Timothy 6:15).

1 Timothy 1:8-11

Glory: It is a glorious thing to be God, with no needs, so that all of his acts outside himself are not intended to shore up weaknesses but to display strengths and beauties for the enjoyment of all who will welcome him as their treasure.

1 Timothy 1:8-11

Gospel: this is good news for weak and undeserving people. It means there is hope that God is for us even though we do not deserve it. His happy, glorious deity proves to be the overflowing fountain of the grace we need.

Therefore: Let's probe this happiness of God. What is the basis of God's joy?



III. God's Specific Pleasures We See in Scripture



1. God's Pleasure in Himself Reflected in His Eternal Son

God's Pleasure in the divine
majesty and meekness of
his Son.

In His Majesty

Matthew 17:2, 5

“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. . . . He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘**This is my *beloved* Son, with whom I *am well pleased.*’”**

In His Majesty

John 3:35 – “The Father **loves** the Son and has given all things into his hand.”

Colossians 1:13 – “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his **beloved** Son [= the Son of his love].”

In His Majesty

Hebrews 1:1-3, “¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature**, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

In His Majesty

Philippians 2:5-6 – “⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.”

Colossians 1:15 – “He is the image of the invisible God.”

In His Majesty



2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 – “⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God... ⁶ For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Colossians 2:9 – “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”

In His Majesty

Hebrews 1:7-8 – “⁷ Of the angels he says, ‘He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.’ ⁸ But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, **O God**, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.’”

John 1:1-3 – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**.
² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

In His Meekness

John 10:17 – “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.”

Isaiah 42:1 – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul **delights**; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. [Quoted in Matthew 12:18-20 ending] a **bruised reed he will not break**, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory.”

In His Meekness

Romans 8:32 – “He who did not spare **his own** Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

In His Meekness

As Jonathan Edwards describes, the beauty of Christ consists most in the juxtaposition of diverse excellencies (majesty and meekness):

“[In the person of Christ meet] infinite highness and infinite condescension... infinite justice and infinite grace... infinite glory and lowest humility... infinite majesty and transcendent meekness... deepest reverence towards God and equality with God... infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil...”

In His Meekness

...an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth... absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation... self-sufficiency, and an entire trust and reliance on God.” – Jonathan Edwards, “The Excellencies of Christ,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), pp. 681-682.

Thus God loves the Son, that is, delights in the Son, with infinite joy because the Son is the perfect representation and divine radiance of himself.

Edwards

Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Trinity behind this pleasure of God in his Son:

“And this I suppose to be the blessed Trinity that we read of in the Holy Scriptures. The Father is the deity subsisting in the prime, unoriginated and most absolute manner, or the deity in its direct existence. The Son is the deity generated by God's understanding, or having an idea of Himself and subsisting in that idea...”

Edwards

...The Holy Ghost is the deity subsisting in act, or the divine essence flowing out and breathed forth in God's infinite love to and delight in Himself. And I believe the whole Divine essence does truly and distinctly subsist both in the Divine idea and Divine love, and that each of them are properly distinct persons” (An Essay on the Trinity, p. 118).

Conclusion



- The gospel is the “gospel of the glory of the happy God” (1 Tim. 1:11). Joy is at the bottom and aim of all reality.
- The destiny of those who receive God as their supreme treasure is to enter into the joy of their Master (Matthew 25:21)—that is, into the very infinite joy that the Father and Son have in each other.

Conclusion



- This is finally how we fulfill God's aim that we magnify his glory. His glory consists largely in his joyful self-sufficiency. Therefore we magnify his glory by experiencing his joy in himself as our joy in him—that is, by being satisfied in him as our supreme joy.

Conclusion



Thus both our aims unite:

1. To be deeply and lastingly happy.
2. To glorify God—that is, reflect and make much of his greatness and beauty

2. God's Pleasure in the Display of His Glory, Overflowing from His Trinitarian Delight

The Most Foundational Pleasure Outside the Trinity



- In moving from the intra-Trinitarian pleasure of God in his Son through his Spirit we deal next with the most foundational pleasure of God outside the Trinity.
- The pleasure he has in going public with his intrinsic worth.
- God's supreme zeal in creation is to display his glory in all that he does. Or to make his name great.

