

The Joy of the Puritans

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the duty, strategies, glory, and summons to delight in God above all else. It highlights the importance of being born again to have a new covenant heart that delights in God, fighting against distractions that hinder this delight, and engaging in constant conversation with God. The glory of enjoying God is seen as essential for glorifying Him, and any aversion to delighting in God is viewed as a disruption of the universe's order. The sermon concludes with a powerful summons to awaken and make delighting in God the business of life.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:26, Psalms 37:4, Psalms 40:8, Matthew 15:8, Matthew 11:30, Isaiah 58:11, Psalms 96:11

Topics: "Delighting in God", "The New Covenant Heart"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray together. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is in the Lord. He will be like a tree planted by water that sends out its roots to the stream.

He will not fear when the heat comes, because his leaves remain green, and he will not be anxious in the year of drought. Because he does not cease to bear fruit. So Lord, we relinquish all trust in ourselves and man, and we put our trust in you for these moments, and we ask that we would we would pulse with the sap of life from you and bear fruit.

I pray in Jesus name, amen. According to Jesus in Mark 12 30, the first of all the commandments is, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. Now, what does that mean? It cannot be reduced to physical acts of compliance with the law.

It cannot be reduced to acts of willpower against the desires of the heart. And we know it can't, because Jesus said in Matthew 15 8, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me in vain. Do

they worship me? So the lips, muscles here, are singing.

They're singing hymns and worship songs. These lips are preaching truth. They're advocating for justice, and for the poor, and for the unborn.

And these acts of the body and the will in themselves are not love for God. They are a moral zero. In vain, empty, zero, naught, do they worship me? Their heart is far from me.

On Sunday, they're singing. On Monday, they're doing deeds. None of it is love to God, because love for God is from the heart.

Now, Luke's version of the great commandment gives a clue that that's the case. Luke's version, just to read it now in the ESV, the lawyer expresses this, and Jesus approves it. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind.

But that translation isn't exactly right, because those four prepositional phrases in the English are all the same, and in Greek they're not. The first one, heart, has a different preposition than the other three. It has the preposition X, from, out of, and the others are all N, in, with, by.

So, literally, I would say it goes like this. You shall love the Lord your God from or out of your heart, with your soul, and with your strength, and with your mind. Now, why does that matter? That's a clue.

That's a hint that the human heart is unique in its role that it plays in loving God. The soul, living, animating principle of life, the strength, the mind, are not peculiarly, in the Bible, associated with the affections. But the heart is.

Love for God comes first from the heart. You shall love the Lord your God from all your heart. And in all three of the synoptic Gospels, heart is first.

That's not an accident. The essence of love is heart work, not mind work, or soul work, or muscle work. Acts of willpower against the desires of the heart, acts of the lips, or the arms, or the legs, are not, in their essence, the love of God.

The love of God essentially, in its root, begins in the heart for its essence. The function of the mind, and the strength, and the soul is to express or feed that. Lips, singing authentically what's here, if there's something here.

Jesus said it wasn't here, which means this is nothing, zero, because that's the essence. Arms, hugging, arms serving, nothing, unless that action is flowing from love for God here, or the mind can throw the kindling of truth on the flame of the heart. So, heart work is where love essentially is rooted and finds its home.

So Jesus says, in vain do they worship me. In vain do they love me, for their heart is far from me. They move their muscles, they move their lips, exercise their willpower, go to church, and their affections are not for me.

Now, I'm using the word affections. You've heard it a lot. It's come out a lot.

I'm using it the way the Puritans used it. For example, John Owen's book, *The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded*, there he says, without spiritual affections, we cannot be spiritually minded. Well, what's

he referring to? Spiritual affections, he explains like this.

Spiritual affections are the way the soul adheres. Now, pause parenthesis. I think he's using soul here, not the way Jesus did in that verse, but rather virtually interchangeable with the heart here.

