

2 Peter 1.16-21 - The Ranked, Manifold Witness of our Lord Jesus Christ

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Peter's testimonies of Jesus' Divinity and being Messiah are each precious and confirming, but not to the same degree of rank. How does the Bible rank each of them with the others

1 Peter 5.1-11 - Addressing the Shepherds of God's Flock

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There is an economy in God's Kingdom that sits upon His perfect Order. This economy is of rewards - both positive and negative. 1Peter 5 is written to guide and encourage the Shepherds, reminding them of this economy

1 Peter 4:12-19 - Study Notes and Comments

04/09/2025

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

While Peter is addressing the believers in Asia Minor (Turkey/Türkiye) who are facing harm, the threat yet to come for the greater Church under Rome will be even more severe. The Ten great Roman Persecutions of the Church beginning in AD 6 through AD 310 sought to eliminate believers through most grotesque measures.

At the time of his writing, perhaps AD 64-65, the greatest religious/rebellion turmoil continued in Israel. The nation was a hotbed of revolt against the Roman occupation with a succession of replacement Procurators charged with keeping the uprisings of religious and political fanatics at bay. Self-proclaimed prophets would rise and gather followers who hoped for the coming of the Kingdom that would violently throw the occupiers out. The Romans would bring crushing force upon the groups often killing by the thousands and crucifying the leaders. Political treachery, bribery and assassination were employed by both the Procurator and appointed leaders. One faction of fanatical patriots called the Sicarii tasked themselves with the removal of political opponents by sly and unobserved public assassination with a dagger. The Sicarii murders were so frequent that no one felt safe as they even killed Jonathan the High Priest with the quiet approval of Felix (AD 52-60).

The Romans almost seemed to encourage rebellion so as to give excuse to kill the troublesome Jews.

“The first rebellion against which Ventidius Cumanus, A.D. 48-52, had to contend was occasioned by the coarse insolence of a Roman soldier. This man had the presumption at the feast of the Passover, when to maintain order and preserve the peace a detachment of soldiers was always situated in the court of the temple, to insult the festive gathering by assuming an indecent posture. The enraged multitude demanded satisfaction from the procurator. As Cumanus, however, attempted first of all to hush up the matter, he too was assailed with reproachful

speeches, until at length he called for the intervention of the armed forces. The excited crowds were utterly routed; and their overthrow was so complete that, according to Josephus' estimate, in the crush which took place in the streets in consequence of their flight, 20,000 (!) men lost their lives."

Schürer, Emil. A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ (p. 314).

Add to this climate of tyrants, zealots and rebels the appearance of the sect of Jesus. Amidst a parade of new prophets and patriots, Jesus had clearly demonstrated His legitimacy in miracles and teaching as the others could not. But to the leaders of Israel He was still yet another threat to the fragile power balance between Rome and Israel. It is no surprise that Saul was given rights to hunt down the followers of Jesus.

By the time of the writing of 1 Peter, Nero had burned down Rome and laid blame on the Christians, seeing many Christians executed in various gruesome manner.

^{13b}...so that also at the revelation of His glory (1 Corinthians 15:51-53, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18) you may rejoice with exultation. (2 Corinthians 5:10 , 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Hebrews 11:35)

The Lord will meet us midway in the clouds at the First Resurrection, beginning the Tribulation. The Bema Seat Judgement of Christ will follow for the raptured Church Saints, where our works will be tested and rewards granted.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

2 Corinthians 5:10 ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Hebrews 11:35 ³⁵ Women received their dead — they were raised to life again. Some men were tortured, not accepting release, so that they might gain a better resurrection,

¹⁴ **If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

Luke 6:22-23 ²² *Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.* ²³ *Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.*

¹⁵ **Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;** ¹⁶ **but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.**

In the tumultuous environment of Procurators, soldiers, assassins, patriots, rebels and zealots – do not be involved. But suffering as a servant of the Lord in this – for all that might mean – you will glorify God. (**2 Corinthians 12:8-10**)

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 ⁸ *Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.* ⁹ *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* ¹⁰ *For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

¹⁷ **For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

With Israel’s rejection of the Messiah, Jesus had prophesized that God would soon judge the nation and Jerusalem. (**Mark 13:1-2**) The city, the surrounding strongholds, and the Temple would be destroyed by the Roman Titus who would

breach the last walls of Jerusalem on August 10 70AD. During the siege, three Jewish rebel factions inside the city fought each other ferociously while killing innocents in their path, even shortsightedly burning the common grain stores that the others wouldn't have it. Before this happened, the Christian community had fled Jerusalem "in consequence of a divine admonition" to the pagan city of Pella in Perea.

For about six months Titus' army used battering rams to push through the successive walls surrounding the city. By August 8 the final siege had begun; by the 10th the Temple was destroyed. Though Titus wanted to preserve at least the inner court of the Temple for Roman use, it was inadvertently set ablaze by his soldiers and was a total loss. The Roman slaughtered without discrimination, and the rest of the city was set ablaze. Two of the three Jewish rebel tyrants still holed up in the upper city continued to murder and rob. By September 8, the whole city was under Rome's control. The entire city was leveled to the ground except three gates and the wall on the West. The rest of Israel's strongholds would be subdued by AD 73.

With this began the dispersion of the Jews to the world until Israel would again become a recognized nation in 1948.

*Mark 13:1-2 ¹ As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples *said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" ² And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."*

¹⁸ And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner?

The difficulty does not refer to perils faced in achieving Salvation, for this is secure in Christ. Instead, the difficulties are the trials that believers face that Sanctify or even threaten to destroy. All of these are under the administration of our Sovereign God (**Romans 8:26-28**), also see **Proverbs 11:31**. Conversely, those who would be damned, living without God and His corrective staff, may have ease now but will

suffer immeasurably more in their punishment. (**Luke 16:24-25**)

Romans 8:26-28 ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Proverbs 11:31 - ³¹ If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth,
How much more the wicked and the sinner!

Luke 16:24-25 ²⁴ And he called out, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' ²⁵ But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.

¹⁹ Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

Jesus showed us how to suffer righteously under a Sovereign and loving God as He prepared to face His death.

