

13 October 2013

God has no pleasure in a selfish man (Pt.1 Pleasure)

This is a new study series on the word *pleasure* in the Holy Scriptures. There are 61 occurrences of the word *pleasure* in 60 verses and eight occurrences of the word *pleasures*.

In this study we will cover three points; (1) God has no pleasure in the lost, and (2) God has no pleasure in the death of the lost, and (3) God has no pleasure in the man that does things in his own strength.

Let us add a little detail to our points:-

1. God has no pleasure in the lost Jew or Gentile.

Hos.8: 8 *Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein [is] no pleasure.*

See also Mal.1:10

Before we seek to understand our verse, let us consider what it means for God to have no *pleasure* in someone.

According to the Oxford dictionary, *pleasure* means "Enjoyment, delight...enjoying themselves...please."

To confirm these meanings are applicable to the Scriptures let us consider briefly the Greek words behind the English word *pleasure*. There are three Greek words that are translated *pleasure*. *Edorki* is also translated lust, *thelema* is also translated desires and will, but the most helpful is the third Greek word *charis* which is also translated acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace, gracious, joy, liberally, thank, thanks and thankworthy. Then when we turn to the Scriptures we confirm the link between pleasure and joy (see Ps.16: 11). Hence in the Scriptures when God says He has no pleasure in someone, it means He has no joy in them, no delight nor favour.

Our verse from the Old Testament says that God has no pleasure, joy nor delight in the nation of Israel, just as with the Gentiles. And we know that the prophet is speaking from God, because it is part of a discourse that began in chapter 6:1-4 where God is speaking.

And what has Israel done wrong to be labeled with the Gentiles? Hos.8: 4 answers this question. They have set up kings but not by the Lord, they have set up princes and the Lord knew them not, and they made idols of gold and silver, and verse 5 indicates that God's anger was thus kindled against them. Hence, for all intents and purposes Israel were *as* the Gentiles, and therefore our verse says that they have been swallowed up among the Gentiles. And we know that the Gentiles of the Old Testament and the New Testament are lost, so it is reasonable to make an application from this Old Testament passage to this the church age, and say that God has no pleasure, no joy nor delight in the lost, whether they be Jew or Gentile. And today it is not because they have made idols, nor because they have set up kings or princes, but because they have not believed in His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because they have not trusted in His death, burial and resurrection for their salvation. And therefore they remain in their sins and are separated from God (see Is.59: 2).

So it won't surprise you that the Scriptures also teach that God has no pleasure in the wicked (see Ps.5: 4), who when they die will be turned into hell (see Ps.19:7). In the same Holy Book we also read that God has no pleasure in fools (see Eccl.5: 4). And according to the Bible who is a fool? "*A fool saith in his heart there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works*" (see Ps.14: 1). So the scientist, the evolutionist and the agnostic, who write God out of the text books as creating the world are, according to our God, fools! Is it any wonder that the preaching of the cross is to them that reject the gospel, foolishness (see 1Cor.1: 18).

So the Scriptures provide a clear picture of the sinner, the lost, that God has no *pleasure* in them! Now think about that for a little longer. Who is it that has no pleasure in the wicked, your lost brother, sister, uncle or niece? It is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who created the heavens and the earth. It is *He* that has no pleasure in the foolish, the wicked, the lost!

May God give us grace, charity and humility to share His blessed gospel with those in our family who do not believe His word. Because although I understand that God has no pleasure in the wicked, I would find it hard to live with myself if I had never shared the gospel with family who were on their way to hell, knowing that while they were on earth God had no pleasure in them. Let us pray for our family and friends who are not saved.

2. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they should turn from sin.

Eze.18: 23 *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: [and] not that he should return from his ways, and live?*

See also Eze.8: 32 & 33: 11, 2Pet.3: 9.

One of the objections that the unsaved often throw at the preacher after he has preached the gospel of Christ crucified, is how can a loving God (and God is love, see 1Jn.4: 8) send anyone to hell? There have been books written on this subject that offer endless reasons, but the biblical response is that God is both loving and just. In His love He gave us His Son, and in His Son He shows every man mercy and extends an arm of redemption, that

everyone has the opportunity to be saved, they simply have to believe God. In God's love for the world He has given us a remedy, we need to take His remedy to receive His love, we need to receive and believe in His Son and turn from our sin. As Ez.18: 23, 32 and 33: 11 says, they are to turn from their sin, and in the New Testament we read that "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2Pet.3: 9). *But*, if man chooses *not* to believe, *not* to receive God's free gift of His only Begotten Son, then God's justice requires that they pay for their own sin, He cannot simply ignore their sin, He cannot just forgive everyone's sin because of His love. His justness requires payment for sin, hence God is both the just and the justifier (see Rom.3: 26).

Imagine a solicitor who has a heart for the young people and gets accepted to be a youth court judge and he loves the youth so much that *he* decides to forgive and forget their crimes and let them go free. Would that be acceptable to the Justice Department of New Zealand? No of course not! A person has to pay for their crimes, the courts demand that a person either goes to jail, pays retribution, goes on probation or gets counseling, but the judge cannot opt out of issuing a just judgment for each crime.

