Things That Please God

by Raymond Golsworthy

God's pleasure is found in His creation, His Son, and the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we can experience it by trusting in Christ and reflecting God's glory.

Scripture: Genesis 1:31, Isaiah 53:10, Matthew 17:5, John 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:30, Colossians 1:19, Colossians 2:9
Topics: "Christ Alone", "Gods Pleasure"

Description

Raymond Golsworthy preaches about God's pleasure in creation, in His Son, and in having all His fullness dwell in Christ. He emphasizes the importance of finding satisfaction in Christ alone, as it pleases God to have all His fullness permanently residing in Christ for the benefit of believers. Golsworthy highlights the need for Christians to continually go to Christ for all their needs, rather than seeking fulfillment in Christian things, doctrines, or other alternatives.

Transcript

1 GOD'S PLEASURE IN CREATION AND IN HIS SON

"And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." Gen. 1:31

"While He yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Matt. 17:5

When we study the Bible we will find quite a list of wonderful things that bring pleasure to the heart of God. Our conclusion cannot be otherwise: God's pleasure is a very important matter. It covers the questions about our very existence: why do we live? Why are we here on this earth for seventy years or more? Is it not to please God? And if it is, how do we please God? How can we be sure we are not a nuisance to God but rather please Him? We have longings, and God Himself has longings, and we do want to know what it is that meets the longings of our God, our Maker and Redeemer.

Divine pleasure

We will start by meditating on two things that please God, but before we do that we need to remind ourselves that God is a God who does have pleasure. He is acquainted with grief, He has sorrow--we cause much of it--but God is not only capable of grief and sorrow. Let us be quite sure that the God we love, the God we worship, the God to whom we say "Abba", is a God who has pleasure. He has joy; there

is joy in the heart of God. I remember very well when once brother Austin-Sparks directed our attention to 1 Timothy 1:11 about "the gospel of the blessed God". That is what it says in our King James Version. But our brother pointed out to us on that occasion that that could quite accurately and rightly have been translated "the happy God", "the gospel of the happy God". And I explored the original language and saw indeed that same original word is often translated joy or happiness, joyful or happy, and our God is a happy God. When the circumstances are right God knows how to rejoice; it is in His heart to rejoice over what is right. He grieves over what is wrong, of course. He is capable of both of these, grief and joy. He rejoices over that which warrants divine rejoicing and divine happiness. Some of us need perhaps to correct our impressions of God. We do get a wrong, a distorted picture of God. I was guilty of this for a long time in my own life. I thought He was a very powerful being far, far away from me. I even visualised Him as stern, very serious and austere. Well, in a sense yes, there are times when that would be an accurate portrait of God and of God's heart. But let us not think solely of God in those terms. Let us be wide open to the truth that our God is capable of joy and when circumstances are right He rejoices, and His heart is made glad. In fact we even read that God can sing! Do you know there is a verse in the Bible, at least one, that tells us that God sings? If you doubt it, look at Zephaniah 3:17. It speaks of God joying over His people with singing. So that is a little introductory thought.

God's pleasure in creation

Now with that in mind let me try and share with you some of the things that please God. We start right back in Genesis 1:31. The verse does not mention joy, rejoicing, singing, but the thought is there. It says: "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." And of course I believe that that expression, "it was very good" does not only mean that it was good in itself, in its own essence, in its character, but I do not think we are changing the meaning of the sentence when we take it to at least include this--it was very good to God. Whatever God makes is good in its own character, its own nature, certainly. But I believe there is this extra thought here, that the original unspoiled universe was very good in His own estimation. Before sin came in it was something that stirred His own heart to joy, something that brought satisfaction to Him. "Behold, it was very good"... to God. Five times in Genesis 1 we read, in connection with the various parts of the creation, that God saw that it was good. But at the end of the chapter we find something significant: God looked and saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. All the things together viewed as a composite whole, in its completeness, gave something extra: it was very good.

1. A manifestation of God's glory Now, for what reason or reasons was that original unspoiled creation a joy to God? For what reasons did it bring not only satisfaction, but positive pleasure to the heart of God? And two thoughts came to me in answering that question. The first was that even that original unspoiled creation was, to its own measure a manifestation of His own glory. It, we could say, was an initial, preparational manifestation of His glory. He had produced something that reflected to some degree His own character, His own nature.

That is why He was pleased to look upon it and pronounce that it was very good. In itself it was very good, and to the Creator it was very good. When we look out on the creation in a garden we do not simply say, "What a lovely garden!" In our hearts there is something deeper than all that, that says, "What a glorious God! What beauty! What life! What abundance! What death-conquering power manifest even in created things." Yes, it is a manifestation of its own glory. But what makes it even more glorious is that "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork", as Psalm 19:1 puts it.

I think that is one reason why God said, "Ah, that is good, I have got something that begins to express, to emanate truth concerning My character, My being." And of course there is that very important verse in Romans 1:19 where Paul expressly says that the creation did make known truth about the character of God, the nature of the eternal "I am": "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen."

The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead. That is why it brought such a joy to Him. Just think about the very first elements in the creation: God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. That was certainly a manifestation of God Himself. We read in the first epistle of John that God is light. I do not know if any scientists can explain exactly what that particular light was and how it compares with the sun and the moon that were created later on.