Luke 22:41-44 ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony he prayed more

earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Life Under Grace in Christ the Victor - 1 Pet 3:8-22

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1 Pet 3:8-22

[1 Peter 3:8-22 - Life Under Grace in Christ the VictorDownload](#)

Period of Grace - 1 Pet 3:8-9a

Peter concludes his instructions to Believers, explaining life in this present time of Grace. This period we're currently in following the Cross will continue until He retrieves (snatches up, **1 Thess 4:13-18**) His Church, beginning the time of Wrath. Until then, Peter explains grace towards others as we "were called for the very purpose that (we) might inherit a blessing." **1 Peter 3:9**

This blessing is the Holy Spirit given to us in Salvation, through faith - "...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." **Galatians 3:14**

Harmony with Others - 1 Pet 3:9b-12

Citing **Psa 34:12-13**, Peter explains how to employ a blessed and Saved life while we still live amongst sin, with a reminder that the LORD watches and hears the righteous and opposes those doing evil. The same is taught by James, "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." **James 5:16b**

Paul wrote this same declaration to Titus:

“¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” Titus 2:11-14

Stand Firm under Christ, Suffer as He did – 1 Pet 3:13-17

Living in the reality of being reborn in God through Jesus – while still assailed by the sin that envelops us – Peter urges grace, grace, grace. Emulating the same Grace as Jesus when suffering unrighteousness, we like Him shall strive to tamp down wrath and make as much way possible for the Spirit to do the work only He can do. Our response should act in support of Him as we would be “ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in” us, even patiently suffering wrongs against us “if God should will it so”. The whole of the equation in this Period of Grace rests in making the case for Christ to sinners and staying out of the way to let Him do His Work. When the Time closes, no one will be ignorant of the opportunity.

Christ’s Work/Actions Between Bodily Death and Resurrection, Ascent – 1 Pet 3:18-22

Christ’s Work on the Cross was not the end of His Work. What was seen on this side of the Creation:

*⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, **the veil of the temple was torn** in two from top to bottom; and **the earth shook and the rocks were split.** ⁵² The **tombs were opened**, and **many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised**; ⁵³ and **coming out of the tombs after His resurrection** they entered the holy city and appeared to many. Matthew 27:50-53*

On the other side of Creation unseen, while between His Body's death and His Ascent to the Throne, Jesus in Spirit preached the Word to the most disobedient spirits in the underworld prison called Tartarus (**2 Peter 2:4**). These are not the fallen angels of Satan but the 'sons of God' in pre-flood Genesis 6 who fathered the Nephilim giants. They will be taken straight to the White Throne Judgement. (**Jude 6-7, Rev 20:11-15**)

The Gospel is vital and relevant to all, both the Quick (for Salvation) and the Dead (for Judgement). Jesus also preached to the disembodied souls of Hades (not the final place of eternal torment, the Lake of Fire) emptying the Paradise side (Abraham's Bosom/Lazarus) to bring them to the Heaven that still awaits us who sleep in the grave before the Rapture. Post-Cross, the souls of the Saints proceed to the same place immediately to the Lord (**2 Cor 5:8**)

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says,

"WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." ⁹ (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?

*¹⁰ He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) **Ephesians 4:7-10***

Jesus' total domination and reclamation of all Authority given by Father would be settled. As He already demonstrated His being the perfect Prophet, and is now exercising the office of High Priest, we await His return as King of all Kings ushering in the end of the kingdoms of Man.

*¹⁷ When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. **Rev 1:17-18***

Baptism in Allegiance to Him - 1 Pet 3:21-22

"Corresponding to that", the chapter closes out with the reasoning for a Believer's Baptism. While a physical act, it no more enacts a spiritual outcome than does fasting or a shorn head (**Acts 18:18**). Instead, it reflects an inner conduct of the heart that God recognizes. Baptism is a show of surrender to Christ the Lord. Fasting demonstrates a devotion to Him and a denial of the flesh to amplify the spirit's focus. A vow is in devotion and obedience to God despite protests in ourselves.

The only Ordinances given by Moses - Circumcision and Temple Sacrifice - have been rendered obsolete and unnecessary by the New Covenant, entered through our death in Christ and so a release from the Law.

The Good and Beautiful Life, Chapter 7 - Love Your Enemies, Discussion Questions

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The Human heart and the motives that proceed from it are powerful. In the Original, right way it was a force of Good that enjoyed the backing of the blessings and resources of God.

The Good and Beautiful Life,

Chapter 6 - Lying, Discussion Questions

04/09/2025

Matthew 5:37 - But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

The Good and Beautiful Life, Chapter 4 - Thoughts in Considering Anger

04/09/2025

Anger is rightly expressed toward that which opposes God, to as far as we are responsible to judge. However, anger expressed outside of our responsibility, or outside of God's expectations, is sin.

The Good and Beautiful Life, Chapter 10 - Worry, Discussion

Questions

04/09/2025

Worry is a difficult one, because the issues that lay seed to our worry are potent and numerous. The interesting thing about worry, though, is that it is always a concern for the impact of a future event.

The Good and Beautiful Life, Chapter 1 - How to Ruin Your Life, Discussion Questions

04/09/2025

The Holy Spirit is a living person, and He can be known in an increasing degree of intimacy. Since He is a personality, He can never be fully known in a single encounter. – AW Tozer

The Good and Beautiful God Introduction, through beginning of Chapter 1

04/09/2025

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The Good and Beautiful God

Introduction, through beginning of Chapter 1

Summary

Our new book deals with how we might move into a life of intimacy with Father. We acknowledge (read: Millennia of pondering) that Jesus did this with perfection – but what does this show us? His successful navigation as a Human is a banner for us to learn and follow.

Perhaps His chief goal, after Salvation, is to help us understand how to live in the Kingdom of God, now. His reliance upon and trust of the Father He knows was His success – and should be ours as well.

Key points

Prelude We usually strive to do the ‘right thing’ in the eyes of God, but why? The first answer should be to glorify Him, but who can’t say the notion of peace and success isn’t a motivator? Fair enough, because among the promises in the Word are our peace and success. [Matt 6.19-20](#), [Prov 3.3-4](#), [Rom 8.28](#), [Ps 29.11](#), *et al.* As well is our natural desire to avoid the opposite, pain and difficulty. And therein lies the issue – we might reason

1. God is good; 2. He is Sovereign; 3. He says He intends to bless us; 4. Difficulty comes; 5. We scramble to discover what we’ve done wrong, that it would be corrected, and the pain would go away.

Confliction about God (or at least what He might do next?) If we

see things this way, it is not hard to come away confused and conflicted about God. The responses of God of the Old Testament compared to the Father Jesus tells us about can add to the issue. How to reconcile this while acknowledging both reports about God are true and of the same Person? This is what the author addresses by examining what Scripture says of Jesus' understanding of Father, as He knows Him across the Old and the New Testaments. Jesus shows us the full and true realities of the Father He knows, understands and trusts.