Close that parenthesis. Spiritual affections are the way the soul adheres onto spiritual things. Scripture, salvation, Christ, heaven, God.

Now, how do the affections adhere to spiritual reality? He says this, by taking in such a savor, S-A-V-O-R, such a savor and relish of them as wherein the soul finds rest and satisfaction. That's the way spiritual affections adhere to spiritual reality. Savoring, relishing, finding rest, satisfaction.

This, he says, quote, is the peculiar spring and substance of being spiritually minded. Those are his words, not mine, though I take them for myself. Just want you to know I didn't make language like that up, and it's not new.

Somebody asked me the other day, when do you know, when do you have the courage to say something new that you've thought? And I said, I hope I've never said anything new. I'm scared of new. Truth is old.

If it ain't old, it ain't true. And I thought when I made that sentence up this afternoon. So, but I'll leave it.

I think that's a good thing to say, and you can adjust whatever adjustments you think are necessary. So spiritual affections are the Holy Spirit-enabled savoring, relishing, resting in, being satisfied with spiritual reality as opposed to carnal or worldly reality. And, of course, at the apex of spiritual reality is God.

Therefore, to be spiritually minded is to love God with all your heart. That is, to savor him and relish him and rest in him and be satisfied in him above all other reality. That's what it means to love God.

It's not all it means. That's the essence of what it means. That's the heartwork of loving God.

Now, when John Owen says amazingly this, all the designs of God's effectual grace — just think how sweeping this is — all the designs of God's effectual grace are suited unto and prepared for this one end, namely, to recover the affections of man unto himself. What an amazing statement! What he means when he says that is, the one great end of redemption, creation and redemption, is to bring man to love him from the heart. Or, just to make it complete, let's say it like this, the great end of creation, redemption, is that God's greatness, beauty, worth, be magnified in our savoring, relishing, resting in, being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus.

Or, to use more familiar language, God's great end in redemption is that his glory be magnified in our being satisfied in him forever. That's the essence of the great commandment. That's what it requires.

The heart's enjoyment of God, above all things, love God with all your heart, means savor him, relish him, rest in him, be satisfied in him above all things. And out from that grow all the expressions of love for God. Or, they're not expressions of love.

Now, this is not—that sweeping statement that all of redemption, all of effectual grace, all of history, and all of creation is designed to get the affections of man back to God that's not reductionistic. As if Owen or I were saying that the grand aim of creation and redemption were reduced, or limited to, the affections of the human heart. The roots of a tree and the sap that courses up through the trunk and flows through every branch and every leaf and gives life to every fiber in the tree is not the tree.

It's not everything. The roots are not the branches. The sap is not the leaves.

The human heart is not the mind. Or tongue, or legs, or arms, and spiritual affections are not the new heavens and the new earth. But, under God, they are the authenticating reality of all divine and human activity.

Without them, nothing is of any worth. God includes. If God has no affections for God, He's not God.

Here's the way Owen puts it. Whatsoever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on His command, whatever we undergo or suffer for His namesake, if it proceed not from the cleaving of our souls unto Him by our affections, it is despised by Him. He owns it not.

In other words, whatever we do in the age to come, the new heavens, the new earth, which are more than the affections, whatever we do, whatever we think in the new heavens and the new earth, whatever we build there, whatever creativity we exercise there, whatever we do in worship there, will be as nothing, worse than nothing, if they are not coursing with the sap of delight in God. Savoring God, relishing God, loving God, which means we won't be there without them. Savoring, relishing, resting in, being satisfied, loving God defines who we are and whether we belong in heaven or not.

Owen puts it like this, whatever men pretend as their affections, so are they. That's right. They're not everything.

The affections are not everything, but they permeate everything. They authenticate everything. They sweeten everything.

They magnify God in everything. They guide everything. Affections, quoting Owen again, affections are in the soul as the helm in the ship.