But when God said, "Let there be light," and there was light, that was the beginning of the manifestation of the invisible God, God who is light and in whom is no darkness at all. That is His heart, and that was beginning to be expressed in what He had made. Is it not true that everything we look at in the universe, in one way or another, expresses the glory of God? The rocks, do they not remind us of the power of God, the stability of God, the trustworthiness of God? We see these invisible things of God began to find physical expression.

Well, we can go on and on--the flowers certainly show the beauty of God's nature; the rivers: the abundance of life that is in Him. In Him is life as well as light. Those are reasons, suggestions, as to why God found pleasure in beholding His original unspoiled creation.

2. The scene of the drama of redemption

But then another reason why God was pleased in looking upon that unspoiled creation was this, that He could see the stage being set for the drama of redemption. It was here in this universe that God was going to enact, in the giving of His Son, the death of His Son, the resurrection of His Son, the extension of His Son into saved souls like yours and mine. God could see the hour coming, the time drawing near that His redeeming mercy would find its expression in the death of His own dear Son on that hill called Calvary outside the city wall of Jerusalem. This earth is just a minute speck in this universe. Nevertheless it was to be the scene where the drama of redemption was going to be carried through and that is why the earth was so dear to the Maker.

God's delight in His Son The second, and of course the all-inclusive, the all-transcending cause for divine pleasure and divine happiness is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: God manifested in the flesh. If God was happy to behold an unspoiled universe, how happy was He when He looked down upon His perfect, beautiful, altogether lovely Son in human form. The silence of heaven was broken and God spoke from the heavens through the clouds: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

We can hear something of an echo from Genesis 1:31 here. God looked, behold it was very good. And now, God looks again, and He says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There are two occasions when God said that. The first was at the time of His baptism (Matt. 3:17). The other occasion was at the mount of transfiguration when the same voice came with the same message. Remember on that second occasion the face of the Lord Jesus was shining like the sun and we are told even His garment was white as the light.

And God looking down onto that mount of transfiguration again broke the silence of the heavens as though He could not hold back His appreciation, His adoration of His own Son incarnate, taking His place amongst men on this speck in the universe. I believe there were two occasions for a particular purpose. That first occasion was at the end of thirty years of obscurity during which the Lord was in the carpenter's shop in the little town of Nazareth. There is not much written about Him during this period, just one small story of what happened when He had reached the age of twelve (Luke 2).

But please notice that at the end of those thirty years of obscurity, of comparative hiddenness, about which we are told next to nothing, that one sentence tells the whole story. There is thirty years of history, unspoiled, immaculate, untarnished holiness in a carpenter's shop and in the streets of Nazareth. It is all summed up: "I am well pleased." The other occasion was when the Lord reached the pinnacle of His ministry, we may say, in Matthew 17. His face was shining like the sun and His raiment was as white as the light.

Then it was that God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is as though in those two utterances we have two summaries. One is a summary of the hidden thirty years, and the second is a summary of the public years when He was moving from place to place, fulfilling His appointed ministry. Is it not wonderful that the Lord Jesus was as immaculate and holy, unstained, untarnished, God-satisfying, God-pleasing, during the thirty hidden years in the carpenter's shop as He was in the three and a half years of His public ministry, preaching His great sermon on the mount for instance, and performing His marvelous miracles.

God sums it up: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Does not that bring something of a challenge to us? Your life and my life are divided into two sections. There is the public life that everybody sees. Is God pleased with that? Or is there some self-importance or self-advertisement, self-display, that even gets into our ministry? Perhaps it needs some examination and some adjustment and some cleansing. That is more than possible. We all look such wonderful Christians when we are gathered and take part in the worship meeting.

Everybody is watching us and we know only too well how to keep up a good image. But every one of us has a private area too, which the other brothers and sisters are not able to enter into. "But all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Can God look down on our hidden lives, when the door is closed and no human eye is upon us and say, "I am pleased with that. Those thoughts in secret, those actions in secret--I am pleased with that."?

1. Christ, God's daily delight I would like to take you back to a lovely verse with a thought along this same line: Proverbs 8:30. Now I do not think anyone will question me when I say that Proverbs 8 is a chapter all about Christ. On the surface this is a discussion of wisdom; in fact we get that word wisdom in verse 1: "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" And the word wisdom occurs a few times. Verse 5: "O ye simple, understand wisdom." Notice verse 11: "For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it."

And we have wisdom also mentioned in verse 12. Yes, on the surface this is a chapter about wisdom, the wonders of it, the marvels of a God-given wisdom particularly, about what it can accomplish. But no doubt your mind does what my mind does: it runs to 1 Corinthians 1:24, where we read of Christ, the wisdom of God. And I believe you can only understand Proverbs 8 when you remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the personification of all wisdom. Certainly you will agree that we can see Christ in verse 11: "Christ is

better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with Him."

But we are working towards verse 30, and there wisdom itself is speaking. Christ Himself is speaking: "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight." That is it--"I was daily God's delight, rejoicing always before Him." Here we have a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ before the creation of the universe. Look at verses 22 onwards. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old." This is true in fulness only when you read it in the light of Christ.

