

Encountering the Generosity of God

Living with An Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

As we cast vision in our community to pursue depth in intimacy with Jesus and as we call you to obtain a persistent resolve to grow in the knowledge of God we're inviting each other to live with an unguarded heart and a free-spirit. Anything vision less than this - I believe - is below the intentions of God for our lives. Let me define my terms:

Living with a free spirit is to live "in the present tense with the Lord" without being weighted down and being self absorbed (distracted by fear, offense or grasping for personal rights, honor, position, money, etc.), but rather living in generosity toward both friends and enemies because we trust in God's goodness.

Living with a guarded heart is to live continually in fear of loss, rejection and carefully guarding how much one is willing to give to others (love, money, honor).

Few things hinder this lifestyle more than our agreement with lies about God's nature and character; especially His generosity - possibly the most contested doctrine of God. It's one of the simplest foundational truths that the Gospel rests upon and presupposes (that God is incredibly generous in nature) - and yet it is the most widely doubted.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

A. Definition

The sum and substance of the doctrine of the generosity of God is the fact that God is relentlessly committed to doing us good. It implies in the most extreme way possible His tender providential care of His Beloved. When we say that God is generous we mean that He is infinitely good, kind and zealously committed to our well-being in time and eternity.

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

THOP CORE COURSE TRACK ONE: INTIMACY

Encountering the Generosity of God: Living with an Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. (Jeremiah 32:39-41)

32 “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. 35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for [because] he is kind [generous] to the ungrateful and the evil. 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:32-36)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously [generously] give us all things?

B. Distinctions

1. General/Universal

44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45)

2. Special/Covenantal

19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50:19-20)

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. (Romans 8:28)

THOP CORE COURSE TRACK ONE: INTIMACY

Encountering the Generosity of God: Living with an Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

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. (Psalm 84:11)

John 17 - "I don't pray for the world..."

C. Difficulties

1. The doctrine is very difficult to embrace because of how many reasons we have to doubt it. Adverse circumstances, demonic accusations and immature faith [knowledge of God] all challenge the reality of God's generosity.
2. It's essential that we embrace the Biblically prescribed path of renewing our calloused and unbelieving minds in order to receive the revelation that God is generous with us.

II. ROMANS 8: SEVEN DISPLAYS OF GOD'S GENEROSITY

A. The Giving of His Son/A Position of Unimaginable Privilege (8:1-3)

1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 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 [the Father] condemned [our] sin in the flesh [of Jesus]... (Romans 8:3)

B. The Giving of His Spirit (8:4-27)

1. Leadership Unto Life and Peace (8:4-14)

.....in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace... (8:4-6)

....For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (8:14)

THOP CORE COURSE TRACK ONE: INTIMACY

Encountering the Generosity of God: Living with an Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

2. Sanctification (8:11-14)

11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. 12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

3. Adoption (8:15-16)

15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God... (8:15-16)

4. Longing/Groaning/Hope (8:22-24)

22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved... (8:22-24)

5. Assistance in Our Weakness to Pray According to God’s Character and Will (8:26-27)

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (8:26-27)

C. The Giving of an Inheritance (8:17)

THOP CORE COURSE TRACK ONE: INTIMACY

Encountering the Generosity of God: Living with an Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, **17** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (8:16-17)

D. The Giving of the Promise of Providential Care (8:28)

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. (Romans 8:28)

E. The Giving of the Assurance of Salvation (8:29-30)

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. (8:29-30)

Theologians call this “The Golden Chain of Salvation” - All five operations of God have nothing to do with our involvement. It’s not that they negate our responsibility entirely, it’s that God’s initiative is decisive in our salvation.

1. He foreknows us
2. He predestines us
3. He calls us
4. He justifies us
5. He glorifies us

F. The Giving of All Things Together with Christ (8:31-34)

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32** He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously [generously] give us all things? **33** Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. **34** Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one

THOP CORE COURSE TRACK ONE: INTIMACY

Encountering the Generosity of God: Living with an Unguarded Heart and a Free-Spirit

who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (8:31-34)

- G. The Giving of the Experience of His Affections Even in Adversity and Suffering (8:35-39)

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.