

That Which Pleases God

An Examination of What God Delights In

1- God Takes Pleasure in Being God

January 5, 2014

Psalms 63:1-4

1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.

3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.

4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

To the Glory of God

One of the most important people who has fashioned my walk with God more than almost anyone else is a man who has been dead for 256 years. His name is Jonathan Edwards. Edwards has been called "America's greatest theologian", and yet few if any people that I grew up with even heard of him much less were moved by him. And I find that a profoundly bad thing.

And what has drawn me to Edwards is his ability to put together two of the most important aspects in all the Bible:

1. God's Passion for His Own Glory
2. Our Passion to Experience Joy and Satisfaction

Edwards taught that these two aspects are really the same thing. That our desire to be happy and God's Desire to be Known and Loved and Feared and Enjoyed are the same because the fullness of our Joy *cannot* be found in things that are made- but only in the Maker. And since we were created for God's Glory- since we were made to know God and love God and enjoy God forever- our ability to experience the fullest range of joy and satisfaction and delight is woven into our relationship to this great God.

So, therefore, I do not believe that lost people are truly happy. I do not believe that unsaved people know joy in any meaningful way. I do not believe that unregenerate people are satisfied, and, so, they simply *endure* through this life and they really don't do that very well, either.

And that is why people drink and take drugs and commit adultery and drive fast and want to make lots and lots of money and buy lots and lots of things- because down deep- in the very core of their being- the darkness that they live in, the emptiness of their soul, the vacuum of their existence does not and cannot make them truly happy. Their actions prove that they are spiritually dead. The way they live their lives and the things that they gravitate toward only verifies that they are indeed fallen and completely and utterly and totally separated from God.

Conversely, I believe that God is the Happiest Being in the Universe. I believe that the Joy and the Pleasure and the Delight and the Satisfaction that God experiences on a second by second basis in Himself is so far above ours, and so full and so real and so lasting and so deep and so true and so glorious that unless we receive a new glorious and immortal body- if we were to be exposed to that Joy for just a moment- we would literally burst apart and explode.

I believe that it is hard for us to even imagine being as happy as God is, and that what we call "fun" and what we call "joy" is so far beneath God and so base as to be called ridiculous.

And I believe that it is the fact that God desires for us to be as happy as He is as to what Salvation is really all about and that is why Jesus made a strange statement like this in **John 15:11**:

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

In other words- Jesus says here that the things that He said while He was on the earth were spoken to cause us to arrive at a particular end- that the Joy that He has might be in us, and when His Joy is in us- Jesus said our joy would be full. So that begs the question:

What Joy does Jesus have? What is the Joy of God? What is it that God takes Pleasure in?

Jesus said He wants my joy to be full, but He wants my joy to be full *after* His Joy is in me. So what is His Joy? What does God take delight in? What pleases God? What does God enjoy? What brings happiness to God? And that is the subject that I want to explore as we begin this new year and as is my custom- I will take a short "vacation from our "Journey Through Luke" to explore a subject that I think will transform the way you look at God this year and that is:

"That Which Pleases God"

So just what pleases God? Look again at **Psalm 63:3:**

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You

... now just turn this verse around and say it the other way:

My lips will praise You Because Your lovingkindness is better than life

.. in other words the *catalyst* or the *cause* for *why* the psalmist is praising God with his lips is because he realizes that God's Lovingkindness is better than life. Now first of all- we must realize that God is the Giver of life. Without God- there would be no life. Life was God's idea and we don't have life- we don't have any life at all- unless and until God mercifully and graciously gives us life. So all that is in the world- green grass and blue skies and birds that chirp and laughter among friends and the sweetness that is in a child's eyes and food to eat that is prepared in a thousand different ways with different sensations and tastes and beautiful music that is played in a thousand different ways and athletics and business and cars and technology and medicine and science and beautiful houses and mountains and immense galaxies and subatomic particles- all of life is a merciful and gracious gift from a Good and Wise and Powerful God.