Define failure and success Aside from the 'world' that doesn't belong to God, ask a typical follower of Jesus to define success, and he will rightfully include peace and prosperity. But is this God's economy? Jesus was asked what was most important, and He answered in *Matt 22.36-38*: "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?*" And he said to him, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.* We are also told in *Eph 2.10*: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* Father intends for us to put Him first, and will bring us to do so as He works on us.

When do we tend to draw unto God; in plenty or in need? Father intends us good, but will not suffer being 2nd in our 'hearts'.

And, as mentioned at our meeting, we often find we are left more useful to Him – having a better understanding of Him – after trials test our faith and turn us to Him. Therefore, shall we call our peace success, or is a higher success shown as a deeper reliance upon God that results in true peace?

Jesus threw in Jesus fully threw in to the Human condition, except for sin. He navigated life following/relying upon

Father through the same means available to us.

His success is the Banner we must follow – but how? We must come to see, understand, and trust

the Father that Jesus knows. We must

grow into His Narrative, and thus our perception – and response to life – comes into line with His. This is how we are made like Him.

By all accounts, we are a lost cause.

Sin has warped us and made our intentions patently against Him. Our eyesight is incapable of seeing the Truth

without His intervention. What seems up

is too often down, and vice versa. Enter,

Jesus. Our Savior not only won our

forgiveness, but He graciously demonstrated what life looks like in harmony with and in full reliance upon Father.

Furthermore, He personally attends to our schooling, making us ready to be received and stand perfected before Father on that Great Day.

Big difficulties = bigger usefulness We all know mature Followers, those who have better expression of the Spirit's Fruits ([Gal 5.22-23](#)) that show as godliness, wisdom, usefulness to the Body. How do they come to possess this? The answer is through a learned familiarity with His Word and Its application. It also hinges on a hands-on history of experience with God Himself, won through the slow process of seeking Him, drawing close, learning dependence – through knowing, understanding, and trusting Him.

And this is all by His design, under His Sovereign care of the very details and circumstances of our lives.

Can't lead where you haven't gone So, what might be an excellent use of the life God gives each of us?

Line one of the common Catechism states our Chief Goal is to 'glorify God, and enjoy Him forever'. The Great

Commission ([Matt 28.18-20](#)) includes making disciples and teaching them to observe

Christ's commands. Taken together, an excellent life involves a more experienced soul helping a less experienced one. Therefore, our job is to cooperate with God's teaching of us, growing in maturity, and helping others who have yet to embrace more of Him. This is our call to grow, because who can lead where they haven't gone?

Narrative is imperative What we believe – that is, embrace, not simply acknowledge – resides in the 'heart'. It is from here our actions play out, and is therefore central to who we are.

Scripture is replete with God's references to our heart. Jesus said in *Matt 15.18a* *"But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart"*. And consider A.W.Tozer's observation; *"Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?', we might predict with certainty the future of that man."*

If our narrative is key, then it reasons that we must fight for an improving one. Who better to inform our narrative than the One who knows God best?

Jesus not only went to great lengths to explain Father and the Kingdom, but He also demonstrated the ties to the Old Testament, lived an example, provided the Words for the New Testament, and continues to craft and shape us even today.

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 6 - God Is Holy

04/09/2025

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(Re)cap

09-23-18

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 6 - God Is Holy

Summary

God's Holiness cannot be underestimated or underemphasized. This (RE)Cap installment will not be an attempt to consider God's Holiness, but instead thoughts on why reconsidering His Holiness is imperative.

It is a mistake to see God's love as the foundation of Who He is, for God's Holiness is the foundation.

Misplacing these two results in a theology very different than His. Compare these two viewpoints:

God's Foundational attribute is love, followed by His Holiness: God intends me to worship Him for His love, to become increasingly loving, and I will escape Hell as a receiver of Christ's standing in love before God. It is through His Holiness that He will bring me to this outcome.

God's Foundational attribute is Holiness, followed by His love: God intends me to worship Him for His Holiness, to become increasingly holy, and I will escape Hell as a receiver of Christ's standing in Holiness before God. It is through His love that He will bring me to this outcome.

At our last meeting, we discussed the Author's approach to God's Holiness, and found his treatment lacking. This month, rather than backfilling his thoughts, let's consider this Bedrock Issue of God and His Person.

Key points

A thought about God's Glory

If on a warm summer's day, perhaps we could consider that the searing nuclear source of the Sun is like Father God, and the warmth and the Sun's effect is like the Holy Ghost. The One who offers sunscreen, sunglasses through which we may look safely into the Sun, Who explains the Sun to us and shields us from the destroying radiation if we were to stand right in front of it - is Jesus.

We rightly enjoy the warmth of the Sun and the good it brings. We rightly embrace the loving offer of Jesus and all of the priceless and incredible benefits He offers. What of our pursuit, recognition, worship of God's Holiness? God's Glory, His Holiness, is *the* consuming force behind all things seen and unseen, proceeding and outlasting Creation. If Holiness is central to His Person, how do our priorities compare? What if we ask to enjoy the warmth but not the Sun? What if we focus on the sunglasses or the benefits, but not the Sun? The warming effect, our Friend Jesus, the Sun in the sky - all are to be taken together. Fixating on one at the expense of the Whole is our loss, and it is not what He expects from us.

God is Holy

How much human effort has gone into considering and writing about God's Holiness? Any honest treatment on an

attribute of God demands volumes of thought.

In fact, as vast as God is, it can be argued that our efforts to capture a full understanding will fail, as we are mere dust, mere fallen creatures veiled from seeing Him.

“For now we see
in a mirror, **dimly**, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but
then I shall know just as I also am known.”

(1 Cor 13.12)

Yet in an effort to understand – which He endorses us to undertake –
consider John Piper’s definition:

God’s holiness is His infinite value as the absolutely unique, morally perfect, permanent Person that He is and Who by grace made Himself accessible — His infinite value as the absolutely unique, morally perfect, permanent Person that He is.

Jesus was sent to us as one of us, that we might grasp the enormity of
God through a Person Who took on our form.

Yet even the God-Human Jesus revealed the brilliance of His Holiness on
the Mount as Peter, John and James looked on:

As He prayed,
the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and
glistening. // But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and
when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with
Him. **(Luke 29.29, 32)**

God’s greatest Attribute

God’s expression of love is the greatest aspect we currently see, in
Christ. According to His Word however,
this is not His greatest attribute, but it must be His Holiness – the ultimate
seat of His Person. Consider John’s
reaction to Christ’s revealing Himself in John’s vision.