And if that is how it is for our legal system that is subject to all of our human failings, and God loves this world more than a youth court judge loves the youth, and He is more just than the most just High Court judge, don't you think that God's justice would be just? Don't you think that God's ways would be equal? The lost will often say it is unjust of God to send them to hell, just as Israel wanted God to simply turn from His wrath without *them* turning from their abominations. Adulterous Israel felt God was being unequal in His judgment, see Eze.18: 29. But God responds in the same verse with "are not your ways unequal?" And then in the next verse He says "Therefore I will judge you, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (verse 30). God requires just judgment but never has pleasure in issuing that judgment, He always prefers for the lost to turn from their sin, He is never willing that any should perish, but that doesn't mean, if the lost don't repent and believe the Lord Jesus Christ, that He won't impose His just judgment.

So when a lawyer, or anthropologist, or evolutionary scientist, asks you to explain, perhaps in an effort to trap you, as the lawyer did to Jesus in Matt.22: 25 & Lk.10: 25, you will now be better equipped to provide an answer from the Scriptures. But remember, as with the lawyer and Pharisee in Jesus' day, and with some today, if they choose *not* to believe, and are only asking you the question to tempt you, or trap you, then even if you remember to provide such a carefully-worded reply, they will only think up another question to tempt you. But nevertheless it is good to reply to such questions from the Scriptures as Christ replied to questions regarding the law (see Lk.10: 26). Just because the Lord Jesus had the answer from the Scriptures didn't mean the person always got saved, but He was able with all humility and lowliness to show the lost the way to eternal life. It *was* and *is* always their choice to receive God's love, or His judgment. And let us never forget that God has *no* pleasure in the lost going to hell for an eternity, He has given them a way out of that place and He desires that *all* would believe the gospel and go to heaven when they die.

3. God has no pleasure in what man can do in his own strength

Ps.147:10 *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.*

Our previous two points have been focused on the lost man, the heathen who rejects God. This point can be applied to both the lost man who does everything in his own strength or the saved man that has not yet learnt the joy in trusting in God's strength.

Ps.147: 1 & 2 set the context of who 'He' is in verse 10, and it is the Lord God. And although the verse does not say that God/He has no delight in what man can do in his own strength, it is reasonable to suggest that such can be inferred from the second part of the verse: "he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man." In other words, man can run as fast as he likes, he can have the biggest thigh muscles, be the world's strongest man, but that means nothing to God because the Lord has no pleasure in such strength, no joy, or delight in such strength. And when the unsaved athlete at the Olympic Games realises that his strength is nothing, he will most likely trust in God and get saved. The saved rugby player like Michael Jones would also need to come to the knowledge of this truth. The barrier for the saved man to realising this truth is often his pride, his arrogance, as he thinks more of himself than he should. An attitude of "I can do what I want, I will do things my way, I have the knowledge, I have the strength", with that sort of attitude God cannot use such a man, because he is not yet willing to lay down his life, give up what he wants to do, instead of what the Lord God wants. Because as a believer, if we only want to do what we want, and do it in *our* strength, then God has no pleasure in what we do. God has no joy nor delight in what we do, because we do it in our own strength.

And remember, just because a person becomes a Christian, doesn't mean that person instantly trusts God for His strength and does nothing in his own. I know for me, as an unsaved man, I was selfish, self-centred and shallow. I

did everything in my own strength, my own way, and struggled to listen and learn from anyone. And when I got saved it took me years to not just learn the Scriptures, and what they say we are to do and be, but then I have had to learn to live each day in those truths. Because God has no pleasure in us doing things in our own strength.

I think I have already used this illustration in a previous study, but it is applicable to this point, so will use it again. In our final year of BCNZ there were fellow-students saying what they wanted to do when they left. And I remember a student named Peter and his wife, with whom Karen and I became friends, when they spoke of leaving it was always to do further training for a Methodist minister because his wife wanted to be a minister's wife. If that was their true reason, and he is now a minister in Levin, are they doing the work in their strength or the Lord's? Does Peter write his sermons with his wisdom or with the wisdom given to him from above? I don't know the answer to that question for this example, but I do know that if *we* chose to go in the ministry, and *we* chose to become a teacher of righteousness because *we* want to and God has *not* called us, then it is more than likely that we will continue that theme and do the work in our own strength, which means that God has *no* pleasure in that work. And what happens when the devil attacks the minister? Well, it could be that some ministers would say that the devil doesn't exist, he is just a metaphor in Scripture for evil. But if the minister accepts that the devil does exist and he gets attacked, as soldiers do in this daily warfare, how does he defend himself if he does everything in his own strength? He will try and defend himself in his own strength, rather than praying, reading the word, and trusting in Christ, and dying to the things of the devil. He will struggle in his own strength and will have no success in overcoming the wiles of Satan in his own strength. Plus, if the minister does everything in his own strength, for example his sermons, defending himself from the devil and pastoring the church, who gets the glory? Not God, but the minister, and that is taking the glory away from God and giving it to another. And that is exactly what Israel did when they worshipped idols and that is exactly what we do when we do things in our own strength, we give not God the glory but give it to another, and God will not give His glory to another according to Is.42: 8. Is it any wonder that God Almighty will therefore have no pleasure in a man that does things in his own strength, because the man gets the glory, not the Lord! And imagine if you only have one hour left to start and finish a point in your sermon and you are doing it in your own strength, you will always feel the pressure and anxiety. But if you give it to God and do it in *His* strength and it is His will, then you will invariably complete the task without pressure or anxiety and give God the glory! It is a wonderful lesson to learn. Let us pray for our brethren, and for the overseers of the flock, that they would seek to do all things in God's strength and not their own, that God, and Him alone, would be glorified.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our first study on the word *pleasure*, we have covered three points; (1) God has no pleasure in the lost, and (2) God has no pleasure in the death of the lost, and (3) God has no pleasure in the man that does things in his own strength.