It reminds us of John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word", in the beginning was Christ, and Christ was with God, and Christ was God. Then verse 23: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." That is true of Christ, certainly. In verses 24 to 29--this is pre-Genesis 1--in fact Christ Jesus is described as co-creator with His Father: "When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.

When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." We have been speaking of Christ as the object and the subject of the Father's joy.

We spoke of the thirty years in which the Lord Jesus rejoiced His Father's heart; we have spoken of the three and a half years, again how in His public ministry the Lord rejoiced, satisfied, moved His Father's heart: "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." And even going back before creation it is the same Person bringing the same movement of joy and satisfaction to the heart of His partner in the Trinity. The Lord Jesus is the eternal satisfaction, the eternal joy and delight of His Father's heart.

This is something that goes beyond our ability to understand. When we think of what it is that pleases God we can say an unspoiled universe pleases God for reasons that we can perhaps list or name, but the real joy and satisfaction of the Father is the Son.

2. Christ, our delight

What God said at the baptism in the Jordan, what God said at the time of the transfiguration, this same thing He has been saying before ever time was. He has been perpetually reveling in His dear, perfect, immaculate Son. That can just be truth. But what God is doing I believe is mercifully bringing us into His own eternal delight in Christ Jesus. That is what is going on in your heart and mine. There was a time when this same Person, the Lord Jesus, meant little or nothing to us, but is He becoming daily your delight, the sum of your pleasure? That is what God is working for: so to deal with us, so to show us this Person from the Bible, so to show us His love and His grace and His power and His authority and His majesty and His mercy, so to unveil this One that He will become daily, hourly, moment by moment the One who delights us. That is the task that the Holy Spirit is engaged in with you and with me; that is the work He is doing in your heart and mine right now, to lift us from ignorance of Christ, darkness concerning His incomparable character. He is bringing us into the place where we begin to see in Christ what the Father has seen in Him from a past eternity and will see in Him all through a coming eternity. "I was daily His delight." And it is wonderful when a Christian can re-echo those words, and say, "Yes, something is happening in my heart: every day He is my chiefest joy; He is the One that satisfies me; His glory is being

unveiled, His character is being explained; the mystery is getting out what Christ is." Yes, unspoiled creation delighted God's heart, but what is that compared with the unspoiled Son Himself? The One without spot or blemish or any such thing, who eternally not only satisfies, pasts the tests, but also eternally moved God's heart to singing and rejoicing, He is the One who pleases: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." That is God's eternal language concerning our Saviour. God is well pleased with Him, and He is daily and eternally His Father's delight.

3. Credited with the loveliness of Christ

When I was thinking of the Lord Jesus as the eternal satisfier of His Father's heart, the One who perpetually ravishes the heart of God, a thought came to me that really silenced me: "We are accepted in that beloved one" (Eph. 1:6). That took my breath away. It means that all that loveliness, that ability to ravish His Father's heart, that is credited to those who trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Those of us who will take the sinner's place, repent of our sins, accept this dear Saviour as Lord and Saviour are credited with that loveliness and winsomeness in the eyes of the Father. It is not only that God is forgiving us, and giving us justification like a clean sheet. Salvation is more than getting a clean sheet. It is inheriting the virtues, the values, the incomparable lovelinesses of Christ; they are all credited to us when we hide in Christ. That is justification by faith. "... whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). He glorifies us by making us partakers of this God-satisfying, unique, incomparable beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one of us who has understood what it means to be "in Christ", justified by faith. We have credited to us, in the mercy of God, that eternal loveliness, untarnished perfection, heart-ravishing nature of the Lord Jesus. It is a great salvation, is it not? And it is a great Saviour. But all these thoughts come crowding in when we begin to ask ourselves, "What is it that pleases God?" May the Lord move our hearts again, and as we see what it is that pleases God, may our hearts be set upon just that, in one word: our incomparable Christ.

2 GOD'S PLEASURE IN THE CROSS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." Isaiah 53:10,11

We have a further thought which we can look into profitably, here in Isaiah 53:10, a mystery verse, of which we shall not be able to plumb the depths. I need help to really understand some of the mysteries in Isaiah 53:10. There is a lot more to be seen than I am able to mention.

The mystery of Isaiah 53 What a mystery we find at the beginning of the verse! Of course we know that this is a chapter about the Calvary sufferings--we can call them that--of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a chapter about the cross where God's dear Son was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. May I just mention the fact that Isaiah 53 was written seven hundred years before Christ came into this world, seven hundred years before that Beloved One was nailed to the cross on a hill called Calvary--unbelievable is it not?

I well remember when a young Christian brother came to me when we were in Japan. He was recently converted but he had an appetite for the Word of God even in those early days of his Christian life. And I remember he came to me in that prison camp in Japan; he had been reading this chapter and he sat down in front of me and said, "Brother Golsworthy," how many years after Christ was Isaiah 53 written? Or how

many months after Christ?" He wanted to know the history of this chapter.

