

# That Which Pleases God

## An Examination of What God Delights In

### 3 God's Delight in His Son- Part 2

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January 19, 2014

#### Isaiah 42:1-4

**1** “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one *in whom* My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

**2** “He will not cry out or raise *His voice*, Nor make His voice heard in the street.

**3** “A bruised reed He will not break And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.

**4** “He will not be disheartened or crushed Until He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.”

#### Matthew 3:17

and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

To the Glory of God

Now last week we saw how that there are two main ways in Which God the Father Delights in God the Son:

1. Through the Majesty of Christ's Glory
2. Through the Beauty of Christ's Meekness

But we need to understand that the Worth and the Beauty of the Son come not just from His Glorious Majesty, nor only from His Servant-like Meekness- but from the way these two seemingly divergent Divine Concepts *minge* in perfect proportion. For example- when the angel cried out in **The Revelation 5:2**,

**“Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?”**

... the answer came back,

### **The Revelation 5:5**

**"Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."**

So we see that God loves the unquenchable Strength of the Lion of Judah. And this is why Jesus is worthy in God's Eyes to open the scrolls of history and unfold the last days. But this picture is not complete until we ponder something else. Just *how* did the Lion conquer? The very next verse describes His Appearance:

### **The Revelation 5:6**

**And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.**

So Jesus is *worthy* of the Father's Delight not only as the Lion of Judah- but also as the slain Lamb.

One of the sermons of Jonathan Edwards that God used to kindle the Great Awakening in New England in 1734–1735 was titled "*The Excellency of Christ*." And in that Sermon- Edwards unfolds the Glory of God's Son by describing:

“the admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Christ.”

And his text was **The Revelation 5:5&6**, and Edwards unfolded the union of these “diverse excellencies” in Jesus Who is both Lion and Lamb. He showed how the Glory of Christ is the combining of different Attributes that would seem to be utterly incompatible in one Person. Edwards said,

“In Jesus Christ meet infinite highness and infinite condescension; infinite justice and infinite grace; infinite glory and lowest humility; infinite majesty and transcendent meekness; deepest reverence toward God and equality with God; worthiness of good and the greatest patience under the suffering of evil; a great spirit of obedience and supreme dominion over heaven and earth; absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation; self-sufficiency and an entire trust and reliance on God.”

So we must understand that even though it is true that the qualities of Lowliness and Meekness were not manifest in Jesus until His Incarnation- they were nevertheless part of God the Son's Character from all eternity. We need to know that Jesus did *not* undergo a *conversion* before He submitted to the Father's Will that He die for sinners. This is why the Love that the Father has for the Son goes back way before Creation.

**John 17:24a,c**

**Father... You loved Me before the foundation of the world.**

... so there never was a single second in all of eternity when the Father was denied the Pleasure of delighting in the Glory of His Son.

For example- God loved His Son *in* the very act of creating the universe. He enjoyed His Son as His Own Word of Wisdom and Creative Power in the Act of Creation.

**John 1:1-3**

**1 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 came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.**

God the Son was the Wisdom of God creating, with God the Father- all that is not God. And, as the Proverb says,

**Proverbs 10:1**

**... A wise son makes a father glad...**

So God was glad in the Wisdom of His creative Son. In fact, the Proverbs are even more specific concerning God's Wisdom. **Proverbs 8** personifies Wisdom at the beginning of creation as a Master Workman delighting the heart of God.

**Proverbs 8:27a, 30**

**When He [God] established the heavens, I [Wisdom] was there ... I was beside him, like a Master Workman; and I was daily His Delight, rejoicing always before him.**

The Son of God was the Father's Delight as He rejoiced with the Father in the awesome Work of making a million worlds. No other relationship comes close to this one. It is utterly unique. The Son is absolutely unique in His Affections for His Father. He is the **"only begotten"** (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1John 4:9). He is *the* Son, by eternal generation, and we are other "sons"- but only by adoption.

#### **Galatians 4:4-5**

**4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,**

**5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

And only in us "eating" (trusting) Jesus as *the* Son are we then empowered to become **"children of God"** (John 1:12).