And when I
saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me,
saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the
Last. I *am* He who lives, and was
dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys
of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you
have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will
take place after this." (**Rev 1.17-19**)

John's reaction is not to Jesus' love, but to His Holiness. Also, consider the four
living creatures attending
to Father's Throne, who say "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is
and is
to come!" (**Rev 4.8**), and, the twenty-four Elders seated around His
Throne, who John observed "And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on
their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God". (Rev 11.16) Jesus
shows us the God Who is Love, but this Message of love is built upon the truth
that His Love could not be perfect without His underlying Holiness.

Yes, His love is most excellent.
Yet, we err if we conclude His love is the center of the God we are to
pursue.

Or do you
presume upon the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you
not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (**Rom
2.4**)

He calls us to repentance to His Holiness. The reason to trust His Person *is* His
Holiness. His intent, His ability, His guidance, His
grace, His Son, His Salvation, His promises, even His love - all of these rely
and rest upon His Holiness.

We are His Workmanship. He trains us into Holiness.

As God values the prayers of the Saints, Peter tells us our adherence to

His command to be Holy effects His hearing of our prayers. And what of our growth in submission to His Holiness? When do we often find ourselves calling out the most to Him? Christians are pitched into learning to navigate a relentless struggle between our nature of sin and His demand of holiness. Don't we each soon forget God when we are at ease, then cry to Him again when need arises again?

Remove falsehood
and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches - Feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God. (**Prov 30.8-10**)

If this is true - that we forget God, and that He intends to continue our training in holiness until our time here is done - can we deny His allowance of a steady diet of new challenges specifically tailored to address where He sees we need to grow in Holiness?

We have an endless need to grow in holiness and reverence. Yet our pride, our misconceptions of Him, our fears, our wrong use of reliance upon ourselves and others and objects - all of these He commands against. Our better grasp of His Holiness offers answers to all of these sins. As He sees fit, He crushes and He uplifts - all under His Holy Throttle - to press out our sin and extract the wine of Holy Worship. We cannot afford to not grasp His Holiness, and fortunately, He will not allow it.

We tend to learn more of God's Character when we are pressed into trials that compel us to turn to Him for relief.

Our desire for rescue brings us to consider our sin and His response. His response deepens our understanding of His Character and value.

This better understanding drives our worship further as we realize His

Holiness, love and care.

And what is promised to those who overcome, who succumb to the training and overcome sin, embracing holiness?

To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

(Rev 2.7)

He who overcomes
shall not be hurt by the second death.

(Rev 2.11)

To him who
overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it. (Rev 2.17)

And he who
overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations (Rev 2.26)

He who overcomes
shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (Rev 3.5)

He who
overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. (Rev 3.12)

He who overcomes
shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. (Rev 21.7)

And this is rooted in pursuing Him and learning holiness through the direction of His Word.

Behold, I set
before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known. **(Duet 11.26-28)**

Shall we sin, neglecting Holiness, so that grace and love abounds?

God loves us, and we are invited to flee to Him and His rescue through Jesus. Jesus' offer and Work is the means to the end – our journey does not end at the Cross, but instead begins the road to holiness, the road to overcoming sin, free of condemnation for our mistakes and disobedience. He beckons us first to the Cross, and next He says 'Follow Me.'

To loosely quote Spurgeon: Are we no longer accountable to His Standards of Holiness? We under Christ are no longer under His Law, but under grace (Rom 6.13). Jesus said not a jot or tittle would pass

away, so the Law remains – but for what?

Under the Blood, the punishment for disobedience – death – is quenched, but not the command to follow it, nor the benefits that obedience to Holiness brings. The Law reflecting His Holiness has been shifted from the outside of our rebellious hearts and moved, written on a new heart of flesh desiring to follow Him.

The Law is there to become instilled, soaked through, to increasingly become the controlling factor in the believer's heart. It is His living command, the right road to a

Holy life. The promise from our Holy

Guide 'involves lifelong security: Salvation at once, guidance unto our last

hour, and then endless blessedness’.

This affects how we view, approach, respond to, and pursue God

Beware of simply making God’s kindness to us as the seat of our Worship, for this aspect of Him is not the source of Who He is. True, this is an essential part of Him, but it is fully and absolutely His Holiness that exceeds all else. The Apostle John, who dwells on God’s love extensively, first confirmed of His Holiness, upon which he built his Epistles. For if we rest finally on God’s love, and mistake it for His final and defining thought towards us, where will we be when He rightly decides to correct us? Will we, in the worst of experience, question Him and Who He is? Will we question His love, even His existence, if we conclude the outcome He conducts is not loving? Yet, if we conclude His outcome is Holy, we stand on firm ground. Consider Job and how he settled this issue, following his great loss – he praised God for His Holiness, and as that was the unquestionable basis of his worship, Job was clear to give thanks to God for both giving and for taking away. Job valued His Holiness.

“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord.” In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong. (**Job 1.21a-22**)

This also affects our stance on the teachings and Worship music we sit under. Are we fed a constant diet of His kind treatment towards us, or are we exposed to a Biblical proportion of the High Church sort, of His Glory, Honor, Holiness? Singing week after week about our woes and how He loves us is a poor nutrient by itself.

But including the right portion of His unquestionable worth, glory, majesty keeps us in a right posture towards the unseeable, otherwise unapproachable God. It is then, knowing more of our utter lowliness, that we can rightly value Christ in His bridging this incredible gap.

Jesus left a greater position to stoop down and become flesh. Yes, His Labor at Calvary was magnificent, His Work pure and sufficient. It was out of the vault of Father's Love and Glory that Jesus was sent to us on loan.

Consider too, Jesus' appearance was normal and typical, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isa

53.2a) Yet at the Transfiguration on the Mount, he allowed His burning Glory - His Holiness as God - to be seen. Jesus revealed the core of the true God, a Holy Glory otherwise unbearable without Jesus as our Shield and Reconciliation to the Holy God.

He certainly accomplished the utmost more than any son of man could, because none of us could ever qualify as the sinless Lamb nor bear the burden of the Cross. However, this gargantuan Love cannot be God's greatest attribute. It must be what undergirded His ability to carry out this Task - it must be first His Holiness.

God shows us a Holy God first, followed by holy Love:

"Teacher, which

is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a

second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” – **Matt 22.36-40**

I am
the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. – **Exod 20.2-3**

Honor your
father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. – **Exod 20.12**

Both passages demonstrate the order of Holiness first, followed next by love. In the Ten Commandments, the first half are of the Holiness of God, the second half of loving others.

The Pendulum Swings?

