

Cultivating a Life of Enjoyable Prayer

I. A PROMISE, A PRAYER AND A LIFE VISION

A. A Promise

6 “And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:6-7)

B. A Prayer

13 But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. (John 17:13)

C. A Life Vision

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:9-11)

II. THE GREATEST HINDRANCE TO ENJOYING GOD: FEELING THAT GOD DOESN'T ENJOY US

“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

“Taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Psalm 34:8)

“Behold what manner of love is this, that the Father has lavished upon us, that we should be called children of God.” (1 John 3:1)

- A.** It is a Biblical command to enjoy God and to experience the fullness of His affections towards us. God is glorified much when we are satisfied in Him. But the problem we find when we attempt to obey these commands is the conscious feeling that God does not or cannot enjoy us until we attain maturity. This is not a Biblically rooted emotion; it is illegitimate. And it takes a “reformatting of our hard-drive” whereby we are filled with the truth about how God feels about us having been united to His Son through faith to enjoy Him and feel enjoyed.

- B. God has different emotions related to how people respond to Him. Most live confused without knowing whether God is mad at them, sad about them or glad about them. We do not want to think God is mad when He is delighting over us, thus living in condemnation. Nor do we want to think He delights in us if He is grieved because of our compromise, thus living in presumption. It's essential we understand what He feels about us and why. **The main point is this: The moment we turn to God in repentance we have more than enough reason to believe He enjoys us as we grow into maturity.**

III. SIX REASONS TO BE CONFIDENT THAT GOD ENJOYS US AS WE MATURE

- A. Jesus' substitutionary death

1. We receive God's favor because of what Jesus did not because of what we do. His death secured our position of privilege before God.

¹⁷ If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new...¹⁹ not imputing their trespasses to them...²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)

- B. God's Incomparable Gladness

"...according to the Gospel of the glory of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." (1 Timothy 1:11)

"You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11)

"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices...You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." (Acts 2:26-28)

"You have loved righteousness and You have hated lawlessness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy and gladness above and beyond Your companions." (Psalm 45:7/Hebrews 1:9)

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged (crushed, disheartened) till he establishes justice on the earth..." (Isaiah 42:1-4)

- C. God's unfathomable delight in mercy¹

"Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will have compassion

¹ God's mercy in the Psalms - Ps 4:1; 5:7; 6:2; 6:4; 9:13; 13:5; 18:25; 18:50; 21:7; 23:6; 25:6; 25:7; 25:10; 25:16; 27:7; 30:10; 31:7; 31:9; 31:16; 32:10; 33:18; 33:22; 36:5; 37:21; 37:26; 40:11; 41:4; 41:10; 44:26; 51:1; 52:8; 56:1; 57:1; 57:3; 57:10; 59:5; 59:10; 59:16-17; 61:7; 62:12; 66:20; 67:1; 69:13; 69:16; 77:8; 77:8; 77:9; 79:8; 85:7; 85:10; 86:3; 86:5; 85:10; 86:3; 86:5; 86:16; 89:1; 89:2; 89:14; 89:24; 89:28; 90:14

*on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”
(Micah 7:18-19)*

His compassions/mercies fail not. They are new every morning... (Lam. 3:22-23)

*⁴ What man...having a hundred sheep...does not leave the ninety-nine...and go after the one...? ⁵
When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing...⁶ he calls together his friends...saying,
Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! (Lk. 15:4-5)*

*I will...say to him, “Father, I have sinned...” He arose and came to his father. When he was still a
great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.
The father said, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him...” (Lk. 15:18-22)*

*“...For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight in
love. He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His
pleasure and will...” (Ephesians 1:4-5)*

- D. God’s gentleness – or said another way, the fact that He loves us even in our weakness

He delivered me because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)

Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great. (Ps. 18:35)

*“It will no longer be said to you “Forsaken,” nor will it any longer be said, “Desolate,” but you will
be called “Hephzibah,” and your land, “Beulah.” For the Lord delights in you, and you Him your
land will be married. For as a young man marries a virgin so your sons will marry you; and as the
Bridegroom rejoices over the Bride, so your God will rejoice over you.” (Isaiah 62:4-5)*

- E. The fact that God sees rebellion and immaturity very differently

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt. 26:41)

- F. The fact that God sees weak love and declares it to be thoroughly genuine

*¹⁵ Jesus said, “Simon...do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that
I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, “Simon...do
you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My
sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon...do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He
said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You
know that I love You.” (Jn. 21:15-17)*

IV. THE FAILURES OF PETER AND THE UNRELENTING LOVE OF JESUS

- A. Peter’s call to discipleship – Luke 5

*On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing
by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of*

them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. (Luke 5:1-11)

- B. Peter's desire to destroy those who opposed him (though the text doesn't say Peter was present I think, for the sake of this session and it's message, Peter shared their sentiments) – Luke 9

52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. 53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. 54 And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" 55 But he turned and rebuked them. 56 And they went on to another village. (Luke 9:52-56)

- C. Peter's revelation of Jesus and his disagreement with the cross – Matthew 16
- D. Peter's advice at the Mount of Transfiguration – Matthew 17

28 Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. 30 And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. 34 As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" (Matthew 17:28-35)

- E. Peter's refusal to have his feet washed – John 13
- F. Peter's confidence in his commitment to Jesus – Matthew 26
- G. Peter's denial – John 18
- H. Peter's message from the angels at the tomb – Mark 15

- I. Peter's forfeiting of his apostolic calling and his return to professional fishing – John 21

- J. Peter's restoration – John 21