Jesus often referred to God as **"my Father"** and **"the Father,"** but He never referred to God as **"our Father"** except once- when teaching the disciples how *they* should pray (Matthew 6:9). Once Jesus used the remarkable expression, **"my Father and your Father ... my God and your God"** (John 20:17). So the relationship between God the Father and His eternal Son is utterly unique.

Their intimacy and communion are incomparable. Jesus said,

#### **Matthew 11:27b**

**... no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.**

And as the Son carries out the Redeeming Plan of the Father, the Father's Heart abounds with increasingly intense expressions of Love for the Son.

#### **John 10:17**

**"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again.**

And this overflowing Esteem that the Father has for His Only Son spills over onto all who serve the Son:

**John 12:26**

**"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.**

Thus the Father seeks every means possible to manifest His infinite Delight in the Son of His Love—including judging those who do not delight in His Son.

**Hebrews 10:29**

**How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

The Son of God is worthy of all the worship that the hosts of Heaven can give- not to mention ours. But God will not be excluded from the celebration of the Son Himself. The Father is thrilled over the Greatness and the Goodness and the Triumph of the Son. And He gives His Son a Name which is above every name (**Philippians 2:9**), He crowns His Son with Honor (**Hebrews 2:9**), and the Father joyfully glorifies the Son in His Own Presence with the Glory that He had before the world was ever made (**John 17:5**).

I tell you that it is impossible for us to overstate the greatness of the Fatherly Affection that God has for His One and Only Son. We see this unbounded affection behind the logic of **Romans 8:32**:

**“He who did not spare *his own Son*, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?”**

And the point of this unspeakably precious verse is that if God was willing to do the hardest thing for us (give up his cherished Son to misery and death), then surely that which looks hard (giving Christians all the blessings that Heaven can hold) will not be too hard for God.

And what makes this verse work- is the *immensity* of the Father's Affection for the Son. As Paul wrote this- he assumed that **“not sparing his own Son”** was the hardest thing imaginable for God to do. Jesus is, as Paul put it simply in **Colossians 1:13**:

## **“the Son of His Love.” or “His Beloved Son”**

So if there ever was a Passion of Love in the Heart of God- it is a Passion for His Son. A. W. Tozer once said,

“God never changes moods or cools off in his affections or loses enthusiasm.”

And if there is any Enthusiasm in God of which this is true- it is the Father's Enthusiasm for the Son. It will never change; it will never cool off. It burns with an unimaginable Fervency and Zeal that is called “Delight”. Therefore, I affirm with Jonathan Edwards,

“The infinite happiness of the Father consists in the enjoyment of His Son.”

Now it is important for us to understand that when we say that God loves His Son- we are *not* talking about a Love that is Self-Denying, Sacrificial, or Merciful. We are talking about a Love of pure Delight and total Pleasure. God is not stooping to pity the undeserving when He loves His Son. *That* is how God loves *us*. God loves us with pity; God loves us with Mercy; God loves us with Sacrifice. But it is *not* how He loves His Son. God is well-pleased with His Son in every way, and He is well pleased- all the time. God's very Soul delights in the Son! When the Father looks at His Son- He fully enjoys and admires and cherishes and prizes and relishes what He sees.

Now to avoid a harmful mistake about God's Love for His Son- we need to go further now and show that the Son of God has the *fullness* of Deity- and here's why. Because we are fallen creatures- it is possible for us to agree with the Biblical Truth that God has Pleasure in His Son- but then make the mistake of thinking that the Son is merely an extraordinarily holy man that the Father somehow “adopted” to be His Son because He delighted in Him so much. And this was the ancient heresy called “Adoptionism”, which is simply yet another attack on the full Deity of Jesus Christ.

Now on the one hand- it is understandable that people struggle with Jesus. After all- God never became a Man before Jesus was born and humanity never had to try to grasp the “fleshing” or the

“Incarnation” of God. The idea that Jesus was 100% God and 100% Man in the same Body at the same time without conflict or contradiction still blows my mind, and it compels me not only to love and serve Jesus – but it forces me- correctly so I might add- to be in awe of Him.