And yet the psalmist says here that God's Lovingkindness, God's steadfast Love is *better* than all of that. And what that means is that if all of that was to be taken away, if all of that was to cease to exist up to and including life itself and all you had left was God's Lovingkindness- you wouldn't just *survive*- but you would actually be *better off*- because

God's Lovingkindness - which by the way has given you all that other stuff- doesn't just *replace* all that other stuff- but is *better* than all that other stuff. But even though that would make a good bumper sticker- I am not convinced that many of us really believe that.

And so I have this burden as I look at the modern Church and I listen to what people say and as I read what they write about and come to know what brings joy to them- that what the psalmist says here is really *not* what drives people today, and that frankly- the average person who sits on the pew of the average Church today couldn't care less about this.

So what can I do, what can I say, how can I conduct my Ministry so that when I pray with a person preparing for surgery and when I visit with scared people as their children are burned and when I sit at the feet of old people who are lonely and when I sit at the head of my table at Christmas dinner and get on the radio and teach and stand behind a pulpit a preach- what can I do and say that when I leave a person's life- they will come to say to themselves:

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You

But to actually do that we need another text- so please turn with me to **Psalm 90:11-17:**

11 Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You?

12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.

13 Do return, O LORD; how long *will it be?* And be sorry for Your servants.

14 O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days You have afflicted us, *And* the years we have seen evil.

16 Let Your work appear to Your servants And Your majesty to their children.

17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us; And confirm for us the work of our hands; Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

So here in verse 14- this psalmist says:

O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness, That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

... so this psalmist is saying to God:

"I am not yet in the place where your Lovingkindness is better than life, and I need to be and I want to be- so help me- O God- get to that place where I can honestly say that."

Now nobody in their right mind would go to God in prayer and song and ask God to satisfy them with His Lovingkindness so that they could sing for joy and be glad in God all their days if that were already true in their lives. No, the only reason you ask God to do something is because you *do not* already have it-and you see that you *need* it and you know that God is the only One Who can give it to you. So the only reason the writer of **Psalms 90** is asking God to satisfy him with God's Lovingkindness that the writer of **Psalms 63** talked about is because he doesn't already possess it, and he knows that he *needs* it and he *wants* it and sees the *value* of it, and so he is asking God to do something in his life to *cause* him to be satisfied with God's Lovingkindness- that the writer of **Psalms 63** said was better than life itself and everything that life brings to a person- that God's Lovingkindness is better than all of that- and the writer of **Psalms 90** says that he wants God to make him satisfied in God's Lovingkindness so that he can rejoice in God all his days.

Now what *I* think about "That Which Pleases God" is relatively unimportant. But what God thinks about "That Which Pleases God" is *infinitely* important. So if this series is simply the rantings of a deranged man- then it has no authority to convict your soul or change the way you think about God and alter the way you live your lives. But if I can prove my thesis from God's Word, then it *does* carry the weight necessary to bring conviction and change to your life. So that is my burden during this series to begin this new year- to prove to you from God's Word that God Himself delights in being God, and His Delight in Himself is the basis and the foundation for the fullness of our own joy that will in turn give us the strength and the ability to endure very

tough and difficult days that are ahead of us so that we will remain faithful to God, busy in the Work of the Lord, and fruitful in His Kingdom- to God's Glory. So let us begin.

Now most of you have never heard of Henry Scougal. Henry was born in 1650 in Scotland and died in 1678. So he was 27 years old when he died and that places him in with other men like David Brainerd (29), Henry Martin (31), Robert Murray M'Cheyne (29)- great servants of God who died very early in life. But before he died of tuberculosis- Scougal wrote to a friend to encourage him in his growth in godliness, and to instruct him on the Christian life. Though it was never meant to be published, it succeeded far beyond the author's expectations. The letter passed from hand to hand until 60 years later it was brought to Gilbert Burnet- the future bishop of Salisbury- with the suggestion that it be made available to the world. Today this letter is considered a classic book of Christian devotion and I highly recommend that you get a copy and read its 96 pages. No less than George Whitfield said that he was saved as a result of reading this book and wrote the preface to it that says,

"How did my heart rise and shudder like a poor man that is afraid to look into his ledger lest he should find himself a bankrupt. 'Shall I burn this book? Shall I throw it down? or shall I search it?' I did search it; and, holding the book in my hand, thus addressed the God of heaven and earth: 'Lord, if I am not a Christian, for Jesus Christ's sake show me what Christianity is, that I may not be damned at last.' I read a little further, and discovered that they who know anything of religion know it is a vital union with the Son of God -- Christ formed in the heart. O what a ray of divine life did then break in upon my soul!"¹.