And I told him then what I have just told you, "No brother, this was written before Christ." And if eyes could talk, his eyes certainly said to me, "Brother Golsworthy you are not telling the truth. Surely that chapter must have been written after Christ, and after the death of Christ on the cross. It is so clear, details are so minute, satisfying. It must have been." We did not have an argument, but I do not think that I did convince that young man, even to this day, that it was written before Christ, and before that great event of Calvary.

We are in a marvelous chapter here; we all know it. God has spoken to all of us through this chapter, I am sure, again and again. But here is the mystery verse, "It pleased the LORD to bruise him", written right after it speaks of Christ being wounded and bruised: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities" (verse 5). My, what wounds! What bruises! The lashings by the whip that He endured apart from the nails that fastened Him to that cross. Yes, "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities".

"A man of sorrows", it is said a little further up, "and acquainted with grief". Well, this is what we want to think about. Remember our theme is "Things that please God". Now of course we can understand how the unspoiled universe would please God, and we can certainly understand how Jesus Christ is the beloved Son in whom the Father was eternally well pleased, and will always be the delight of His Father's heart. And may we add that He is gradually becoming the joy of our hearts also.

But now, after this description of the sufferings of our Lord in Isaiah 53:5 we find this mystery verse: "It pleased the Father to bruise Him." We have a problem, don't we? Here is a mystery unfathomable, perhaps we shall never really understand the real depths of that simple statement. And lest we should find some secret way around that we will never be able to understand the next statement in the verse. That is even more direct, more mysterious, more abrupt: "He hath put Him to grief."

It pleased the Lord to bruise that beloved One who was eternally the delight of His heart. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. And He put Him into those griefs and sorrows. We need help don't we, from the Holy Spirit, and maybe from each other, young and old--sometimes more light comes through the younger ones. But anyway, I am not going to go into the depths of this mystery now. At present the deep problem of this verse is unsolved by me. I am just a seeker of light when it comes to these first two phrases in Isaiah 53:10: "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him."

He put Him on the cross, He put Him to grief. The results of the sufferings of Christ We are going to leave many of the thoughts that lay hidden in this mystery verse; we have to. There are depths unfathomable in the Bible. And some of its best-known phrases, we have to say, are still not understood. But there is something that we can take hold of, certainly as far as the first part of the first phrase in the verse is concerned, where it says, "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him."

I believe we will be fully justified in thinking and in accepting that that phrase refers to the results that issued from that bruising of the Lord. It was not so much the bruising of Christ itself that pleased God, but what issued from those bruisings, those sorrows, those wounds, that anguish. And we are going to content ourselves with just mentioning some of the glorious issues, the blessed results of the bruisings of the Saviour, which certainly pleased the Father. Can you think of some of the blessed results of that great act of Calvary, that laying down of the Saviour's life, pouring out of the Saviour's blood at Calvary that would have pleased the Father's heart?

And of course, that leads us into the whole Bible, because the whole Bible really has to do with Calvary and its glorious results. But let us confine our thoughts to what is unfolded in this chapter without looking at other parts of the Bible. What does this chapter indicate as being amongst the issues, the results, the fruits of the bruisings of the Son of God?

1. The great atonement for sin The first thing we can see in Isaiah 53 of what was accomplished through the bruisings of the Saviour refers to a great atonement for sin. And that great atonement certainly would have, and does, ever shall, please the heart of God. This chapter mentions that great atonement, that way of forgiveness for sinners that was opened up through the wounds and the bruisings of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will look at some of those phrases in the chapter.

We have this matter of the accomplishing of a great atonement right in verse 10 where it says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin ..." It was an atoning death that the Saviour died. He was offering an offering for our sins. It was the Lamb of God bruised and broken on the tree, and His soul was being made an offering for our sins. I love an old hymn which covers this theme. It moves my heart every time I think about it or hear it.

It says, "Christ has for sin atonement made, What a wonderful Saviour! We are redeemed! The price is paid! What a wonderful Saviour!" That was a result, a consequence, a fruit, of Calvary, a finished work of divine redemption. You remember what the Lord Jesus Himself said. Perhaps He gasped these words on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Someone has said the whole Bible can be summarised under two simple expressions: the whole of the Old Testament: "Where is the Lamb?" (Genesis 22:7) and the New Testament: "Behold the Lamb!" (John 1:29).

The Old Testament is asking a question. The New Testament is answering the question. The prophets were saying: "Where is the Lamb? Is there someone who can pay the price of sin?" And the New Testament answers the question--in the words of John the Baptist--"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Another hymn says in this connection, "There is a green hill far away, without the city wall, Where our dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all. There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin, He only could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in."

The death of Abraham, the death of David, the death of all the patriarchs and godly men of the Old Testament, all those deaths put together could not have atoned for our sin. If Abraham died that would be the just demand for Abraham's sin, not for mine. Abraham was a sinner, and his death would only have been the result of his sins. But there is a sinless One, there has been a spotless Lamb, the only One without spot or blemish or any such thing, Who did no sin. We cannot say that of anyone else: "He did no sin, neither was any guile found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22).