Many of us have been exposed to ‘Fire and Brimstone’ ministers who almost exclusively focus on God’s Wrath (attached to His Holiness) and the need to repent. Perhaps we’ve also been exposed to the ‘Love and Grace’ ministers who almost exclusively focus on forgiveness and peace (attached to His Love).

For those who have experienced a lopsided diet of either, predictable problems arise – that God is impossible to satisfy and I will likely be lost (heavy on Holiness), or, God winks at my sin and has no expectations whatsoever (heavy on Love). In fact, both halves have truth in God’s character, actions and intent. But of course, one half of the ingredients won’t make a cake. A Biblically proportioned view of His Holiness – expressed in Love – underlies the entirety of His Word to us.

The obvious solution is a clear representation of the whole truth, as God tells it. Ministries that have taken this tact have predictably flourished.

Sounds simple, doesn't it?

But it's not. The Heart is tricky

(The

heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?– **Jer**

17.9); Accordingly, our motives

and understanding are flawed (Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on

your own understanding. – **Prov 3.5**); It is therefore easy

to misrepresent God, Who holds leaders to a high standard (Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we

all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. – **Jas 3.1-2**), and Who takes the issue very seriously (For I testify

to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. – **Rev**

21.18-19)

Coming off of the recent swing of 'Fire and Brimstone', it is argued

that we've fled to the 'Love and Grace' side to appeal to an injured or perhaps more stiff-necked public. Yet, in

considering how Jesus would approach this question, we can conclude He would take it on the whole, straight down the middle.

As we read the Gospels, we see that is exactly what He did. Yes, He was killed for it, but none the less,

He accepted Father's driving Holiness to be tantamount, and refused to swerve to the left or the right. Father called this good and accepted His Work.

Thanks and praise to a Holy God, Who loves us relentlessly.

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 5 - God Is Love

04/09/2025

[2018.06.15.TGaBG_.ReCap_.Love_.Ch5_Download](#)

(Re)cap

06-15-18

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 5 - God Is Love

Summary

It is true. God's love is central
and core to His Person – we cannot read His Word and conclude otherwise.

We've all been schooled on the problems of 'romantic love', the idea
that love centers around often blind, warm feelings. Is this a true basis of love?
Perhaps not, if we look to the essential
issue behind love – a willful commitment, per God's law, to another who we have
no expectation to repay us. Consider
Jesus' discourse in **Lk 6.32-36**. It ends with the commandment to "be merciful,
just as your Father also is merciful."

The last time we met, John walked us through the problem of assuming
that Father's love is as performance-based as the fallen-Human love around us,
expressed
in the way our world teaches us to expect to be treated.

In this (RE)Cap, let's look at an aspect of our Father's willful

commitment and mercy towards us. Let's look at how a devoted love is expressed to a people who can't but fail to show Him a worthy response, and who by our very nature, often begin our trek to the Cross kicking and screaming against Him.

We go to the Cross for the first time, even as His enemy. Against all of this, He demonstrates how His devoted and merciful love overcomes the worst we have to offer.

Spoiler alert: God's Offer, in love, has conditions.

Key points

Conditional love is usually cruel - but why?

Life, and our peers, both teach us about the often conditional use of what is called love and acceptance. This is no secret. But, let's also recall Paul's words - he knew of God better than most anyone - that we see through a glass dimly (**1 Cor 13.12, Job 36.26**). Let's recognize that starting even now, the remainder of our existence in Christ will be spent pondering our God and shedding our misconceptions about Him.

We grow to see His worth.

We could likely agree that conditions for acceptance can be distasteful to us. But why? It's likely due to fickle or unfair terms, or perhaps a person's disingenuous motives that result in our being rejected. But, are conditions and their use the problem, or could it be that the one in charge of the conditions misuses them?

We approve of conditions with those we call friends, those we invite into our home, or share personal information with, or give help, money, care, love. God Himself prescribed conditions for guests to join His people Israel in worship and even nationhood.

While God's Offer is conditional, His resultant relationship-Love is unconditional. This flawless,

God-branded love is possible through Christ's fulfilling those conditions and sharing (imparting) Father's satisfaction of those conditions, to us who accept the Offer.

**The conditions of Father's Offer cannot be cruel,
because He's not cruel.**

We might recognize the conditional nature of the relationships around us, and see inconsistency and inequity.

The chain of relationship between us and Father is also conditional, but with an important difference – the conditions required for our relationship with God have been borne by Jesus. The conditions were God's intent even before Creation, before we existed. As God unilaterally carries His Covenant with Abraham (**Gen 15.9-11, 17-18a**),

Jesus also is the sole Author of our Salvation once we have answered His irresistible Call. We who will accept the Offer were already intended to be included without a chance of failure. Father ensured we could not escape, that His Goal would be met, by His assuming responsibility for His Conditions. Father's demand for sin's payment, and the sinless Man-Vessel Who would satisfy Him, are non-negotiable to us. To answer that Condition, He specifically gave Jesus to accomplish the job of Sacrifice. Father's terms being 'finished', Jesus revealed the New Covenant allowing us forgiveness, and so satisfaction of God's Wrath against us who accept. Father intended the overall plan before anything began.

Jesus alone would perfectly satisfy Father's Wrath and impart the benefitting result to us. Jesus, as our High Priest, will protect and keep us safe us in that Covenant. It is God's to Offer – but He will never, never take it away from His children, once received and cemented in His holy Salvation.

So, yes, conditions exist in all relationships. The difference between the relationships we

know with our peers and the one we know with God are that God is perfectly wise, righteous, loving, and without sin.

Our peers, fellow sinners like us, are not. Therefore, we cannot rightly project our peer-relationship expectations upon God.

We must shed what we think we understand of relationship, embrace the truth of His Conditions, and believe Him - even when we fail Him, even when the Enemy tempts with "Did God actually say..?".

Conditions from God can't be confused with conditions between peers. We are not God's peers.

Does Father have Conditions over our eternal life with Him? Yes: We would choose Jesus, else we will suffer Judgment and endless torment in Hell.

Are a Fireman's conditions of "Climb down the ladder from the burning building - only the ladder, there's no other choice available" - cruel?

Does Father have Conditions over His children adopted under the Blood of Jesus? Yes: He fully accepts us into His family and loves us no matter what. Bound tight under His love and life's Sovereign circumstances, is escape from the call to trust and obey possible? We are, as glad bondservants of Christ (**Eph 6.6b**), conscripted into learning obedience to His ways as His Law is written on our new heart.

There are no conditions excluding us from God, once we've met The Condition of confessing Christ.