There is a single sentence in this book on page 68 in a section called "*The Excellency of Divine Love*" that gave rise in my soul for this sermon series, and it goes like this:

“The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured
by the object of its love”

¹ Whitfield, George; The Preface; *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*; Scougal; Martino Fine Books

... in other words- that which is the *object* of someone's love- that which somebody deems to be worth setting their love upon- is that which tells of the worth and the excellency of their own soul. So if we are to know what is the worth and the excellency of somebody's soul - we need to examine that which that person has set his love upon.

So- as far as this series matters- if we are to rightly and fully understand the Worth and the Value of God- we need to see that which God has set His Love upon and we need to examine that which pleases God, and that which brings Delight to God, and that which gives Pleasure and Joy to God, and by doing that- by examining that which God Himself delights in- we can then know and understand the Worth and the Value of God.

Now since this sounded so strange to me- and because I really didn't hear anybody talk about this- I really didn't know if the Bible actually taught this at all and to my amazement it does. And actually- God goes to great lengths to tell us in very vivid detail what He delights in and what pleases Him and that which brings Joy to Him, and the only thing I can say about that is that since God took the time to move upon human writers to pen down inerrant Words that describes to us that which brings Joy and Pleasure to God Almighty- then we should take the time to study it and in the logic of Brother Scougal- as we study that which pleases God- we will then come to know the Worth and the Excellency of God.

Another way of looking at this is that if the Westminster Catechism is correct and the Chief End of Man is:

To Know God; to Love God; to Glorify God; and To Enjoy Him Forever

... and if **Jeremiah 9:23&24** is correct and

23 Thus says the LORD, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;

24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD ...

... then for us to know and understand God is the *best thing* we could ever do. And to understand God's Worth and Value is for us to examine that which God takes Pleasure in. So this series is designed to allow us

to understand That Which Pleases God so that we will understand the Worth and the Value of God so that we will judge God to be deserving of *our* love and faithful service- even in the face of very hard times that are upon us.

Now one problem with going down this road is that there might be another way of understanding the Value and the Worth of God besides looking at what God takes Pleasure in or that which God delights in. For example- we might want to say that we can determine God's Value by looking at what He wills or what He thinks. But the problem with that is that God doesn't "think" or "will" anything that He doesn't actually do.

So one of the amazing Perfections of God's Holiness is that God doesn't simply *try* or *want* to do something. No, God accomplishes *all* that He wills and is never in any way defeated in what He desires to do.

Isaiah 46:9-11

9 “Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;

11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned *it*, *surely* I will do it.

So in spite of what is commonly taught today- neither Man's choices nor demon power can thwart God's Intentions, and evil exists on the earth only to the degree that it propagates and serves God's Purposes. So satan is simply a tool that God uses to further His determined Will in the earth and satan cannot do anything unless he has first obtained God's Permission- not only in whether he can actually do that "evil thing", but in how far and wide and long and to what extent that "evil" can be carried out.

And we need to know that God doesn't do anything half- hearted. God never just goes through the motions. God is never bored and tired. God never *determines* to do something and then loses interest in it because what He has *determined* to do is the very *best thing* that He could have done.

So it isn't simply that God is *powerful* enough to do something in the earth but it is that God is *Good* enough to do something that is the very *Best Thing* that could possibly be done, and, therefore, God does that best thing *with Joy* and with *Passion* and with *Gladness* and with *Energy* and with *Delight* because God genuinely takes Pleasure in that which He has determined to do- precisely because what God has determined to do is the *best thing* that He *could* do. So based on that- we can say that God's Love is His Powerful and Prevailing Passion to accomplish all that He has determined to do. And if that is true- then that which Pleases God is the measure of the Excellency of His Soul. So we say:

The Measure of God's Worth and Value is That Which Pleases Him

Now why does this matter? To see God like this allows me to put together the two things that matter the most to me:

- A. I Want to be Happy
- B. I Want to Glorify God

And I do not believe that we can do the *second* thing without the *first* thing being true. In other words- I do not believe that we can truly and fully *glorify* God unless and until we begin to *delight* ourselves in Him. That until we truly *enjoy* God, until we find genuine pleasure and satisfaction and joy in loving and serving God- we really do not bring God any Glory at all.