"He did no sin": He was sinless in actions. "Neither was guile found in His mouth": not one word has come from His lips that was not immaculate and glorious. None other could unlock the gate of heaven, and let us in. But the death of the Lord Jesus suffices to secure forgiveness for sinners. Verse 5 says: "He was wounded." For what was He wounded? "For our transgressions." The verse goes on using the same verb as we have in verse 10, to bruise: "He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

Then verse 6 says: "All we--Abraham, David, and all of them--like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him--the Lord hath caused to meet on Him, is the marginal reading--the iniquity of us all." Oh, brothers and sisters, do you not tremble at that? The due

recompense of a night's sin in Amsterdam was borne by Christ. We can go on: Rotterdam, London, Sydney, Melbourne wherever it is; and not just one night, but ever since man was made the iniquity of all men--now try and imagine it--was made to meet on that Man of Calvary.

It was necessary if ever you and I were to be able to be righteously forgiven. Someone must pay the price, someone must pay the debt, and Someone did. That is the Gospel. I love the Gospel. I love the Christ of the Gospel. Oh, don't you? Of course we do! God made all the sins of all the world to meet on Christ at Calvary. "He who knew no sin," says Paul, "was made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). When the Lord Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; the way was opened for us to have fellowship with God.

There would never have been any entrance for any one of us, but for those bruisings of Calvary. Well, a great atonement was accomplished. Isaiah 53 clearly shows it from verse 5 right on to the end. At the end of verse 8 we read: "For the transgression of my people was He stricken." Verse 11 says at the end: "He shall bear their iniquities." And verse 12 says: "He bare the sin of many." How many sins did He bare? How many in China? How many in Africa? How many in India? God laid on Christ the iniquity of us all.

If anyone should ask, "Why aren't all people saved?" The answer is that God has a requirement, and that is that we recognise, we believe that it happened, and we take the benefits of the bruising. That is the simple thing that God requires. We go to all the world and tell the Gospel, and give people the opportunity of believing that their sins were borne at Calvary. Then every sin that they have committed can be forgiven, not only are their sins forgiven, but they are also justified.

They obtain righteousness, this spotless, immaculate righteousness of this new Man from heaven. Christ Jesus is the new Man. Other men are from the earth. We are made from the dust, but He is from heaven and that is why His atoning blood is sufficient to cover the sins of all other men. It is one Man from heaven dying for one humanity, rebellious and under the curse. His death is sufficient, One for one. Humanity is really just one man. Humanity is only Adam in multiple expression; that is all. It is that one Man from heaven dying for rebellious, hell-deserving humanity. "He bare the sin of many."

2. A great battle fought and a great victory won Well, there is another issue, another fruit of the bruisings of the Saviour, and that is that a great victory was won. A great atonement was made, no questions about that. We rejoice in that, we hide in that, every time we come around the Lord's Table and we take that bread into our hands and put that cup to our lips. But this chapter also points out a great victory won at the cross through those bruisings of the Saviour. I said that is lightly touched upon in Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors."

There is, we may say, the smoke of battle in verse 12, a victory, and spoils. That is what Calvary was--what a battle! And what a victory for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! Hebrews 2:14 sums it all up: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same; that through death He might destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

By death He destroyed the one who had the power of death. Calvary was a battle which we cannot really comprehend. It goes right back to the mystery of a rebellion in the heavenly places, when Lucifer coveted the rights of God, and wanted worship. That is all in the Bible, in Isaiah 14, very clearly unfolded. We see that usurper, a fallen rebel angel. There were rebel angels before there were rebel men. Lucifer was the

king of the rebel angels, set against the rights of God. We know how this adversary came and challenged Christ in the wilderness of temptation. (See Matt. 4:1-11.)

And you know, if Christ had fallen, for a moment, in that wilderness of temptation, we would have been lost for ever. He would not have been the perfect Saviour, and a perfect Saviour was needed, one who would maintain spotless perfection under all pressures, from all sides, and be completely submissive to His Father's will no matter what subtle temptations and promises were put in front of Him. That is what was in the wilderness of temptation: He was offered all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow for a moment to this vile Lucifer.

Thank God, He did not bow. He said, "Get thee hence, Satan." But here is the same adversary pursuing Him to the cross, and we are told in the Psalms that demons and devils were compassing Christ around like bees. "They compassed me about like bees" (Ps. 118:12). If the Lord Jesus would have said one rebellious word, or would have had one thought that was not utterly, absolutely pure there would have been no salvation for sinners. But He did no sin, neither was any guile found in His mouth.

In 1 Peter 2:24 we read, "He bare our sins." He did no sin Himself--He bare our sins. Oh, glory to His name! By His death the Lord Jesus destroyed Him that had the power of death; that is the devil. So we see in Isaiah 53 that a great victory was won at Calvary. That is why it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, because from those bruisings and from that burial after the bruisings, and from that resurrection there was a complete destruction of the enemy. In what senses, in what way did He destroy the enemy?

Have you thought of that? All Satan's plans to hold humanity in his control were undone when a Redeemer emerged, when an efficacious atonement was accomplished. Satan's hopes were dashed to the ground. It was accomplished by the emerging of a Redeemer whose blood would set the captives free, and bring us out from Satan's hold into the hold of the resurrected Saviour, out of Satan's hands into the Saviour's hands. That is why Calvary was victory. It took away all ground from under the feet of the enemy.