If it be laid hold on by a skillful hand, he turneth the whole vessel, which way he pleaseth. Now, up to this point in this message, I haven't used the word joy, and that's the title of my message, but I hope you see that's all I've been talking about. Spiritual affections of savoring, relishing, being satisfied with, delighting are ingredients of joy in God, and that's what I aim to focus on in this message called the joy of the Puritans.

I'm going to talk about the joy of the Puritans in God, and if you were expecting something else, then you don't know me. I'm sorry to let you down because they did enjoy other things properly. Now to help us grasp not only the meaning but the importance of what I'm talking about with the affections, which are ingredients of joy in God, I want to open the lens wide enough to take in more of Scripture.

Over the years I have found, and I don't know, it must be true of some in this room because there's just so many folks here, over the years I have found that there's a kind of Christian—I think they number in the millions—who read their Bibles through lenses that virtually block out, or more accurately perhaps neutralize or deactivate the significance of the affections in the Bible. As though the lens of their glasses—put a little note on every text that dealt with the affections—put a little note on the text, and the little note says, unimportant, negligible, peripheral, caboose on the train, icing on the cake, optional, all strange glasses. Or to say it another way, the lenses are designed to make the Christian life look like right thinking, right deciding, right doing.

Doctrine, decisions, deeds. My life, they would say. Have right thoughts about God, make right decisions about God, do right things for God, while hundreds of biblical texts about the affections drop away.

That way of reading the Bible is another world from the Puritans' reading of the Bible. Owen said, the affections are the seat of all sincerity. He's just given to these kinds of statements.

He just makes the most sweeping statements, and they're true. The affections are the seat of all sincerity, which is the jewel of divine and human conversation, and he means life when he says conversation, the life and soul of everything that is good and praiseworthy. That's incredible.

Let me read that again. The affections are the seat of all sincerity, comma, skip out the middle part, the life and soul of everything that is good and praiseworthy. And people wear these glasses.

Just cancel it all out. Now, I don't know where your roots are on that issue, what kind of church you come from, what kind of home you grew up in, but it might be helpful right now to pan out and just let the Bible talk for a minute about the vastness and the indispensability of the affections. By vastness, I mean how many kinds there are, and by indispensability, I mean they're commanded, not suggested.

So here's a list. Negative. Prohibitions.

We are commanded not to feel covetousness. We are commanded not to fear those who kill the body. We are commanded not to feel anxiety.

We are commanded not to give way to angry feelings. We are commanded not to feel lust. We are commanded not to love money.

Now, those are prohibitions. Let's shift over to the positives. We are commanded to be content.

Now, when we put this online, all the texts are here. There they are right there. The texts are there.

I'm not reading the texts. Hope is commanded. Thankfulness is commanded.

Zeal is commanded. Brotherly affection is commanded. Tender heartedness is commanded.

Sympathy is commanded. Contrition is commanded. Desire for the word is commanded.

Sorrowful empathy is commanded. Joy is commanded. Gladness is commanded.

Delight is commanded. So, if you have been reading the Bible with those glasses on, take them off! Or you won't know what the Bible says. It is not optional icing on the cake.

It's the cake. Or Owen is crazy. It's the cake.

Or those texts are misleading. One of the reasons you want to keep those glasses on, or millions do, is because to take them off is really threatening. There's two reasons why it feels so threatening to take those lenses off, those affection-canceling lenses, to take them off.

One reason it feels so threatening is that we all, every one of us in this room, are emotionally handicapped. The range of our healthy affections is very small. I can name pretty much what the range of your healthy or your affections are.

You're really good at anger. There's scarcely a person in this room that isn't affectionate when it comes to, I can feel that! When she talks like that to me, when she doesn't do that, when they say that, when I read that, most of you are really good at anger. I'm really good at anger.

That's why I shout so much. Lurking enemies back here. Most of you are good at lust.

Very good at it. Feels strong. Of course it's in your veins.