Another way of saying this is that if my service to God is based solely on an obligation or a duty- then God is not as glorified then if I served Him because it genuinely thrilled my soul to do so. And by that I do not mean that we may never sense any obligation to God or any duty to God- we can and we do and many times- obligation and duty is the road toward delight- and so many times- obligation and duty will eventually lead to delight in God- but the goal is not simply our service toward God – the goal is that God's Grace changes us so completely that our service to God is a *delightful* service and we honestly see our faithful obedience to God as being the pathway to the fullness of Joy.

So I want to say something that might sound strange to you at first- but I pray that it will become a very important part of your own

walk with God over the time that we spend on this series because it was *the* paramount issue in the life of Jonathan Edwards and with George Whitfield and with Augustine and with Henry Scougal and with a lot of the Puritans, and it was *the* paramount issue with the godly men whom God used to ignite the Protestant Reformation and with the men whom God used to write the Westminster Catechism and the 39 Articles for the Anglicans and with the men who wrote the 1689 London Baptist Confession for the Baptists and with Charles Spurgeon and many, many others.

In other words- what I am about to say to you was a huge issue with the giants of the Christian Church at every important juncture of Church History, and the fact that this is not a huge issue for many of us today simply shows just how far we have fallen. Okay here is the statement:

The Value of God is found in His Determined Pleasures

.. and allow me to put some practical application under this for you. Suppose that America has ceased to be a nation that is dominated by a Biblical Ethic and you are being hauled before the court because you have taught your children that any sexual expression outside of the one single expression that God has ordained- which is one naturally born man united with one naturally born woman in Holy Matrimony for one lifetime. And you are going to be fined and lose your business for comments that have not been sanctioned by the State, and you are being tried for a hate crime, and now your wife has left you because she could not stand the pressure and your children have abandoned you and you are alone in a jail cell awaiting punishment for loving and serving God, and all you have to do to get out of jail and to be re-united with your family and to get your business back again is to renounce what the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches.

And in that moment- the temptation to compromise with Divine Truth is great, and the temptation to resort to secular political arguments that have nothing to do with Jesus Christ is also very great. But if you compromise with Divine Truth- God is not glorified. And if you resort to simply arguing against the tyranny of the State and base your opposition on that- then I suggest that God is not glorified either.

The *hardest* thing to do in that moment is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ *for the Glory of God*, and one of the things that will help in that kind of situation is to know that God is *worthy* of your faithfulness and to know that the pathway to the fulfillment of your own Joy is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. For you to see God's infinite Worth and that your own Joy is wrapped up in being faithful to God's Desire to allow you to be persecuted and to endure that persecution to God's Glory without compromise is of great benefit in difficult times like that.

And to be able to honestly delight yourself in God during these kinds of terrible situations is what the psalmist meant when he said:

My lips will praise You Because Your lovingkindness is better than life

... and it allows you to accomplish both goals:

- A. To Be Happy
- B. To Glorify God

So I want to say to you this morning that it is God's Well Placed Happiness in Being God, it is God's Delight in Being God that gives me the information of His absolute Value which in turn gives me the ability and the desire to both glorify this valuable God and to have the fullness of Joy in Him.

Every single person in this room has a passion for joy. Everybody wants to be happy. Nobody is immune from wanting to be happy and of seeking to be happy. We were born with that desire. And I would suggest to you that our God given desire to be happy is not wrong, it isn't evil, it isn't a bad thing- God gave it to us. We just need to find that happiness in God, and not in the things that God made or try to find it in sin.

