



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Why God Tells Us That He Delights in His Children

By John Pipe

Scripture Reading
Week of
Aug. 28th – Sept. 3rd

Monday

- ❖ Job 35, 36
- ❖ Psalm 150
- ❖ Ephesians 3

Tuesday

- ❖ Job 37, 38
- ❖ Proverbs 1
- ❖ Ephesians 4

Wednesday

- ❖ Job 39, 40
- ❖ Proverbs 2
- ❖ Ephesians 5

Thursday

- ❖ Job 41, 42
- ❖ Proverbs 3
- ❖ Ephesians 6

Friday

- ❖ Isaiah 1,2
- ❖ Proverbs 4
- ❖ Philippians 1

Saturday

- ❖ Isaiah 3,4

Sunday

- ❖ Isaiah 5,6

The question is not whether God delights in his children. He does. The question is twofold: One, what is it about us that he delights in? And two, why does he tell us that he delights in us? What effect does he want it to have? (When I say “God,” I mean all that God is for us in Christ. I mean the triune, Christian God.)

First, notice some of the texts that speak of God’s delight in his people and his praise of them.

- Zephaniah 3:17, “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; *he will rejoice over you with gladness.*”
- Psalm 147:11, “*The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.*”
- 1 Peter 1:6-7, “In this [salvation] you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to *result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*”
- Romans 2:29, “But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. *His praise is not from man but from God.*”

- 1 Corinthians 4:5, “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. *Then each one will receive his commendation from God.*”

To answer our questions above we also need to see the truth that God commands us to delight in him.

- Psalm 37:4, “*Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*”
- Philippians 4:4, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.*”
- Romans 5:2, “Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we *rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*”
- Psalm 43:4, “Then I will go to the altar of God, to *God my exceeding joy.*”
- Psalm 70:4, “May all who seek you *rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, ‘God is great!’*”
- Psalm 63:3, “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.”

Note: Those last two texts show something crucial. One says that when you love God’s salvation you don’t say

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mainly, “God’s salvation is great!” You say, “God is great!” And when you experience the steadfast love of the Lord, you don’t mainly say, “My lips will praise your steadfast love.” You mainly say, “My lips will praise *you!*” In other words, in all these texts the command is to delight in God himself, and all other blessings we enjoy should lead us to God himself as our final and fullest satisfaction.

Therefore, in answer to our first question my answer is: *At root, what God delights in about us is that we delight in him.*

One way to get at this is to say the obvious: God approves of what is *right*. He rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right. So we should ask, What is right—ultimately? What makes something “right”? My answer is: “Rightness” is *thinking and feeling and acting in a way that expresses in true proportion the value of what is most valuable*. Rightness is thinking, feeling, and doing what flows from a true perception of the supreme value of God. It is seeing truly, savoring duly, and showing consistently in action the infinite worth of God. Therefore, we are doing what is right when we are *understanding* the truth of God’s value for what it is, and *feeling* it proportionately to his universal supremacy, and *acting* in ways that express God’s supreme value. That is what “right” means.

Therefore, when we say God rejoices in our thinking and feeling and doing what is right, we mean that he delights in our seeing, savoring, and showing *his* own supreme value. God values our valuing him. God delights in our delighting in him.

Now the second question we asked above is: Why does he tell us this? Should we be glad to hear it? Yes, we

should be glad to hear it. But why? What is the bottom of our joy in hearing it? It is possible to hear it, and be glad to hear it, in a way that is devastating.

The proper reason to be glad that God delights in our delight in him is because *it confirms that our delight is truly in God*. This fixes our gaze more steadfastly on him and deepens our joy in his beauty. But there is a devastating way to respond to God’s commendation of us. What if we hear God’s praise and are drawn away from delighting in God to delighting in God’s delighting in us? What if we hear his praise as a tickler of what we really enjoy, namely, being made much of? What if the bottom line of what makes us happy is not God himself, but God’s attention, God’s praise? If that is the bottom line, then we are not delighting in God, but only using delight in God to get commendations. That would be devastating. When God’s delight in us lures us to delight in being delighted in, we are ceasing to do the very thing God delights in.

The teaching that God delights in us is very dangerous. Very true. And very dangerous. The reason it is so dangerous is that we are fallen and the chief pleasure of our fallen nature is not sex but self-exaltation. Our sinful nature loves to be praised for what we are and what we have done.

The remedy for this is not to make God the praiser, and think all is well. All may not be well, but deadly. God’s praises of us will do us good, if we hear them as confirming that we are truly delighting in him. God’s praise of our delight in God is meant to help us to keep on delighting in God, and not be distracted by anything. God forbid that his praise of our delight in him would lead us away from delighting in

him to delighting in being praised by him.

Hear me well. We *do* delight in being praised by God. But not the way a carnal mind would. God’s praise of us is not the bottom of our joy. We should not let his praise distract us from the very thing he is praising—namely, our delight in him. *We delight in being praised by God because it confirms and increases our focus on him*, rather than distracting us from him. Even his merciful approval of our imperfect delight in him makes him more beautiful in himself. May those who hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” say, “How great and merciful is our God!”

The relationship between what I have said here and the doctrine of justification by faith is that God looks upon his children through the lens of Christ’s imputed righteousness. That means two things: One is that God counts us perfect in Christ. The other is that he can still see us becoming *in practice* what we are *positionally* in Christ. The lens of imputation secures our invincible right standing with God. It also warrants God’s delight in our imperfect delight in him. That is, even though we are counted perfectly righteous in Christ, God can still see our actual sinning and the fruit of the Spirit in our life. That is why he can be delighted in us to greater or lesser degrees. We know this because he both reckons us as perfectly righteous (Romans 4:4-6) and disciplines us for sin in our life (1 Corinthians 11:32). Therefore, God’s delight in our delight in him varies in proportion to the affections of our heart, but is possible only because God imputes to us Christ’s perfect righteousness.