Most of you are good at the affection of disappointment. Feel it deeply. Produces all kinds of fruit.

Sullenness, self-pity, withdrawnness. Men are good at this, you know. Hmm, you know, she said that again, and you slump off to your television.

Licking your wounds like a dog. Most of us are really good at fear. Really good.

But hope, brotherly affection, tenderheartedness, delight in God. So many spiritual affections are outside our range. We're just broken people.

That's one reason. It's threatening to take the glasses off. I'm gonna feel awful when I read that list.

Here's another reason why we don't want to take the glasses off. The affections are not the kind of thing that you can turn on and off by an act of willpower. So you lose control if you take the glasses off.

You really lose control of the Christian life. You're not in charge anymore, and you can't just make it happen by your self-determining so-called free will. How can you obey the command to be glad when you feel sad? Ain't gonna happen.

How can you obey the command to be tenderhearted when you're really angry? Bitter. How can you obey the command not to fear when you're afraid? But just turn a switch. What do you want us to do, Piper? Become hypocrites? Fake it till you make it? No, I don't want that.

And Jesus didn't come into the world to create hypocrites. He's in the business. He came into the world to help us do the humanly impossible.

So let's remember the rich young ruler, right? Jesus tells him, you go sell everything you have, and you give it to the poor, and you follow me, and you'll have treasure in heaven. In other words, stop loving your money so much and start loving me, my father. He couldn't do it.

He couldn't do it. He walked away. At least he might have tried Mark 9 24.

God, I believe, help my unbelief. That man said the right thing. Help me, help me.

Jesus commented to his disciples, it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to get into the kingdom of God. Now they were stunned and said, who can be saved? And Jesus did not say nobody, and he did not say, the problem of this hypocrite, the problem of this guy is that he wasn't willing to become a hypocrite. That's the problem.

He wouldn't fake it till he made it. That's not what he said. He said, with man this is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God.

In other words, I came into the world to forgive sinful affections and create new ones. That's why I came. So I can understand why you might want to leave the glasses on.

Right doctrine, right decisions, right deeds, untroubled by all those affections. It's in control. I'm in control.

I can do this. I make my decisions. I do my deeds.

I think my doctrines. Obedience. That's millions of people are Christians like that.

Now the Puritans see the Bible and the affections and reality of enjoying God in a very different way So what I want to do for the rest of this message is let one of the Puritans that I've only heard mentioned once in this conference so far, let one of the Puritans guide us into a biblical understanding of delighting in God as the essence of loving God, the greatest commandment. So four steps. That's the book.

You read it? Oh, we don't have one of those. Those at the back can hardly see me. This is Grace Church.

A Treatise of Delighting in God by John Howe, H-O-W-E. 279 pages on one verse. Psalm 37, 4. Delight yourself in the Lord and he'll give you the desires of your heart.

May I explain that to you in 279 pages? Vintage Puritan. I enjoyed this book. I think it's harder to read than John Owen.

Not because it's deeper, but because he's not as good a writer as I am. But I recommend it anyway. So I'm gonna let him be our guide now for the rest of the minutes we have together.

I'm gonna do four things and let him help me. The duty of the duty of enjoying God, the strategies for enjoying God, the glory of enjoying God, and the summons to enjoy God. So that's my outline for the rest of the time here and John Howe will be our guide.

John Howe was an English Puritan, 1630 to 1704. He served several churches, was a chaplain for Oliver Cromwell. In 1674 he published this book and the authority of Scripture was his guide and therefore he'll be a good guide for us.

Number one, the duty of enjoying God. First, let's let Howe, John Howe, express his agreement with what we've seen so far. Namely that the great commandment to love God with all the heart is the essence of love for God, is the essence of delighting in God.

Or let's put it this way, the great commandment to love God with all our heart is the essence of savoring or savoring and relishing and being satisfied is the essence of loving God. So he agrees with that and here's how he says it. He uses the word pleasure.