It is no more wrong to want to be happy than it is to be hungry when you miss a meal- it is normal to be hungry and it is correct to feel that hunger when you haven't satisfied that hunger with food. It isn't any more wrong to want to be happy than it is to be thirsty on a hot day when you haven't had anything to drink. There would be something wrong with you if you were *not* hungry or thirsty under those conditions. And Jesus said in **Matthew 5:6**:

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

... showing that both hunger and thirst are good things if directed toward that which is infinitely deserving of those passions. What *is* evil are the two things that God said in **Jeremiah 2:13**

For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.

So Jeremiah says here that there are two ways in which we sin:

- ✓ Forsaking God by allowing things that are passing away to substitute for God
- ✓ Not forsaking God but serving Him with little or no gladness

So the desire to be happy is the driving force that God created within us to push us past the fruitlessness of loving things that are passing away and enable us to adore God- Who is both Eternal and Absolute.

So evil is turning *away* from the Source of true and lasting happiness and of even trying to find Peace and Love and Joy and Contentment in any other place or in any other person besides God. And evil is not wanting to be happy in God. So never feel bad about wanting to be happy in God- pursue that- just don't prostitute it.

So how do we maximize our delight in God? How do we maximize our Joy in God? How do we maximize and fulfill our pleasure in God? The Bible says that this miracle occurs when:

God's Own Personal Delight in Being God becomes our delight in God

When you are glad that God is God in all His strange Doings and in His unsearchable Acts and inscrutable Wisdom and in all His Glorious Being, and when that knowledge of God does not waver even when things do not go the way you would like for them to and you come out on the losing end of life and when you do *not* get that promotion and you lose your job and when your husband runs off with somebody else

and when your child is not healed and when you are punished for doing right, and yet- you are so grateful that you are in Christ and Christ becomes even more precious and worthy and valuable to you in the Emergency Room and in the Jail Cell and in the Courtroom, and you find your lips forming praises to God automatically when you suffer the loss of all things only because God has been so good to you to cause you to know that His Lovingkindness is better than life itself.

I tell you that is a place of real joy where we all should be, and that is a place of lasting contentment where the psalmist was, and that is a place of enduring satisfaction where countless hundreds of thousands of martyrs were in, and that is why they had absolute joy as they burned and why they could sing praises to God as the lions ate them and why they could sing aloud unto God as their flesh was ripped off their bodies, and when injustice after injustice was handed to them- not because they were brave- absolutely not because these people were courageous- but I suggest to you that they were able to go through these things faithfully only because they had absolute confidence in Whom they had believed and for the Joy that was set before them.

The Will of God for every believer is that God the Father's eternal and complete Delight in God the Son by and through God the Holy Spirit 60 seconds of every minute and 60 minutes of every hour and 24 hours of every day and 7 days of every week and 365 days of every year will move into us and will literally *become* our own delight in God. And God's Own personal Joy in Himself will become our joy in Him and it is *then* that our Joy will be full. And Jesus prayed that this would happen to each and every one of us who are saved. And I think that is what the Bible means when it says to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I was in the Emergency Room the other night as I saw my grandchild horribly burned by scalding hot water, and that was after I was just in another Emergency Room just two weeks prior to that with my wife as her red blood count was dangerously low, and I was trying to understand God's Sovereignty in all of that and trying to piece together in my mind the overwhelming "Good" that God was doing in my life and in Rhonda's life and in Brother Kix's life- who as a baby belongs to God, and in my youngest daughter's life and in her boyfriend's life- if they are saved and not if they are not saved- because the "Good" that God is doing is only reserved for those who are called according to God's Purpose- and I was doing that because I believe that the Gospel is just

as real and just as true and just as important in the Emergency Room as it is in the Church- and I believe that we should exult in tribulations, and I believe that we should experience the fullest range of joy in God in our trials and not simply when we are delivered from our trials and I was meditating on this verse from **Romans 5:3-5:**

3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Now wait just a minute. Why doesn't hope disappoint? The King James says; **hope maketh not ashamed.** So why doesn't my hoping in God make me ashamed- especially since so much trouble seems to come my way? What was the reason that the Apostle Paul gave as to why hoping in God doesn't disappoint or make ashamed? Look again at the end of verse 5:

... because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Now based on this verse- are we to assume then that the Holy Spirit is some kind of "tool" by which and through which the Love of God is poured into me? No. The Gift of the Holy Spirit Whom God has graciously given to me to come and live inside me and never leave me and to walk in me and to convict me of sin and to change me from my rebellious condition and to empower me to love God and to give me the desire to stay saved and to lead me into trials and temptations and persecutions to refine and purify me and to cause me to be fit for Heaven- the Holy Spirit- **IS** the Love of God to me. Now look at the very next verse- **Romans 5:6:**

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

... and we are to understand that the word "**for**" means: ***Because.*** So when you put those last two verses together- you have:

... hope does not disappoint, *because* the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us *because* while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Now what is the difference between the foundation of verse 5 and the foundation of verse 6? The foundation of verse 5 is:

... hope does not disappoint, *because* the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us

...and that is an *experience*. That is not an objective propositional and historical Truth- it is something that all saved people literally *experience* as a direct result of being saved. That is not something that we read about and simply agree with and say, "*That is in the Bible and I believe it*", like we do with objective Truth like the Trinity or the Virgin Birth.

No, that is something that we actually *possess* and *experience individually* as believers. God the Father actually pours His Love into us by and through God the Holy Spirit Whom God the Father has given to us. And we actually possess and experience that Reality in our lives.

But all of that is true and we experience that Reality... **BECAUSE** of something else that is also true that *is* objective and that is propositional and that is an historical Truth:

***because* (for) while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.**

And this means that the ground or the foundation of my sense of being loved by God the Father is mediated to me by God the Holy Spirit Who lives and walks within me- *directing* my attention to and cultivating my trust and enabling my belief in- the objective, propositional, and historical and factual Truth of Jesus Christ being Crucified on a Cross 2,000 years ago just outside of Jerusalem. That's what I was meditating on in the Emergency Room the other night. Another verse is found in **Galatians 2:20** that says:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

.. in other words- the Apostle Paul knows that he is loved by God the Father precisely because he ponders the Death of the God the Son and he ponders that historical Death- that he never personally saw- because of the Holy Spirit that dwells in him.

So one is an Objective Truth- the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ- and we have nothing to do with that- we read about it in the Bible and that the Holy Spirit gives us the power and desire to trust in- and the other is a subjective experience- knowing that we are loved by God the Father- that we personally and beautifully and individually *experience* by and through the very same God the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us.

And this is a miracle- the Holy Spirit moving in you to open your eyes and giving you faith to trust in what the Bible says about Jesus- even though you have never seen Him- and moving you toward conviction and away from sin and empowering you to continue to go on with Jesus. And yet the objective foundation and the subjective foundation are one.

And I said all that to say that if my love for God is nothing more than this human, frail, pitiful, weak, immature, haphazard fallen emotion that I call "love", then it will never satisfy the longing that I have to be happy, and sin will eventually attract me to leave God and my desire and ability to remain faithful to God in hard circumstances will play out and reveal the shallowness of my own efforts. I am simply too little, and too finite, and too weak. I can't do it- I need God in me to love like this!

I need what Jesus called "The Love of God" to be in me. And that is defined as the Divine and Eternal kind of Love that God has for Himself. I need that to be in me. And the result will be that I will love God to the extent and in the same way that God loves Himself, and I will enjoy God the same way that God enjoys Himself, and I will be forever satisfied in God the way that God is always satisfied in Himself. And this sermon series is about the question:

Is this Biblical?

... is this true? Is this concept taught in the Bible? Well, let's see. Turn with me to **Matthew 25**- to the Parable of the Talents:

Matthew 25:21

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.

So what did Jesus say here was the reward of faithful service to God?

... enter into the joy of your master

... not simply for us to *go to Heaven or to have* joy or to *know* joy or to *possess* joy- but for us to enter into *His* Joy. This is God's Own Personal Joy. This is The Joy of the Lord. This is *not* the joy that God has for what He made- or for what He did- but rather the Joy that God has that belongs *Personally* to Him. This is God's Own Personal Delight in Himself.