And that is why I talk about this so much. Many in the modern Church correctly say that they cannot fully comprehend the Divine Relationship between all three Persons of the Trinity. But then they wrongly say that since they cannot fully comprehend it- that it is proper to simply ignore it and pretend that it doesn't exist. That is not correct and that approach is far different than any that those who came before us ever took.

We are commanded to love God- not simply with all our hearts- but with all our minds as well, and so God purposefully placed deep and profound Truths in His Word- not so we would ignore them- but force ourselves to ponder them and then stand in awe of this great God.

And so even though very few in the modern Church seemed to be concerned about any of this- this was a huge issue in the early Church. The struggle to rightly and fully understand Jesus Christ in His full Deity and in His full Humanity consumed the Christian Church for the better part of the first 1,000 years of its existence and was the source of almost all the heretical teachings and almost all of the great Doctrines of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium.

So- as believers- we must believe and confess and teach what the Bible actually says about Jesus, and **Colossians 2:9** gives us a very startling concept to ponder:

**For in Him [Jesus Christ] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,**

Now there is simply no way to read that verse with any degree of honesty and not come to the conclusion that Jesus was entirely unique from any other human being, and that He was certainly more than merely a holy and faithful Man. The inspired Scripture declares that Jesus has the fullness of Deity in bodily form.

And what that means is that God did not look for a holy person whom He could somehow lift up into the Godhead by placing Deity in him as so many of the cults teach. Rather:

**“the Word became flesh”**

... in a miraculous, supernatural, staggering Act of Incarnation (**John 1:14**). God sought a humble, faithful woman, and, through the virgin birth, united the fullness of His Own Deity with a child of His Own conceiving. **Luke 1:34&35** says:

**34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"**

**35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.**

God did not raise a holy Man up into Deity. Rather God clothed the fullness of Deity with a virgin-born human nature- Jesus of Nazareth- the Son of God- the God/Man, in Whom

**...all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form**

And this is why both Jesus' friends and enemies were staggered again and again by what He said and what He did. He would be walking down the road- seemingly just like any other man- and then suddenly turn and say something like,

**“Before Abraham was, I am.”**

or,

**“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”**

... or, very calmly, after being accused of blasphemy, He would say,

**“The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”**

.. to demons, He would say,

**“Come out of him” or just “Leave”**



... and the terrified fallen angel would remove himself from the possessed. To the dead He would simply say,

**“Come forth,” or, “Rise up.”**

... and they would obey. To the storms on the sea He would say,

**“Be still.”**

... and when He had five loaves of bread and two fish He fed five thousand men- not counting the women and children. And had twelves baskets of scraps.

In response to the high priest's question,

*“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”*

Jesus said,

**Mark 14:62**

***"I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN."***

No man ever spoke like this Man. No man ever lived and loved like this Man. For in this Man- God Himself had made all the fullness of Deity dwell bodily.

And what I want you to understand this morning is that when God did this- He did it with all His Heart. God did this with the greatest amount of Delight and Joy. God didn't simply do this as an example of His Omnipotent Power- It was God's *Pleasure* to make the Word flesh. **Colossians 1:19** puts it like this:

**For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,**

In other words, it was God's Delight to do this. We have seen that God loved His Son before the foundation of the world (**John 17:24**), and that He loved Him in His incarnate State (**John 10:17**). Now we see that, when God the Father and God the Son engaged to unite Deity and

Humanity in Jesus- the Father rejoiced over this Act. He delighted in his Son's readiness to redeem the world.

Now again we should press on a step farther to guard against misunderstanding and to enlarge our vision of the Glory of God's Gladness in the Son. The fullness of Deity- which now dwells bodily in Jesus Christ(**Colossians 2:9**)- *already* existed in "personal form" before the God/Man, Jesus Christ, existed as a Jewish Teacher on the earth. And this reality pushes us back further into the Happiness of the Triune God. *The Son, in whom God delights, is the eternal Image and Radiance of God and is thus Himself God.* Now please turn quickly to **Colossians 1:15&16**. There Paul says,

**15 He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.**

**16 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him.**

Now historically this has been a very controversial Text. And still today there are sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses that give this verse a meaning contrary to the meaning understood by historic Christian Orthodoxy.