Can they be said to love God that take no pleasure in him? That is, to love him without loving him, end quote. In other words, loving God as we ought is not less than, more but not less than, experiencing him as our greatest pleasure. It is more, not less.

Then Howe draws the obvious implication from the great commandment and from the fact that Psalm 37 4 is a commandment, delight yourself in the Lord, imperative. And he says it is plain, quote, it is plain that it is the common duty of all to delight in God. Duty, obligation, commandment to delight in God.

Delight in the duty that is given to you as a man. Delight in God is commanded by God and therefore it's a duty of man. Delight in God is a command, therefore it's obedience to delight in God.

I'll just linger here for just a moment because there's just no end of confusion when it comes to obedience and delight. And whether I can blow away that confusion, we'll see. So about 25 years ago, I'm in England.

I forget what conference it was, might have been Caster. Elizabeth Elliot, one of my heroes. It's like Johnny Erickson Todd.

It's one of my heroes. I mean, these women. I just want to bow down and worship.

Well, that's not allowed. So we're on a panel together and Elizabeth Elliot knows me and my Christian hedonism, right? She doesn't like it. And so she says to me on the panel, John, I don't think you should say pursue joy with all your might.

I think you should say pursue obedience with all your might. That's what she said, right in front of 2,000 people. And I was like throwing me a softball.

To which I responded, but Elizabeth, that's like saying don't pursue peaches, pursue fruit. Because peaches are fruit and joy in God is disobedience. To obedience to the command, rejoice in the Lord.

It's obedience to the command, delight yourself in the Lord. No end of confusion is caused by trying to inculcate into believers the mindset that delighting in God and obeying in God are alternatives. Oh my goodness.

Endless confusion. That the pursuit of delight and the pursuit of duty are alternative pursuits. They're not.

John Howe is right. It is the common duty of all to delight in God. Now here, there's a little test for yourself to see how you're doing with tracking with me here.

This is kind of a trick question, so I'm not going to ask anybody to answer out loud, just in your head. How would you respond if someone said we should enjoy obeying God? Now my answer to that is yes. The Bible says so.

The commandments of the Lord are not burdensome. First John 5. His yoke is easy. His burden is light.

Matthew 11. In the scroll of the book, it is written of me. I delight to do your will.

Oh my God. Psalm 40. Yes, we should enjoy obeying God.

But there are at least two problems, if that's all you say. First, the average person who hears that, enjoy obeying God, will infer that what you mean or say is that obedience is one thing, and the possible enjoyment of it is another thing. But it's not obedience.

It's not obedience. The enjoyment of obedience is not obedience. That's a problem.

The confusion goes on, right? It just continues. What a mess. Second is a worse problem.

If we say we should enjoy obeying God, but say no more, to clarify, then we're almost certainly going to lead people to think that there can be real obedience to God without enjoying God. They're gonna think that. They're gonna think, oh, there can be obedience to God without that obedience having its root in the

enjoyment of God.

It'll be real obedience, real God-pleasing obedience. Well, the heart is there. It's over there.

Here's what John Howe said, as the law of love is the universal and summary law, comprehending all duty, so the law of love comprehends all duty, so must disaffection to God be comprehensive of all sin. Dost thou not see, then, how thou cancellest, nullifyest the obligation of all laws while thou hast no delight in God? Not to, still how, not to delight in God, therefore, what can it be but the very top of rebellion? In other words, my paraphrase, where the heart has not embraced God as its supreme treasure, all apparent obedience is rebellion. I think that's true.

This people honors me with their professed obedience, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they obey. Paraphrasing Matthew 15, 8. Savoring, relishing, enjoying God in Christ as our supreme treasure is obedience and is the root of all obedience.