This is the overwhelming and incomprehensible Joy that each of the three Persons of the Trinity has for Each Other that cannot be understood by the human mind and that cannot be described through human words and is that Eternal and Full Joy that every single saved person has been invited to enter into after living a life of faithful service to Jesus Christ. **John 15:11 says:**

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

Our joy will never be full until God's Own Personal Joy becomes our joy in Him; until God's Delight in Himself becomes our Delight in Him; until God's Love for Himself becomes our love for Him; until God's Happiness in Himself becomes our happiness in Him; until God's Pleasure in Himself becomes our pleasure in Him; until God's Satisfaction in Himself becomes our satisfaction in Him.

And Edwards and Scougal and a whole bunch of other people taught that all of our trials and all of our misery here on this earth after we are saved, and all of our troubles and all of our afflictions are designed to make that happen in us because above all things- God wants us to be happy in knowing and loving and serving Him so that we will enjoy Him forever.

And God knows that if any of us are ever going to do that- then God has to give us a Joy and a Delight that is supernatural and that is based on something infinitely better and infinitely more valuable than anything that has been made and anything that originates from our own wicked hearts- which is God Himself.

And I truly believe that us not understanding this concept and us not being taught this concept and us losing the concept that Edwards and others understood is what has driven us through the years in a lot of our harsh and loveless and joyless service to God that has born very little fruit.

And I also think it is a horrible thing to believe that God sits up there and agrees with all our assessment of Him and agrees that He is, in fact, Lovely and True and Worthy and infinitely Valuable, and then simply says, *"Okay, guys- now that you realize how great I am- go ahead and like Me. Go ahead and put forth more effort to Love Me. And try harder in your own human strength to Enjoy Me"* without God mercifully and graciously and Sovereignly providing us with that Love and that Joy and that Delight. That would never be a good thing- that would be a nightmare.

And thank God that is not what Jesus said. The Joy that we will enjoy God with- will not be a joy that we work up in our own human emotions. It will not be a gratitude that we have for what God has done for us. And it will not even be a sincere effort to obey the Command to enjoy God. No, the Joy that we will enjoy God with- will be a Joy that God gives to us, and it will be the very same Joy wherewith God enjoys Himself. Look quickly at **John 17:26**:

and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

The making of God's Name known is God the Father choosing us for Salvation and God the Son saving us because God the Father chose us and God the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and revealing the Truth of all that to us because God the Son saved us- so that the sin barrier between us and God is removed so that we will understand God the way that God understands Himself and we will love God the way that God loves Himself and that we will enjoy God the way that God enjoys

Himself- and that we will do all of that- forever. And that is what Jesus means by saying,

... so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them

... and “**love**” here is defined as God’s Own Personal Delight and Joy and Satisfaction. So to the degree that God loves Himself- to the degree that God the Father delights in God the Son, to the degree that God the Son takes Pleasure in God the Father- Jesus prayed that that same kind of Love will be in us- precisely because He will be in us.

Now keep in mind that God did not love Jesus with any Mercy or any Grace while He was here on earth. Jesus did not *need* God’s Mercy or Grace. Grace is that which allows what we patently do *not* deserve to come to us from God, and Mercy is that which keeps away from us what our sins *demand* that we receive from God. Jesus needed neither Mercy nor Grace because Jesus was born without Original Sin and Jesus never Personally sinned against God and was in perfect and continuous obedience to God 24/7 in thought, word, and deed.

So Jesus *earned* God’s Love and Jesus worked to receive God’s Favor. Jesus deserves God’s Affections and Jesus is entitled to God’s Delight. And so God says to Jesus:

This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased

.. something that He never has and never will say to any of us. But what does God say to us?

Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.

... so God the Father will be pleased with us- but only because of what He Himself has done for us through God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. So the great and glorious Love that God the Father has for God the Son is the very same Love that I will have for God the Son and *not* through my own human effort to love Jesus. So to sum it all up:

The Ultimate Experience Happiness for Us is Achieved When God’s Delight in Himself Becomes our Delight in Him.

Amen. Let's pray.