Definitions



- **Holiness:** God's intrinsic worth: his being unique, one of a kind and therefore infinitely valuable.
- **Glory:** the radiance of that worth. It is the going forth of his holiness to be seen as the greatness and the radiance of the moral beauty that God is.

Isaiah 6:1-3

- “¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said: "**Holy, holy, holy** is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his **glory!**"

Isaiah



Take Isaiah As One Source.

We see here what we find throughout the Bible. All of God's acts and purposes are governed by this passion—the display and the vindication of the glory of his name.

Isaiah 63:14 (Rest) – “Like livestock that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.”

Isaiah

Isaiah 43:6-7 (Created) – “I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory.”

Isaiah



Isaiah 48:9, 11 (Restrained anger) –
“For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off... For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.”

Isaiah



Isaiah 30:18 (Mercy) – “Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.”

Isaiah 43:25 (Blotted out transgressions) – “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

Isaiah 37:35 (Defense) – “For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake.”

Isaiah

Isaiah 60:21 (Righteousness)

“Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.”

Isaiah



Isaiah 55:12-13 (Joy)

“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Isaiah



Isaiah 55:1-3 (Come and be satisfied)

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?”

Implications



1. He gets the glory and we get the joy.
And the way to get him the glory is to agree with that and live that—find our highest joy in him.

Implications



2. The righteousness of God is most essentially his acting in a way that upholds and displays his glory. What is right for a God who answers to no one is to act consistently with his worth—to value supremely what is supremely valuable, showing that valuing by the motive of all his works. This understanding of righteousness will be important.

Psalm 143:11 – “For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!”

Implications

3. The hope that God might act to save sinners (not yet fully explained) will rest finally not in our worth, but in his worth. He will do it for his glory or not at all. And if he does it for his glory, the foundation of it will be unshakable.



3. God's Pleasure in All that He Does

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An essential aspect of God's glory is his freedom to do all that he pleases.

- Being totally self-sufficient in the joy of the Trinity
- and being uncreated and beholden to none,
- there are no constraints outside himself to keep him from doing what he ultimately delights to do

3. God's Pleasure in All that He Does



Romans 11:33-36

“³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ ³⁵ ‘Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

3. God's Pleasure in All that He Does

Therefore he is free and unconstrained by anyone or anything. So he delights ultimately (when all is taken into account in all of history from beginning to end) in all that he brings to pass. And all that happens he ultimately brings to pass. Consider some texts...

He delights in all he does.



Psalm 135:5-6 – “For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.
6 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.”

Psalm 115:1 – “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! 2 Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” 3 Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”

He delights in all he does.

Isaiah 46:9 – “⁹ Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose [תְּפִצִּי “my delight, my pleasure”].’”

His invisible hand is behind all that comes to pass.



Ephesians 1:11 – “We have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

Daniel 4:35 – “He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

His invisible hand is behind all that comes to pass.

Amos 3:6 – “If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble? If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?”

Proverbs 16:9 – “The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.”

His invisible hand is behind all that comes to pass.

Proverbs 19:21 – “Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.”

Proverbs 16:33 – “The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.”

His invisible hand is behind all that comes to pass.

Genesis 50:20 – “As for you, you meant evil against me, God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

Lamentations 3:37-38 – “³⁷ Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?”

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.



On the one hand (no delight in death):

Ezekiel 18:23 – Do I have pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

Ezekiel 18:32 – For I do not have pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.



But on the other hand (delight in death):

Deuteronomy 28:63

“And as the LORD took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the LORD will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.”

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.



On the one hand (anger and grief every day):

Psalm 7:11 – “God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.”

Ephesians 4:30 – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.

But on the other hand (joy every day):

Psalm 149:4 – “For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.”

Luke 15:7 – “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.



Solution:

God has levels of willing and delighting. He wills and delights in things in different ways so that approval and disapproval can coexist without being contradictory.

The complexity of God's emotional life is humanly beyond comprehension.

Example:

Lamentations 3:32-33

“³² Though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ³³ for he does not willingly (מִלְּבָבוֹ) afflict or grieve the children of men.”

Implications

God is not easy to understand in his complexity but he is all we need in our trials:

1. He has sovereign control so that nothing is meaningless (Gen. 50:20).
2. God is merciful in all his severity and near the broken hearted.

Psalm 34:18 – “The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.”