It is our duty and the root of all other God-glorifying duty. Number two, that was duty, now strategies, strategies for enjoying God. So we may ask the Puritan, John, how? Well, John, if delighting in God, enjoying God, loving God, being satisfied in God, resting in God, relishing God, is so deeply essential and so pervasively transformative, producing obedience, how then shall we obtain it and live in it, this delight? So he has several answers.

First, you must be born again or you must have a new covenant heart. So according to Luke 22, 20, Jesus bought the blessings of the new covenant by his blood. This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

I purchase the reality promised in the new covenant for my sheep with my blood. Now here's Ezekiel, what is that? What kind of heart is that? I will give you a new heart, a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my ordinances like delight yourself in the Lord. Then how makes this connection? Quote, when it can be truly said, thy law is within my heart, it will also, with the same sincerity, be said, I delight to do thy will.

Oh God, Psalm 40. And since God's will is that we delight in him, not just doing his will, but delighting him, therefore he will be the delight of all our delights. That's a, that's a translation, my translation of Psalm 43, 4. You look it up in Hebrew scholars.

God is the delight of our delights. So that's where it starts. You must be born again.

You must have the heart of the new covenant. It's a miracle. You can't make it happen.

God makes it happen. You're not in control. Second, how urges us to fight against all that obstructs delighting God.

Quote, strive against all your spiritual distempers that obstruct it in the power of the Holy Ghost. God hath in this matter no other rival than the world. It is its friendship that is enmity to him.

So set yourself against God diminishing thoughts. In our, I think in our culture right now, entertainment is the biggest enemy of delight in God. This, this is, this is the biggest enemy right here.

I can watch anything on this. I can watch the most vile pornography or which may be as bad, just waste my time scrolling through banal information. So he would say, strive against every God diminishing

thought, entertainments that make your mind more worldly, less able to delight in God.

If you're spending every night trying to figure out whether there's something worth watching on Netflix, you're not going to find it. I've tried and I've only tried interestingly with my wife in the room and she's way more tolerant than I am. We started something the other night that I thought might be halfway redemptive.

We lasted five minutes before there was a naked Godiva. This was a G-rated thing. A naked Godiva lying on the table, shot from the side, breasts obvious.

Gee, you ain't going to find it. Number three. Is that right? Number three, strategies.

If you ever will do anything, this is, this is Hal now talking. If you ever will do anything in this great matter of delighting in God, you must arrest your thoughts for him and engage them in more constant converse with him and mingling prayers with those thoughts. He goes on, God is out of your sight and therefore, how can it be expected that you should find a sensible delight in him? There can be no other way to be taken but to behold him more in that discovery of him which the gospel sets before our eyes and in that way to seek to have your hearts taken with his amiableness and love and allured to delight in him.

So simple counsel. Every morning for an hour or so, read your Bible. Pleading, pleading for eyes to see glory.

And if you see it, your affections will be changed. Before we turn to number three, one last excerpt from Hal. He gives us a taste for what he looks for when he's reading his Bible.

God did invite thee to delight in him who have always sought thy good, done strange things to affect it, takes pleasure in thy prosperity, exercises loving-kindness towards thee with delight, who contrived thy happiness, wrought out thy peace at the expense of blood, even his own, taught thee the way of life, cared for thee all thy days, hath supplied thy wants, borne thy burdens, eased thy griefs, wiped thy tears. And if now he say to thee, after all this canst thou have no pleasure in me, will that not confound and shame thee? It would, it would. It is confounding and shaming to us that after all God is and has done for us, we could feel no delight in him.

Number three, the glory of enjoying God. So first, the duty of enjoying God, second, the strategies, and third, the glory of enjoying God. It is remarkable how many Reformed theologians are uneasy with the Puritan emphasis on the experiential nature of the Christian faith, rooted in the duty of delighting in God.

Why would that be? I mean, these are my people. Why would that be? One of the possible reasons behind this uneasiness is the preeminence in their minds of the objective reality of the glory of God. Amen, amen.

The objective. He's glorious whether I know him, love him, enjoy him, or not. He's glorious.