He had us captured for ever if there was no redemption. We were his property for ever if there had not been a Redeemer. The presence and work of the Redeemer opened the gates and we can escape from the kingdom of darkness. And we entered into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Well, a great victory was won indeed.

3. A new creation brought to birth Thank God, Isaiah 53 not only describes God's dealing with past conditions, but it looks on into the future as well. It says, "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." He is going to have a family. That is what it means in the simplest of words, a family of faith, a family of saved sinners. And it says there, "He shall prolong His days." There is a clear prophesy of the resurrection. When His soul was made an offering for sin it was not the end, because He is the resurrection, and the life.

He said that in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection, and the life." He is a death-conqueror. And even though His soul was made an offering for sin, even though He was bruised, in fact bowed His head and gave up the ghost, that was not the end. Because there is a quality here, a divine quality--there is something invisible in this man. It is because of this divine quality of the life of the Lord Jesus that we sing: "Death cannot keep its prey-- Jesus, my Saviour, He tore the bars away-- Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose." That phrase, "He shall prolong His days" is one of the Old Testament prophecies of the resurrection. Once His soul has been made an offering for sin, once He dies the death

that we deserved to die, and dies that death for us, thank God, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days. There is a prophecy of the resurrection in Isaiah 25:8: "He will swallow up death in victory." You know, death is a great swallower. I often say that. How many people have been swallowed by death today?

How many? What a tyrant death is! What a great mouth death has! Young and old, healthy people, sick people, on the playing fields, in the hospitals, in the schools even; oh, what a swallower is death! But I love Isaiah 25:8, which says that Christ has swallowed up death; the swallower is itself swallowed up in victory. After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead certain Greeks came to Philip and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21). Philip told Andrew and together they went to inform Jesus about their visitors' request.

It was a legitimate request, but the Lord's answer was so strange: "Except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit" (John 12:24). They wanted to see this miracle worker. They wanted to get a glimpse of God's Christ, the coming King and then they got that strange answer. What the Lord was saying was, in other words, this: "Philip and Andrew, if you bring those enquirers into this little room where I am now, they will not see God's Christ.

They will only see one grain of wheat and not the glorious fruit of the grain after it has fallen into the ground and died. God's Christ glorified is immeasurable!" Isaiah 53:12 says, "I will appoint him a portion with the great." They would only see a man, sitting maybe on a chair in a little room, but that Man was going to be glorified through His death on the cross. And that is why the Lord gave that example of the grain of wheat. When we walk around in a garden in spring we can see the little shoots coming up where seeds have died.

And if a seed will not die it cannot bear fruit. It cannot multiply. You cannot turn one grain of wheat into two grains of wheat, to say nothing of two hundred, unless it goes this way: falls into the ground and dies. Christ glorified through death and resurrection is Christ multiplied. We are part of the multiplication of Christ. He has been multiplied into us because He emerged in the power of resurrection. It pleased the Lord Jehovah to bruise Him, because from those bruisings was going to emerge a resurrection life, a death-conquering life, which would get down into people like you and me and transform us.

That is salvation: Christ in us, the hope of glory. Christ multiplied into us. In Revelation 7:9 we see that multiplication described as a great multitude which no man can number, out of every kindred and tribe and tongue and nation. It is the emerging of a new creation. A new creation has been brought to birth because the Man of sorrows was bruised. It is a matter of the personal Christ becoming the corporate Christ. Before Calvary, before the bruisings we see a personal Christ; after Calvary, because of the bruisings, the resurrection and the multiplication, a corporate Christ, a corporate Man, of whom, you and I, through matchless grace, have become a part.

4. An eternal purpose guaranteed Then the last thought at the end of Isaiah 53:10, another fruit of the bruisings of the Man of sorrows: "The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand." What God has planned in Christ, what God has purposed before the foundation of the world (see Eph. 1:4) was to have saved sinners alongside their Saviour in the administration of the universe for ever. That is the pleasure, the vision of Jehovah. That is what our God has had in mind before ever He made the universe.

That was His scheme. It is going to prosper in His hands. It is not going to fail. An eternal purpose is now guaranteed; it is unquestionable. All that could oppose the eternal purpose of God has already come out

to try to oppose it. "They compassed me about like bees", we said. "Dogs have compassed Me: bulls of Bashan have beset Me round" (Ps. 22:16,12). All the vile enemies that hell could produce emerged and confronted Him, and sought to overwhelm Him, to trick Him into one sinful thought.

They could not. He was altogether lovely, whatever the pressures, from any direction. Hell has done all it can against this Man. And hell has been put to shame. He is the unspoiled Christ. Colossians 2:14 and 15 tells us that He made a show of principalities and powers at the cross. Look at Colossians 2:14 and 15. At the cross the Lord Jesus made a show of principalities and powers. They have done all they can. And today Satan is a defeated enemy. That is why we dare to declare the prince of hell to be the one defeated--utterly, for ever, at the cross.