Around A.D.256 a man named Arius was born in Libya who became one of the most famous heretics of the Christian Church. And he used this text as the foundation of his evil teaching. He was educated by a teacher named Lucian, in Antioch, and became a prominent Elder in the Church of Alexandria in Egypt. He was described by Eusebius, the Church historian as:

"A tall, lean man, with a downcast brow, very austere habits, considerable learning, and a smooth, winning address, but quarrelsome disposition."

The so-called "Arian Controversy" began about A.D. 318 in Alexandria when Arius disputed with Bishop Alexander concerning the Eternal Deity of Jesus Christ. Arius began to teach that the Son of God was different in Essence from the Father, and that He was "*created* by the Father" rather than "*coeternal* with the Father". Eusebius, a Church historian who lived in Constantinople between A.D. 380 and 439, tells the story of how this controversy began:

Alexander [Bishop of Alexandria] attempted one day, in the presence of the presbyters and the rest of his clergy, to deliver a discourse about the Holy Trinity, the subject being 'Unity in Trinity.' Arius, one of the presbyters under his jurisdiction, a man possessed of no inconsiderable logical acumen, thinking that the bishop was introducing the doctrine of Sabellius the Libyan [who stressed Jewish monotheism to the extent of denying a true Trinity], from love of controversy, advanced another view diametrically opposed to the opinion of the Libyan, and, as it seemed, vehemently controverted the statements of the bishop. 'If,' said he, 'the Father begat the Son, He that was begotten has a beginning of existence; and from this it is evident, that there was when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that He had His essence from the non-existent.'"

In other words- Jesus cannot possibly be God in human flesh if He was created at some point and not coeternal with the Father. And so if Arius was right- it would be heresy to worship Jesus or even bow down to Him and confess Him as "Lord" as He would simply be one of many of God's created beings. However if Arius was wrong- then he was guilty of blasphemy for *not* worshipping Jesus as God.

Now it is easy to see how **Colossians 1:15** could be made to support Arius's position. Paul said there that Christ is:

**... the firstborn of all creation.**

... so a person could easily take this to mean that Christ was Himself a *part* of Creation, and was the first and the highest creature. But this would make Jesus to have a beginning. In other words- if Jesus was a created being- then there would have been a point in time when He had not existed at all. And this matters- because if it is true- then Christ's Essence would not be the same Essence of the Father- but would be created out of nothing like the rest of Creation. This is, in fact, what Arius taught.

Now as I have taught you before- this Controversy centered around a single letter of a single word- the Greek word "homooousia". This word comes from two separate words:

- ✓ Homo- Same
- ✓ Ousia- Substance or Essence

So up until this time- the Church taught that Jesus was "homooousia" with the Father, meaning that Jesus was of the very *same* Essence or the same Substance as God the Father. Arius added the letter "I" to this word, to make it "homoiousia", which changed the definition to mean that Jesus was of a *similar* but entirely *different* Essence or Substance than the Father- in effect- making Jesus to be a *created being* and not co-eternal with the Father as part of the Divine Godhead.

Now over the next several years- the controversy spread across the entire Roman Empire. And Constantine, the Emperor, was forced to become involved for the sake of the unity of the Church. He called a great Council in A.D. 325 to deal with these weighty matters, and designated the city to be Nicea *"because of the excellent temperature of the air, and in order that I may be present as a spectator and participator in those things which will be done."* The Council produced a Creed that left no doubt that it considered Arius's ideas heretical.

Now the "Nicene Creed" that we know today is the Anglicanized translation of the original Creed which I will quote- which is technically called "The Creed of Nicea." And it will be plain to every reader which parts of the creed are intended to distinguish orthodoxy from Arianism. The original Creed says:

We believe in one God the Father All-sovereign, maker of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, things in heaven and things on the earth; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man, suffered, and rose on the third day, ascended into the heavens, is coming to judge living and dead; And in the Holy Spirit.