Implications



God is not easy to understand in his complexity but he is all we need in our trials:

3. God will win in the end and nothing will have been suffered in vain.

Matthew 19:29 – “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.”



4. God's Pleasure in All His Work of Creation.

4. God's Pleasure in All His Work of Creation.

The material world is not a problem for God, or a mere temptation for us, or a temporary starting point to be thrown away in the future. God made it and said six times, "He saw what he made and it was good." He plans for the created world to be renewed and eternal.

4. God's Pleasure in All His Work of Creation.

C. S. Lewis gets it right:

“There is no use trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not: He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it...”

4. God's Pleasure in All His Work of Creation.

...I know some muddle-headed Christians have talked as if Christianity thought that sex, or the body, or pleasure, were bad in themselves. But they were wrong. Christianity is almost the only one of the great religions which thoroughly approves of the body -- which believes that matter is good, that God Himself once took on a human body, that some kind of body is going to be given to us even in Heaven and is going to be an essential part of our happiness, our beauty, and our energy" (Mere Christianity).

1 Timothy 4:1–4

“¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”

All his works are his delight



Psalm 104:31 – “May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works.”

One Reason: They display his glory for man to see and praise.

Psalm 19:1-2 – “¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.”

All his works are his delight

God even delights in those works in creation that man does not see.

Psalm 104:26 – “There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.”

...because they display his wisdom.

Psalm 104:24 – “O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.”

Problem



Texts that make God our only delight:

Psalm 73:25-26 – “²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Problem



Texts that make God our only delight:

Psalm 27:4 – “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.”

Answer

Augustine: “He loves you too little who loves anything together with you which he loves not for your sake.”

God is glorified by our use of the creation in at least these two ways:

- *Feasting* to show our thanks to God.
- *Fasting* to show that food is not our God.



5. God's Pleasure in Election

5. God's Pleasure in Election

Deuteronomy 10:14–15 – “¹⁴ Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.”

Literally: “The Lord loved (תִּשַׁק) to love your fathers and chose them.”

He was acting in the overflow of his joy. He was not constrained by anything outside himself to choose this people. He acted freely. His election is unconditional.

5. God's Pleasure in Election



Deuteronomy 7:6-8

“⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples...

5. God's Pleasure in Election



Deuteronomy 7:6-8

...⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

5. God's Pleasure in Election



God stays free in choosing who are his. He is not locked in to the ethnicity of Jewishness once he chooses Israel.

Matthew 3:9

“And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”

5. God's Pleasure in Election

Romans 9:6-13

“⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’

⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring...

5. God's Pleasure in Election

Romans 9:6-13

...⁹ For this is what the promise said: 'About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.'¹⁰ And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—

5. God's Pleasure in Election



Romans 9:6-13

...in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—¹² she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.'¹³ As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'"

What was God's purpose in free unconditional election?



The praise of the glory of his grace. It was the upholding and display of his free unmerited favor for then enjoyment of his people.

What was God's purpose in free unconditional election?



Ephesians 1:3-6 – “³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

What was God's purpose in free unconditional election?



Isaiah 43:20-21

“²⁰ The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, ²¹ the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.”

What was God's purpose in free unconditional election?



1 Corinthians 1:26-31

“²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong—²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not...

What was God's purpose in free unconditional election?



1 Corinthians 1:26-31

...to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

5 Implications of Election

Why then does God delight to choose his people so freely?

1. It brings all praise to his grace and humbles man.
2. It bestows on all who will have it the unspeakable blessing of God's covenant love (He loved us and gave himself for us—like a husband obtaining a wife whom he chooses for his own).

5 Implications of Election



Why then does God delight to choose his people so freely?

3. It assures us of success in evangelism and the success of the gospel in missions.

John 10:15-16 – “¹⁵ Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

5 Implications of Election

Why then does God delight to choose his people so freely?

3. It assures us of success in evangelism and the success of the gospel in missions.

Acts 18:9-10 – “⁹ And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.’”

5 Implications of Election



Why then does God delight to choose his people so freely?

4. It brings security to the heart of the believer because of the chain of certainty connecting election, predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

5 Implications of Election

Romans 8:28–31 – “²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?”

Foreknown



Genesis 18:17-19

“¹⁷ The LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, ¹⁸ seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹ For I have chosen him [literally: “known him”], that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.’”