Will He swivel from us and turn away? He cannot, because He adheres to the Conditions met by the Son He gave, into Whom we can be grafted. Does He tend to us, watch us, correct us? Does He sit with us as we mend from the hurt of life, either anonymously at the hands of a fallen world or from self-inflicted pains as we went the way He didn't hope for us? Yes: He is our

Father, He loves us, He won't quit us. (2 Sam 7.14-15, Heb 12.5-11)

Disappointed with His children? Apparently, not possible.

Devoted to His reputation and to seeing His designs through? Absolutely.

Is God ever disappointed with us?

Perhaps a strong argument could be made that the answer is no. Consider Webster's definition of '**disappointment**': *The feeling of dissatisfaction that follows the failure of expectations or hopes to manifest.*

Disappointment happens when the expected, doesn't.

Note: Disappointment is different than yearning or longing. Consider

Jesus' appeal in **Matt 23.37** - "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See!

Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me

no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' " Jesus demonstrates His knowing the future in saying 'you

shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'. He also states His desire

to see this sure end brought forth in 'How often I wanted to'. This is not disappointment, but His urging the people forward in a knowing, patient concern.

Is disappointment possible for a God of Omniscience - *all* knowing, including of future

events - Who knows the end from the beginning?

If God cannot be surprised, that would mean His hopes cannot be dashed when something doesn't happen. He already knew that would be the case.

And, no, this doesn't give us license to do nothing - we're here under His sanctified training for our benefit, not God's. He needs nothing from us, but intends to use life and opportunities to teach us obedience and peace.

If He cannot be surprised, then God is not disappointed when His child fails, due both to Christ's Blood and His seeing it prior. Our sin elicits His dissatisfaction, and moves Him to correct us. But, the Gift of Christ's Atonement has freed us from Father's Wrath, and in exchange, we have been bought into a relentless, loving path of Sanctification. Our job is to pursue Him, repent and cooperate with Him, learn to know and to trust Him, to live in the Spirit and not the flesh - "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." **Rom 7.25-8.3**

Never surprised, but knowingly patient and diligent in making us better Worshipers.

Jesus our High Priest has compassion for us and our failures. Father intimately knows who we are, and we never surprise Him. This 'program' of Salvation is not capable of nor is designed to put us under God's disappointment, (For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. **Jn 3.17**) but to allow boundless room for us to maneuver under God's instructive care (For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should

walk in them. **Eph 2.10**) and
learn how to see Him, ourselves, and Creation as He does. We are granted time to
learn what it means to
be a child of the King, and to grow in our capacity to love and Worship Him for
it. (But
you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special
people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness
into His marvelous light. **1 Pet 2.9**)

Therefore, as we will certainly discover ourselves opposing God
(sinning), let us believe Him and not the Enemy who lies and accuses. Instead, we
must search His Word for the
truth, reform our thinking to His, confess our fault, and move ahead in
already-assured love and forgiveness through our Brother and Friend Jesus.

A hard life, but not a hardened Father.

The Fallen world is a hard place to reside, but the difficulties
suffered by a child under his Sovereign God cannot be attributed to His turning
away. Instead, ask:

Do I belong to Him through faith alone in Christ?

If so, is this hardship the natural
outcome of not following Him?

If so, He loves me and I
must still repent, obeying His Word.

If not of my own consequence, shall the clay question the Potter? Shall we accept
only the good and bemoan the
bad? Instead, follow the Rabbi Who was
blameless and remember “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the
things
which He suffered.” (**Heb 5.8**),
learning of the Spirit’s Fruit, bearing instruction as He did, and asking Him

for the necessary peace and strength He promises to complete the task. (And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” **2 Cor 12.9a**)

Either way, I will not call Him a liar and question His devotion to His child, and I will ask for and expect His sure help (**Joshua 1.9, Matt 6.25.33, Phil 4.11-13, Heb 5b-6, Rom 8.28**). All the while, I know my God loves and cares for me, working as the author and perfecter of my faith (**Heb 12.1-2**).

So, Christ follower – have you too skinned your knee (or broken your leg) on Life, even crashed and burned, even found yourself opposing the God Who loves you? Seek Him and His directions, know yourself, repent and ask forgiveness – and move ahead in the unconditional love of the Father Who delights in the contrite heart of His child, Who He intends to see succeed. Let’s revel in His generous conditions, and His boundless love.

Final thoughts to consider.

The above might read like a Calvinist’s TULIP tract. Whether it does or not, let’s be faithful to the plain reading of His Word and let the labels fall where they will. In fact, Scripture threads together the Effectual Call to the predestined soul, yet of a person who has responsibilities as a free moral agent (who cannot escape God’s Sovereign influence). Our ‘heart’ is the only thing in Creation that God allows to oppose Him. Perhaps, we have our choice of ‘will’, yet it is never outside of a God Who steers it sovereignly: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.” **Prov 21.1**. I suspect His joy is in capturing and winning the affection of that otherwise hopeless, hateful heart. In the end, God’s love

conquers all.

His willingness and sure ability to suffer our rejection, even under forgiveness in the Blood, is held in place by the Conditions He has offered, fulfilled, and abides by. Is that not the greatest love, worthy of Worship?

Finally, if how our Father deals with us is true, then how might this teach us to treat others - especially those who we are to love (everyone), yet who disappoint us (everyone, given enough time and opportunity)? The parable of the 'unforgiving servant' is one good illustration (**Matt 18.23-35**). I know I have (decreasingly?) been that servant, and I praise God that He continues in loving patience to train, even discipline, me to be like Him instead. Praise to Him whose love will never quit His children.

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 4 - God Is Generous

04/09/2025

[2018.05.04.TGaBG_.ReCap_.Generous.Ch4_Download](#)

(Re)cap

05.04.18

[**The Good and Beautiful God**](#)

Chapter 4 - God Is Generous

A forward note

This chapter's (Re)Cap is a bit different, in that we've considered a scope of thought and Scripture beyond what the chapter addresses. The chapter addresses God's Generosity; the (RE)Cap addresses God's Wrath and His Generosity. In one way, we might question having more than a summary of filler thoughts to expand on this month's discussion. On the other hand, this subject as a whole should burn in our souls, and it seems right to discuss it. Many have observed that we suffer a Post-Christian environment that threatens to strip us of our worship and joy in God, because it's easy to gravitate to the more attractive parts of His story that this environment selectively promotes.

If we're not very careful, every one of us, as mere humans, is prone to settle into the parts of His story that bring us a false ease in a grandfather-god - or an incorrect slavery to malicious-god. He is neither of these, but He is instead a Righteous God Who demands perfection, and Who offers incredible Love and Grace beyond measure to answer His demand of perfection.