And those that say "There was when he was not," and, "Before he was begotten he was not," and that, "He came into being from what-is-not," or those that allege, that the Son of God is "Of another substance or essence" or "created," or "changeable," or "alterable," these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

Now this has remained the orthodox understanding of Scripture throughout all Church history to our own day. And I feel compelled to defend this understanding here because if Arianism (or the Jehovah's Witnesses) proved right- then the Pleasure of God in His Son would be a radically different thing than what it really is.

So even if you don't realize this- everything hangs on the unbounded Joy in the Triune God from all eternity. And this is the very Source of God's absolute Self-Sufficiency as a happy Sovereign. And every true act of free grace in redemptive history depends on it.

So how are we to understand Paul when he says in **Colossians 1:15**:

**“He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn of all creation*”?**

What does *firstborn* mean? And does not the phrase, **“of all creation”**, mean that Jesus is a *part* of that Creation?

First, we should realize that the phrase **“of all creation”** does *not* mean that Christ was *part* of Creation. For example- if I said,

“God is ruler *of all creation*,”

... no one would think I meant that God is part of the Creation. I simply mean that God is the Ruler *“over all creation.”* And there is a good clue in the next verse (**Colossians 1:16**) which helps us understand whether Paul means something like this. So when we use Scripture to interpret Scripture and resist the temptation to use our own natural human reasoning- we put these two verses together and we get:

**“[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; For [because] by Him all things were created...”**

In other words, the *reason* that Paul calls Christ the “firstborn of all creation” is “because in Him *all things* were created.” So the reason is *not* that Jesus was the first and greatest created thing. The reason Paul said this was simply to illustrate to us that *every* created thing was created by Jesus Christ. So this does not incline us to think then that “firstborn of all creation” means “firstborn *among* all created things,” but rather “firstborn *over* all created things.”

And the second thing to realize is that the Greek word that was translated as "firstborn" (*prōtotokos*) may have a strictly biological meaning as when Dr. Luke wrote in **Luke 2:7**:

**And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths...**

But it can also have a *non-biological* meaning of dignity and precedence. For example, in **Psalms 89:27** God says of the One Who will sit on David's throne,

**Psalms 89:27**

**"I also shall make him *My* firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.**

... and the meaning here is that *this* King will have Preeminence and Honor and Dignity over all the other kings of the earth. Other non-biological uses of this term are found in **Exodus 4:22** where Israel is called God's "**firstborn son**", and **Hebrews 12:23** where all believers are called the "**firstborn who are written in heaven.**"

So there are at least four reasons we can give now as to why Arius and the Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong to say that **Colossians 1:15** means that Christ was part of God's Creation.

1. **The word "firstborn" can very naturally mean "Preeminent One" or "One with superior Dignity" or "One Who is First in Time and Rank."** It does not have to imply that Christ was brought forth as part of the Creation.
2. **Colossians 1:16 means that Christ was the Creator of all things and not part of the Creation** ("because in him *all things* were created").
3. John Chrysostom (A.D.347–407) pointed out that Paul *avoided* the word that would have clearly implied that Christ was a "created being" (*prōtoktistos*) and chose to use instead a word with connotations of parent-child and *not* Creator-creation (firstborn, *prōtotokos*).
4. In using the term "**firstborn,**" Paul speaks in remarkable harmony with the Apostle John who calls Christ God's "only begotten Son"

(**John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1John 4:9**) and teaches clearly that this does not make him a “created being” but rather makes him God: **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and *the Word was God*” (John 1:1).**

C. S. Lewis shows why the use of the term “begotten” (and we could add Paul’s term, “firstborn”) implies the Deity of Christ and not his being a created being.

When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers, and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, and man makes a wireless set—or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set, say, a statue. If he’s clever enough a carver he makes a statue which is very much like a man indeed. But, of course, it’s not a real man; it only looks like one. It can’t breathe or think. It’s not alive.