The Lord is allowing him to do some things to enlarge us. Some pressures will drive us to Christ; satanic pressures, even, make us know our need of our Saviour, more than when we have a peaceful Christian life with no problems. We will not have a peaceful Christian life. But the sting has been taken out of the serpent's mouth, the lion has no teeth. (See Ps. 58:6.) He is only employed in God's employ, to perfect the Christians. But as for the eternal purpose of God, it is guaranteed.

The pleasure of Jehovah, the plan of Jehovah, the scheme, what was thought out in the counsel chambers of eternity, is all going to be realized gloriously. We are on the winning side, brothers and sisters. Hell has done its worst; it can do no more. Christ has triumphed. "And the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand." Well that is an attempt to understand, and to share Isaiah 53:10. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him because of all that was going to come from it, and has come from it.

It pleased the Lord to let His beloved take that pathway of indescribable anguish, in order that these fruits might emerge. Here is the great Victor; here is the greatest victory that was ever won. We are in the good of it--hallelujah! Make your response, brothers and sisters. Surely, we cannot be other than totally surrendered at the feet of this Saviour. Are you raising any questions in your life about the mastery of this Man of Calvary? Are you hesitating to go the Calvary way when so much can issue from it in His case, and also yours and mine?

It is the only way of victory, it is the only way of glory, it is the only way of peace, it is the only way of joy. You rob yourself if you hold back from total allegiance to this Man of Sorrows, this great conquering King, this great Victor of Calvary. Let Him have all--no questions--let Him have all for ever. Say so in the quietness: "I want to be conformed to the image of that altogether lovely, that totally victorious Man of Calvary. Let God bruise me if He will, if these fruits can follow."

3 GOD'S PLEASURE IN HAVING ALL HIS FULNESS DWELL IN CHRIST

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Col. 1:19

"For in Him, Christ, dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:9, 10

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30

"And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John 1:16

We have certainly caused much grief to God's heart when we were outside of Christ. Now we are in Christ we want to find out more and more about the things that have pleased, please and will please the heart of God. And we pray that those satisfactions, those joys might really come fully to the heart of our creating and redeeming God. We have been mentioning a few things that please God and in Colossians 1:19 we find a simple statement that leads us to another matter which concerns the satisfaction of God's heart, "For it pleased the Father that in Him, (that is, in Christ) should all fulness dwell." And that really needs to be read alongside those associated verses in Colossians chapter 2, where we are told that "in Christ dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye, ye Christians, are complete, filled full, in Him".

God's fulness deposited into Christ

What does it mean? It is a statement of course, from the apostle Paul, telling us really this: it pleases God that all that He is and all that He has, be deposited, have its residence, we may say, in the man Christ Jesus, thereby becoming available to those who are the members of the Body of Christ. God in all His fulness is happy to be reposed in, have His home in His dear Son, so that all that God is, now deposited into Christ, should become available, accessible to all who have been brought into union with Christ, who are associated with Christ, incorporated into Christ. That takes my breath away! I remember a dear young Christian friend of mine who must have been reading his Bible and enjoying his Bible, and enjoying this particular truth, perhaps from this very chapter. He sent me a postcard through the mail with just a few words on the postcard; my address at the front and these few words at the back: "All God's fulness is in Christ, and all of Christ is for us." I think that is putting into a shorter sentence what I have been trying to say. All God's fulness is in Christ, and all of Christ is for us. Now that is a marvellous thing, a wonderful thing, when a Christian begins to see it. But that makes demands. That sets a particular course for Christians, if they are really going to make progress in the spiritual life. There is a discipline connected to that. And we are just noticing that it is that secret that has pleased God. It pleases God that everything of Himself is in Christ, and in Christ alone and that His fulness becomes available for us Christians only if we go to that particular repository, so that we will know where to find and to appropriate everything that we need: in Christ. God has ordained but one provision for His children for all their needs; it is this Person, Jesus Christ. We ourselves are need-personified, but God is supply-personified; and God has ordained that our needs shall be satisfied out from His fulness if we go to the place, to the Person where those fulnesses are to be found.

Christ our inheritance

In Deuteronomy 8:7 we find an illustration of what I have been saying. We have a lovely description here of the land of Israel to which God brought His people. It beautifully describes the wealth of that land, the supplies that were to be found in that lovely little land to which they finally arrived: "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." God rescued His people from Egypt and put them into a land, into a place, a lovely little land in their case, where they would find divine provision for their every need; a good land: brooks of water, fountains, depths, springs, valleys, hills, wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil, honey, and so on. In every area that little land had been packed with everything that they could need for their heart's satisfaction. And they had to possess their possession. This was their inheritance. We read in Ephesians 1:11 the counterpart of all this: "In whom we have our inheritance." Some translations say: "In whom, in Christ, we have been made a

heritage." Well, I do not think they are mutually contradictory; they are just supplementary one to another. They are two thoughts, both of them equally true. In Christ we are being made an inheritance for God, yes, but in Christ we have found an inheritance from God. Christ is our promised land, just as God packed everything that could be needed by those saved ones, those rescued ones, into that lovely little land, all in abundant supply. So I believe this is a right reading of Colossians 1:19: "It pleases God, God gets pleasure from this fact, that in Christ all His fulness should dwell." And as chapter 2 puts it, "And we are filled full (in Him)." Once we are in that Christ we have to learn to live in that Christ.