And so, He offers His Son.

I perceive our group is rather rounded in the Wrath/Grace mix. This chapter (and perhaps this book) assumes the reader has been overexposed to Wrath, and so promotes the Grace. In this (Re)Cap we don't take either part for granted, but gaze beyond the Chapter's focus, looking to include the balance of Scripture's mix in an effort to consider how Gracious God Is. Proportions of anything that differs from God's Word only brings loss. My hope is that through considering this topic, we can grow in our reverence, hope, joy, faith, love and trust in God.

Summary

I admire this book we are pondering.

The author's works have brought relief to many people as he reveals topics on God. However, his book is not intended to be a complete work, but actually a nudge to awaken us to the basics of knowing, understanding, and trusting Father. This is a book bringing some core topics to study, engage, and pursue in the Word given to us. In today's Church, the problem of Biblical illiteracy is often woeful, and the Body suffers incredibly for it. This book is not intended to instruct on the Whole of God, but instead is a sampler platter to whet the appetite. Father wants us to dig deep, Jesus made the way, and the Spirit stands ready to teach. **(Psalm 27:4)** "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, **to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple**". The issue rests on our willingness to engage Him.

Key points

God is indeed Generous

A sense of His generosity through too narrow a view including only 'He loves me', or simply 'Jesus died for me' - without acknowledging the whole range of Truth He gives us in His Word - is a weak and incomplete foundation to build an appreciation of His generosity.

How much more is a cup of water to a man who knows he is dying of thirst than to another who is just a bit parched?

To have a better appreciation of His Generosity, we need to step back and seek full sight of His care, beyond a view of only our personal concerns that naturally occupies the majority of our thoughts. We are rightly concerned about our life and circumstances, but it is easy to make this the center and whole of our attention. Yet we are not the majority and center of God's Goals - there is far more at play.

Immutably Holy, God's Wrath towards sinners rightly burns, demands to be

satisfied. His Wrath is inescapable, inevitable, necessary. As God cannot change - and as there is no reason to do so (great news) for He is complete and flawlessly Perfect, and as He is the Source and Basis for everything because nothing is above Him - everything under Him must be brought into agreement with Him. Sin must be purged, the sinner's right wage must be paid through death, His Realm must be purified, and everything out of His Perfect alignment, removed.

Hinge Verse: Rom 2:4 - Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

It's easy to miss what lies below the surface

Ice - both bergs and cubes - show only 1/7 of the whole in plain view. The majority of the reality lies hidden under the surface.

God's Word reveals the whole of reality He would have us understand, including that beyond what we would otherwise perceive. For this we are given His Word, reliable and true. It is not completely everything about God, but completely everything God would reveal to us.

His Word is reliable

So how can we hope to know the truth about God's Realm and His involvement, about the whole of what's in play, in Creation and beyond? God graciously has provided us with everything He knows we need to have, to understand His views, expectations and promises. Is the Word reliable? While there is an exhaustive number of reasons we can say 'yes', consider:

Of everything recorded during Mankind's history, Scripture is uniquely

reliable:

- No parts of the Bible are found to be contradictory to the Whole
- It continues to be supported, not disproven, by history and archeology
- Later duplicates of original Scripture are found to be true to more ancient editions
- The Hebrew duplication processes was exhaustive, ensuring true accuracy
- The number of prophecies made prior to their fulfillment are numerous
- Mankind has realized a high degree of universal agreement, in accord with the effort and faith invested, of wisdom/guidance/peace/relationship. This is called Orthodoxy.

Another good starting point is Moody's Erwin Lutzer, who is one skilled scholar addressing this in '[7 Reasons Why You Can Trust The Bible](#)'.

Biblical unawareness and its consequences

We willingly live with Biblical unawareness and disregard for God. This doesn't have as much to do with one's capacity to understand, but instead an unwillingness to strive to understand all one can in his capacity. God offers to teach and enlighten us, and the Holy Ghost is promised to always help us when we seek Father's Wisdom - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (**Jas 1.5**), and But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (**Jn**

14.26), and Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day. **(Psalm 25.4-5)**. Our Enemy encourages disregard and unawareness, tempting on all fronts. Trials in our lives give opportunity to withdraw from God, to seek substitutes, to stoke our disregard.

We can agree that God is perfect, with no speck or blot. We can also find agreement He loves us in Christ, reconciled to Him. But what fills our understanding between Him and us? The more narrow our understanding His Word, the more unproportioned we see ourselves.

Filling out the reality of God's perspective with Scripture

Does God possess anger? Is He right in having it? Who will receive it?

Directed towards His People, Israel:

Deut 32:22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

Isaiah 33:14

Sinners in Zion are terrified; Trembling has seized the godless "Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?

Deut 9:7-8 Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord. Also

in Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.

Warned of after the Cross:

Matthew 3:12

“His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Matthew 10:28 “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 ...dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...

Shown to John, in the Revelation of Jesus:

Revelation 14:9-11a

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night....

Revelation 20:10

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:11,13-15 Then I saw a great white throne and

Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them...The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Does God offer Grace? Is He generous in giving it? Who will receive it?

**Conversely,
consider Scripture of God's Realm and Grace:**

Ephesians 6:10-13

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Eph 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Revelation 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the

dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.**” And he who was seated on the throne said, **“Behold, I am making all things new.”** Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

We all face inescapable Realities where God is concerned – and this is everywhere, because He is Sovereign. The great news is Jesus’ offer to bring us into Father’s family, fully recognized as His Children, with Christ not only as our Savior, but as our Brother.

God’s patience and Jesus’ forgiveness are the key issues, but we make a mistake when we view them as the sole issues

Paul explains through Scripture that the New Covenant replaced Moses’ Law, providing the Pathway to reconciliation – yet remember, it does not make God wink at sin, but satisfies His Wrath.

His intent – to cast out sinners, unrepentant – remains, and will happen.

Jonathan Edwards, on the unbelieving Israelites

In Jonathan Edwards’ notable 1741 sermon on the Passage *‘Their foot shall slip in due time’*, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” observes that the Hebrews were the people chosen by God, protected by Him, sustained by Him, and under miraculous display. Edwards illustrates the reality of their

precarious situation, if not for God's generosity:

- They were always exposed to destruction; as one that stands or walks in slippery places is always exposed to fall.
- As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning.
- They are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another.
- The reason why they are not fallen already and do not fall now is only that God has graciously upheld them.