So for these reasons, then, I take my stand gladly with the great tradition of Christian orthodoxy and not with ancient or modern Arianism. Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn *over all* creation. **“He is *the Radiance of the Glory of God and is the express Image of God’s Own Nature* (Hebrews 1:3). “Though *He was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped*” (Philippians 2:6). “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*” (John 1:1).**

So the Son in Whom the Father delights is the Image of God, and the very Radiance of the Glory of God. He bears the very stamp of God’s Nature and is the very Form of God. He is equal with God and, as John says, He is God.

So from all eternity- way before Creation- the one Reality that has always existed is God. This is a great mystery, because it is so hard for us to think of God having absolutely no beginning, and just being there forever and ever and ever, without anything or anyone making Him be there—just Absolute Reality that everyone of us has to reckon with whether we like it or not.

But we must understand that this ever-living God has never been “alone.” He has not been a solitary center of consciousness. There has

always been another- Who has been One with God in both Essence and Glory, and yet distinct in Personhood so that They have had a Personal Relationship throughout all eternity.

So the Bible teaches that this eternal God has always had a perfect *image* of Himself (**Colossians 1:15**), a perfect *Radiance* of His Essence (**Hebrews 1:3**), a perfect *Stamp* or *Imprint* of His Nature (**Hebrews 1:3**), and a perfect *Form* or Expression of His Glory (**Philippians 2:6**). So we now should agree with Jonathan Edwards who said,

As long as God has been God (eternally) He has been conscious of Himself; and the Image that He has of Himself is so perfect and so complete and so full as to *be* the living, personal reproduction (or begetting) of Himself. And this living, personal image or radiance or form of God *is God*- namely God the Son. And therefore God the Son is coeternal with God the Father and equal in both Essence and Glory.

So it would be correct to think that the Pleasure of God in His Son is actually Pleasure in Himself. Since the Son is the Image of God and the Radiance of God and the Form of God, Equal with God, and indeed *is God*- therefore God's Delight in the Son is ultimately Delight in Himself.

So the original, the primal, the deepest, the foundational Joy of God is the Joy that He has in His Own limitless Perfections as He sees them reflected in the Glory of His Son. In **2Corinthians 4:6**- Paul speaks of:

### **“the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ”**

So from all Eternity- God has beheld the panorama of His Own Perfections in the Face of His Son. And so all that God is- He sees reflected fully and perfectly in the Countenance of His Son. And in this- God rejoices with infinite Joy.

Now if you are not used to thinking deeply like this- at first this sounds like vanity. And it absolutely *would* be vanity if we humans found *our* deepest joy by looking in the mirror. We *would* be vain and conceited and smug and selfish if we were to find our joy in ourselves.

But why would that be true? Aren't we supposed to imitate God (**Matthew 5:48; Ephesians 5:1**)? Yes, in some ways we are- but not in



every way. This “self- love” was the first deceit of Satan in Heaven and then in the Garden of Eden. He tempted Adam and Eve to try to be like God in a way that God never intended them to be like Him—namely, in self-reliance. *Only* God is Self-reliant. All the rest of us should be completely God-reliant.

So in the same way- we were created for something infinitely better and nobler and greater and deeper than *self*-contemplation and self- love and self- righteousness. We were created for the contemplation and enjoyment of *God!* And anything less than this would be sinful idolatry toward Him and a great disappointment for us. God Alone is the most glorious Being in the entire Universe, and so not to love Him and not to delight in Him- not to find ultimate satisfaction and pleasure in Him- is a great loss to us and it horribly insults Him.

And all I’m saying is that the very same thing is true with God. How can God act so that He will not insult and blaspheme what is infinitely Beautiful and Glorious and Valuable? How may God act and think that will not be idolatry? There is only one possible answer:

God must love and delight in His Own Beauty and Perfection above all things.

For *us* to do this in front of the mirror is the essence of vanity. But for *God* to do it in front of His Son is the very essence of Righteousness. Is not the essence of Righteousness to place supreme Value on what is supremely valuable- with all the just actions that are appropriate? And isn’t the opposite of Righteousness to set our highest affections on things of little or no worth- with all the unjust actions that are not appropriate?