Foreknown



Amos 3:2

“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

5 Implications of Election

Why then does God delight to choose his people so freely?

5. Because of the complexity of God's emotional life (see above), our election does not mean God does not love the whole world *or* that they are not really responsible for their choices *or* that we cannot offer the gospel freely to all people and say: "Whosoever will may come," *and*, "If you will believe you will be saved and prove to be among the elect."

Texts



1 Timothy 2:4

“...who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

2 Peter 3:9

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”



6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

Isaiah 53:10

“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief [literally: “It pleased [תִּפְּצֵן] the Lord to crush him.”]

Ephesians 5:2

“And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

How can that be? What is behind it?

God has chosen sinners for his own loved possession. But sin is dishonoring God. Therefore, it looks like God is discounting his glory, which would contradict his highest value and would be unrighteous. Therefore, if sinners are to be elect and saved, God's glory must be upheld and his righteousness must be vindicated.

Romans 3:23–27



“²³ All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- Sin is exchanging the glory of God for substitutes (1:23).
- God passed over billions of these glory-belittling sins for his elect (David, 1 Sam 12:22).
- This made God look unrighteous (like he valued more something less valuable and scorned his glory).

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- Christ came and lived and died to glorify his Father.

John 12:27 – “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”

John 13:31 – “When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- God's righteousness is vindicated and his wrath is averted and sinners are saved by believing in Christ alone.

Romans 3:28 – “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

Romans 5:1 – “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- God's righteousness is vindicated and his wrath is averted and sinners are saved by believing in Christ alone.

Romans 8:1 – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- This was all God's doing.

Acts 2:23 – “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

Acts 4:27-28 – “²⁷ Truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son



How could God delight in something so horrible? Experience it as a fragrant aroma?

- The faith-filled, God-glorifying obedience of his Son was beautiful to him and it reached its climax on the cross. **Philippians 2:9** – “Therefore God highly exalted him” (cf. Heb. 2:9).
- The salvation of his sheep was beautiful to him **John 10:17** – “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.”

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- The Son was not coerced or forced, but willingly embraced the Father's will.

John 10:17-18 – “¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

- The glory of God is upheld in saving sinners.

6. God's Pleasure in Bruising His Son

- The Son is worshipped as worthy to rule history because of his death

Revelation 5:9 – “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”

Woe to us if we disdain or reject this glorious substitutionary work of God in Christ.

Chalke and Mann



The blasphemous view of Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), pp. 182-183.

“The fact is that the cross isn’t a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed.

Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith....

Chalke and Mann

...Deeper than that, however, is that such a concept stands in total contradiction to the statement: “God is love”. If the cross is a personal act of violence perpetrated by God towards humankind but borne by his Son, then it makes a mockery of Jesus’ own teaching to love your enemies and to refuse to repay evil with evil.”

On the Contrary



Galatians 3:13

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”

Romans 8:3

“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh.”

On the Contrary



Isaiah 53:4-6

“⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”



7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



Justification and progressive sanctification through the blood and righteousness of Christ means that God sees us as perfect in Christ and delights in what he sees. And he is making us more and more like Christ and delights in that lived-out moral likeness wherever he sees it.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



Zephaniah 3:17

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



Isaiah 65:19

“I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.”

Isaiah 62:4

“You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.”

Why is that good news?



Wrong Answer: The bottom of our joy is that we like being made much of. We are happy to be God-centered as long as God is man-centered.

Why is that good news?

Right Answer: God is totally for me in Christ—totally committed to my ultimate good, my ultimate joy. Therefore, he is totally committed to removing every obstacle to my fullest enjoyment of him. This is what he is doing and this is what he delights to do and delights to see in me. In Christ he sees this as already done—I am perfect in that I already share in the perfection of Christ because I am united to him by faith.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



But there is more! In my earthly life I am being changed incrementally into the kind of person God delights in fully. The me he enjoys is the me that is becoming totally satisfied in God. The me he enjoys is the me in whom he is my highest Treasure. God delights in me inasmuch as I delight in him. In this way his delight in me is both in my highest joy and his greatest glory.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



Psalm 147:10

“¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,
¹¹ but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



In other words the essence of the Christ-likeness, that God is producing in us and *enjoying* in us, is our finding HIM to be our greatest Treasure. *Hoping* in him means that we are treasuring all that he is and promises to be for us in Christ. When do hope in *God's action* on our behalf, what makes us most glad about that *action* is that it reveals more of *him* and helps us see and savor him more fully.