I'm quite dispensable. So amen to the objective reality of the glory of God. It is as though they think elevating the subjective experience of delighting in God will somehow dislodge the glory of God from its objective preeminence.

Very strange. Ironically, it was the very fact that the Puritans shared this zeal for the preeminence of God's glory that they insisted on the indispensable duty of delighting in God. It's the opposite conclusion, just the opposite tendency.

Now Jonathan Edwards and with him, the little teeny echo of John Piper, Jonathan Edwards and Piper was not, were not, the first to see the revolutionary truth, God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. That's my sentence. I made that up.

It rhymes. The truth is as old as God. Here's what Howe says.

See if you don't think so. We all know Edwards said it. He just said it.

And we all know I said it. I say it all the time. Did you know the Puritans said it? For example, John Howe.

We are to desire the enjoyment of God for his own glory. And yet here is a strange and admirable complication of these with one another. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God.

It just doesn't rhyme. That's all. It's exactly the same truth because it is so true.

It's just so true. I'll read it again in case you didn't hear. For if we enjoy him, delight and rest in him as our best and most satisfying good, we thereby glorify him as God.

Continue reading Howe. It is his glory to be the last term of our desires and beyond which no reasonable desire can go further. Still reading from Howe.

It is his glory to have needy souls satiating themselves in him. Oh, I want to kiss him on the cheek. And if you should say you love him, but you care not to be happy, it would sound like a hollow compliment.

You are not to deal with God upon such terms. Shame on you, reformed people. I think that's what he would say.

The kind I'm talking about was just so suspicious of the very thing that gives God glory. You're being ravished by him. Strange.

I don't get it. What does John Howe think about any effort to minimize the greatest commandment, the commandment to delight in God? Love God, delight in God. What does he think about any effort to minimize the greatest commandment to delight in God above all else and thus to glorify God as the most excellent of beings? What does he think of the aversion to delighting in God that would attempt to extol the glory of God without delighting in him or even say it's possible? And here's what he thinks.

And this, I think, is the most amazing paragraph in this book. Quote. Is not aversion to delight in God a manifest contrariety to the order of things, a turning all upside down? How fearful a rupture does it make? How violent and destructive a dislocation? If you could break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe within itself, reduce the frame of nature to utmost confusion, rout all the ranks and orders of creatures, tear asunder the heavens and dissolve the compacted body of the earth, mingle heaven and earth together and resolve the world into a mere heap.

You had not done so great a spoil as in breaking the primary supreme tie between the bond between the creature and his maker, delight in God. I read that break in pieces the orderly contexture of the whole universe. He's not given to rhetorical flourish.

He means that if we could succeed. The whole human race. In succeeding in aversion to delighting in God, the whole universe would come apart because God designed the universe to have us.

In our affections. Lastly, and just one or two more minutes, duty, strategies, glory, and now summons. I'll let him summon you to enjoy God.

Since God. We'll be supremely glorified in his people when they are satisfied in him. Let us heed John Howe's closing summons, which I'll now read to you and then pray.

Awake. Make haste to get your heart fixed to delight in God. The heavens rejoice or lest lest the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, the world and all that's in it, lest the sea roar and the fullness thereof, the floods clap their hands, the fields and the hills be joyful together and all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord while you only are silent.

And unconcerned make haste. Do you not have a promise? In his presence, his fullness of joy. And his right hand, our pleasures forevermore.

Pursue this with all your might. Make this, he says, the business of your life. So, Father, I pray for the miracle of new covenant.

Faith. New covenant life, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The transformation of our affections, the enabling of us to do the humanly impossible, the broadening of the scope of our affections.

I pray that you would forgive because of Christ our failures to feel as we ought. And that you would awaken in us. A relishing, a savoring, a resting in, a being satisfied with, a love for yourself.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/LzTg7u--FBs.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/the-joy-of-the-puritans/>

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