The discipline of going to Christ

It is God's plan that we learn as Christians to realise that everything for us is there in Christ, and nowhere else. And if we are going to live the Christian life, we must learn to go and go and go again and again and again to that glorified Person into whom the deposit has been made, where the fulness is. That is how I understand it. I have been seeking to learn through the years that the basic secret of the Christian life is going to Christ Himself for everything that we need. Now I said there is a discipline bound up with that. We are so inclined to go here, there and everywhere to get our needs supplied, but God will not have it that way. What has pleased God is to put our total supplies in one repository, His Son. And if we want to go on in the Christian life we have to learn the secret of going again and again to Christ. I hope you do not think I am emphasising that too strongly; I do not believe we can emphasise it too strongly. You see, Christians have to be those who are going continually to that reservoir to fill their cups, and to get their needs supplied. I said that that is demanding; in fact I would say it is revolutionary, even for the best of us, to learn a lot about this. We have to learn--I do, still--about having contact with Christ, really immersing myself into Christ, to get my needs satisfied, and to be enabled to take any further step onwards in my spiritual experience. Christ, and Christ alone. It pleased God that in Him all the fulness should dwell, not three quarters of the fulness, not 90 per cent of the fulness. But it pleased the Father that in Christ, as far as the Christian's needs are concerned, should all the fulness dwell. And I say it is not automatic, it is not easy to learn to go to Christ for everything.

No alternatives

We are so inclined to try and find other alternatives. We try to find our supply from good books, for instance. And thank God for all the good books, but do not be trapped. Don't begin even to think that your needs can be satisfied from books. At the best, books can only be introducers to conduct you to the real supply. The books, the best that have ever been printed are not the supply. And if we stop short and go to books, and consume books, books, books, we shall be trapped. Because it says that it pleased the Father that in Christ should all the fulness dwell. We have got to learn to go to Christ, brothers and sisters. Going to meetings is important for a Christian. But you will not get your needs met by going to meetings. Are you convinced of that? You may get your heart hardened by much learning of truth even from anointed preachers. It is not the meetings. Your needs are not met from having fellowship. This is the burden that has come on me as I have been pondering this, praying over it. If we are to make real spiritual progress, brothers and sisters, we have got to be those who are going, going, going all the time to Christ. Now, what contact have we had with Christ today? I asked myself the same question. We may have had a lot of happy contact with fellow believers, but we have got to learn to make our contact, our real contact, the contact that counts, with Christ Himself. A wellknown word from the lips of Christ in this connection is John 6:35: "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Oh, thank God for Christian friends; yes, thank God for Christian meetings and Christian books, but if that is where it ends, and if there is no reaching out of the hand to take the Bread--

Himself--we shall not grow at all; certainly we shall not grow as God wants us to grow. God wants us, His children, to learn the art of going to Christ for everything. Thank God for all the agencies that He uses, but everything else, everyone else must be regarded as being at best something to introduce us, something that will take us by the hand, and leave us at the feet of Christ, to have our dealings with Him about everything that we need. And that pleased the Father: that was the Father's plan. We are grateful for all the agencies that have introduced us, but beyond those agencies God loves to see us coming to Christ Himself.

Keep on coming to Christ

The Lord Jesus said, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger." That does not refer to an initial coming only. It does not mean going to Christ to get started and then going to other things to continue. John 6:35 virtually says, "He who keeps on coming to Christ shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Christ shall never thirst." Are we making adequate, personal, day by day contact with Christ Himself? That is the question. He is intended to be our perpetual friend, our perpetual companion, our perpetual supply, in every realm of our need. That is what pleases God: to have put everything into His Son, so that Christians will be coming to His Son. He will be their daily delight, just as He has been the Father's daily delight. We read that in Proverbs chapter 8: all through a past eternity before there was a creation Christ was the daily delight of His Father. And as the Father was revelling in His Son, all through those endless ages of a past eternity, perpetually, unceasingly, unendingly we ought to find our satisfaction in Christ and in Him only. That is the Christian life, I believe, and nothing less than that is the full Christian life. I just urge you, dear brothers and sisters--I am urging myself--keep contact, keep connected, keep in touch with Him. And do not be satisfied with Christian things, Christian helps--thank God for every one of them--but do not make your contacts with Christian things, even Christian truths, Christian doctrines. There is no doctrine that can meet your spiritual supply. It can lead you to a spiritual supply, but no doctrine is the reservoir. The electricity is not in the doctrine--that is a dead wire, comparatively, but you have to touch Christ for the power to get in and for the light to be there and for the life to be there and the warmth to be there. You have got to touch the power and the power is a Person. God has ordained that Christians be perpetually in need of Christ, perpetually in contact with Christ, and perpetually supplied out from that fulness that is in Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Christ should all the fulness dwell." The Greek word that is translated with "dwell" implies a permanent residence. Somebody can stay at a certain place for a short or a longer time but not be living there actually. It is a dwelling-place, but the person is not living there permanently. That word in Colossians 1:19 means that in Christ God's fulness dwells permanently, for ever. And our needs are all satisfied when we are immersed into, coming continually to that Person.

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