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



This hoping and delighting in God is an essential part of saving faith.

Hebrews 11:1 – “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

John 1:12 – “To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (Chair & R. C. Sproul)

7. God's Pleasure in Doing Good to Those Who Hope in Him.



This response to God in Christ—hope/faith/treasuring/delighting—is so God-honoring, that all of God's energy goes into preserving it and blessing those who have it.

Promises

Here are some amazing promises of God's acting for us with all his heart to show how much he delights to work for those who hope in him.

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Promises

Jeremiah 32:39-41

“³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.”

Promises



Isaiah 64:4

“From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.”

Psalms 84:11

“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Promises



2 Chronicles 16:9

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.”

Philippians 4:19

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Promises



Psalm 23:6

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

Psalm 35:27

“Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, ‘Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare of his servant!’”

Promises



Ephesians 2:6

“⁶ [He] raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Promises



All of this not because we have deserved it or worked for it. All of it because God freely loves us in Christ and overcomes every obstacle to our everlasting and overflowing joy. *This is the overflow of his infinitely happy relationship to Christ.* It overflows in electing us, and creating us and sending his Son to die for us, and pursuing us with goodness and mercy all our days.

Promises



His invitations are lavish and free to all:

Isaiah 55:1-2

“¹ Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?”

Promises



Matthew 11:28-30 – “²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

John 6:35 – “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’”



8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People—Especially Their Public Acts of Love

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

1 Samuel 15:22

“And Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.’”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People



If faith/hope/treasuring Christ (receiving and being satisfied in him as our supreme treasure) is the disposition that magnifies his worth, then the obedience—the sacrificial love for people—that overflows from that faith/hope/treasuring is most pleasing to God because it fulfills his purpose to display his glory openly and fill the earth with it.

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

This is where obedience—summed up in love—comes from. It is the fruit of faith/hope/treasuring all that God is for us in Christ.

Galatians 5:6 – “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

1 Timothy 1:5 – “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

2 Thessalonians 1:11 – “To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power.”

Romans 1:5 – “...through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations.”

Romans 14:23b – “For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

Why does this movement from faith to obedience—to sacrificial love—matter?

Because God's being glorified publicly by human beings matters:

Matthew 5:16

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

How does faith/hope/treasuring Christ produce the public love that delights God?

2 Corinthians 8:2

“In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

Hebrews 10:32-34

“³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People



Hebrews 12:2

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

We too will look to share in the joy he anticipated.

Revelation 3:21

“The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People



The words of Jesus, “Enter into the joy of your Master,” will reach their final and fullest expression: We will sit with him on the throne of God. We will not be God, but we will share as much in God and his joy as it is possible for a finite, saved creature to know. And we will sing with the energy of a co-ruler of the universe the praises of God's excellency forever.

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People



The pleasure of God in being God will have overflowed in the display of his glory, and the millions of the redeemed will treasure this glory above all things and in all things. And for all eternity God will be magnified in Christ Jesus through the joy that we find in him.

8. God's Pleasure in the Obedience of His People

The pleasure of God in being God will have overflowed in the display of his glory, and the millions of the redeemed will treasure this glory above all things and in all things. And for all eternity God will be magnified in Christ Jesus through the joy that we find in him.

"The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love." God's worth and excellency is supreme, because all of his delight is ultimately delight in the greatest excellency, his own.



IV. Almost Too Good To Be True

A Final Word of Hope

Luke 12:32

A Final Word of Hope

*Fear not, little flock,
for it is your Father's good pleasure
to give you the kingdom.*

A Final Word of Hope

...**good pleasure**—He enjoys doing this and he is acting in freedom.

...**your Father's**—His care for you is as for his child (Matthew 7:9-11; Romans 8:15-17)

...**to give you**—not trade or loan or sell. He is lavishly generous.

... **flock**—now he is our shepherd and we are his sheep.

A Final Word of Hope

...**little**—He knows we are small. It signifies his affection, and that we don't have to be big to count.

...**the kingdom**—He is now not just Father and Shepherd, but King. And we inherit his rule and his realm.

Fear not—Rejoice in the anxiety free pleasure that the Father takes in being and giving everything you need.