So the Righteousness of God is the infinite Zeal and Joy and Pleasure that God has in what is supremely valuable- namely, His Own Perfection and Worth. And if God were ever to act contrary to this eternal Passion for His Own Perfections- He would be patently unrighteous and He would be patently an idolater.

Now I realize that all this is very lofty thinking. But let me bring this down to you in very practical terms that should encourage you. I am telling you that this Truth about God loving God, and God delighting in Himself more than He delights in anything else is not mystical speculation. No, it is the foundation of all our Christian hope.

And this will become increasingly obvious to you as we go through this series- but let me give you a preview real quick.

It is in this God-centered, Divine Righteousness where the greatest obstacle to our Salvation lies. How so? Explain how an infinitely Righteous God could ever set His Affection on sinners like us who have scorned His Perfections and trampled His Glory in the ground? Why would a God like this even care about us?

And the great Wonder of the Gospel- that makes the Gospel to be "Good News" is that in this Divine Righteousness lies also the very foundation of our Salvation. Okay- here we go.

The infinite Regard that the Father has for the Son makes it possible for me, a wicked sinner, to be loved and accepted in the Son, because in His Death- Jesus vindicated the Worth and Glory of His Father, and because the Father loves the Son- He seeks to honor what the Son has done. And this is why the psalmist prayed,

**Psalm 25:11**

***For Your name's sake, O Lord, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great"***

The Apostle John said it like this

**1John 2:12**

**I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.**

.. and simply turn this verse around and you have:

**I am writing to you, little children, because for His name's sake. your sins have been forgiven you**

So it is not simply because we ask God, and not even because we need it- but for the sake of Jesus Christ and for the sake of His Name, and for the sake of His Pristine Reputation, and for the cause of His Glory, and for the Fame of the Name of Jesus Christ- it is for these reasons that God the Father forgives us.

So we see that Jesus has now atoned for sin and vindicated the Father's Honor so that our sins are forgiven. So it is precisely because God holds His Own Name so highly and because He holds His Own

Delight and His Own Pleasure in His Son so highly- that *that* is the reason behind why God forgives wicked sinners.

How arrogant it is to assume that we are forgiven simply because we ask. Just who do we think we are that God would move from His Throne to forgive us? There must be a better reason- a far more important reason because manifestly we *are* forgiven. So if it is true that we are forgiven, and if it is true that we are *not* forgiven because of any merit on our part- then pray tell- *why* are we forgiven?

**[Y]our sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.**

So precisely because God is passionate about being known and feared and loved and adored and worshipped and enjoyed- because God delights in all He does; because God delights in His Son- we are forgiven so that by forgiving wicked and unworthy sinners- God's Name is magnified and God's Grace in Jesus Christ is exalted! In other words- if God was not like this- we would not be forgiven!

So this is an example of how the Father's infinite Pleasure in His Own Perfections is the very foundation of our own everlasting joy. So the Pleasure of God in His Son actually being Pleasure in Himself- is not vanity, dear friends- it is the Gospel.

So if young Henry Scougal was right, and the worth and the excellency of a soul is measured by the object and intensity of its love- then God is the most Excellent and Worthy of all Beings. Because God Alone has loved His Son better and more than we can even imagine-far more than we could actually do. And God loves Jesus- the Image of His Own Glory- with infinite and perfect Energy and continuous Zeal from all eternity.

So let us then stand in awe of this great God! And let us turn from all the trivial resentments and fleeting pleasures and petty pursuits of materialism and human "spirituality." And let us be caught up into the Gladness that God has in the Glory of His Son- Who is the very Radiance and Image of his Father. Because there is coming a day when the very pleasure that the Father has in the Son will be in us, and on that day- God's Pleasure in Jesus will be our own pleasure in Jesus.

I tell you that there is only one Fountain of lasting joy—the overflowing Gladness of God in God. Without beginning and without ending, without source and without cause, without help or assistance,

this Spring of Life is eternally Self-replenishing. And from this unceasing Fountain of Joy flow all Grace and all Joy in the universe- so let everyone who is thirsty- come!

Amen. Let's pray!