One takeaway from Edwards sermon is this: Unsaved sinners are in a precarious, dangerous position. But, God graciously cares for us out of His Love and His commitment to His promise to do so through Salvation in Christ. We have a hard time seeing the true risk we face, but an easier time enjoying the general and specific results of His care – even to the point that we see the results but fail to recognize how much from God takes place behind the scenes. And even if Saved through Christ yet not understanding this, we risk becoming glad receivers of Grace who can fail to appreciate and worship the God Who is responsible – even contributing to Spiritual Idolatry and disregard. It is available to [read](#), or on audio.

One final thought on His Generosity - Inclusion at someone else's party

The Jews, The Church, and our Jewish Savior

Finally, consider that the Church has not replaced Israel, but the Church instead benefits from God's Covenant with Abraham: **Gen 22.18** – In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.

Paul states in **Romans 11:11**

& 14 – I say then, have they (Israel) stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. For

I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them.

We are the grafted branch, not the host tree, per **Romans**

11:17: ...you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree... Verse

24 demonstrates that we, while equal in Christ, are subordinate to Jews per the Covenant with Abraham: **Romans 11:24** For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

All who receive Christ will have Salvation. The Gentile Church is a big part of His Plan. Yet, the Jews have the first seat, not the Church; they alone are the chosen people, saved by a Jewish Messiah (**Jn 4:22b** – (Jesus to the Samaritan woman) ...we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.) With incredible generosity, He has included us to their 'party'.

God IS indeed Generous!

Can we grow to see the larger scope of what's in play, and how His generosity is full from top to bottom – not just within a narrow view of the life we live and see? Knowing, understanding, and trusting God to our fullest ability stokes our Worship, and rightly belongs to such a loving and generous Father.

The Good and Beautiful God Part 3, Chapter 3 - What is your Cup?

04/09/2025

[2018.03.02.TGaBG_.ReCap_.Cup_.Ch3-P3Download](#)

(Re)cap

03.02.18

The Good and Beautiful God

Part 3, Chapter 3 - What is your Cup?

Summary

The topic of trials and sanctification is core to the human experience under Father God – and is perhaps only second in importance and difficulty to the understanding His Theology. Our difficulty comes from many directions, including an inability to understand His mind (“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. **Isa 55.8**), that our perceptions and affections are directed towards us and not Him (Haughty eyes and a proud heart – the unplowed field of the wicked – produce sin. **Prov 21.4**), and we fall short if we do not progress in learning surrender and trust to Him in the circumstances He allows (...you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **Jas 1.3-4**). The question ‘What is your cup?’ can illuminate our understanding of God and our alignment with Him. Yet, we can learn faith and peace in it all, because ‘we are all God’s handiwork’, and He loves us recklessly.

Key points

Two perspectives, yet only one must prevail.

It is very understandable that we as fallen people favor our view from our perspective. In the moment that ushered in the Fall, mankind's gaze swung from God to ourselves - and every human since then born of an earthly father has suffered the consequences brought upon us by Adam - The seeing of ourselves as more important than God. This is a Theological fact, demonstrated through billions of life experiences throughout history. The only Human to escape the consequence had to be "born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship." (**Gal 4.4b-5**). Jesus was born of God the Father: "And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." (**Luke 1.35**). Coming from a lineage outside of our 'sin-infection', Jesus arrived Holy. This Holy Jesus, being and knowing God personally, explained to us the reality of our situation and how we can be rescued. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3.17**) Our perspective - self focused and incorrect - may be countered with His perspective - God focused and true. And as God is Sovereign, His perspective will prevail. The question is, will we strive to understand and cooperate?

Head and Heart Knowledge

A 'head knowledge' is inferior to a 'heart knowledge'. A reformed heart is His goal

because the
'heart' is the root and seat of character, not the head. Consider:

For where your
treasure is, there your heart will be also. (**Matt 6.21**)

And He said to
him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your
soul and with all your mind. (**Matt 22.37**)

But what comes
out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. (**Matt 15.18**)

And I will give
you a new heart, and 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. (**Ezek 36.26**)

Head knowledge is necessary to advance towards a faith in what is true,
but unless that knowledge lands on a contrite and willing heart by faith,
knowledge does no good.

"Then Jesus said
to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on
Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they
do. For they preach, but do not practice." (**Matt 23.1**)

"...but that
Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in
reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it
were based on works." (**Rom 9.31-32a**)

The (otherwise) incorrigible heart

And so, our otherwise irredeemable problem. Contrary to current and popular
opinion, we
are not a race that is inwardly good, and can choose wrongly. Rather, we are
inwardly wrong and, save

godliness, will also choose wrongly.

Corrective glasses are of no use to a blind man. And as the eye must first be repaired, so too our heart.

This is, aside from the work of God, an impossible task to us. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed

to do evil." (**Jeremiah 13.23, sarcasm by God intended**)

Faith comes from God alone (**Jas 1.17**),

through our hearing His Word (**Rom 10.17**),

asking His understanding (**Jas 1.5**),

and stepping forward on His statements before we would see the results

appear (**Jas 2.17**). Consider: The moment before you found an

assurance of Salvation, had you ever tasted it beforehand? No, each of us learned we needed it, heard

and understood His promise of it, and asked Him in faith believing He would answer as He said He would. This would

have been your first taste of His reforming an otherwise irredeemable

heart. And so the boot camp of the rest

of our lives in Christ began.

Sweating it out of us

Now faith is the

assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (**Heb 11.1**)

By faith Noah,

being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear

constructed an ark for the saving of his household. (**Heb 11.7a**)

And whatever you

ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. (**Jesus, Matt 21.22**)

The faith God intends to increasingly forge in us will always focus on Him (**Mk 11.22**), fully grounded in His Character which is explained to us in His Word (**Ps 119.142**), and affirmed in His response (**John 14.21**). God and the faith He intends is not the problem, our blind and stubborn hearts are.

So, how would He inform a heart that can't understand Him, or penetrate the callouses on a heart that is free to defy Him? Ask any parent, and hear that a child's error might be from either ignorance or from disobedience. Do we use the same correction for both cases? Both cases are to be instructed to the degree they can, and grace tempers the response.

Father holds unquestionable love, the gift of faith, the sovereignty over circumstance, and the wisdom to instruct.

All of these He employs in our training.

We commonly call them trials. And

so, knowing what He is achieving, why He does it, that He loves and protects us, and that He intends us to know/understand/trust Him - we can embrace James' command:

Count it all

joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (**Jas 1.2-8**)

Is James alone in this admonition?

Consider:

Peter - "Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good." (**1 Pet 4.19**)

and, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He

cares for you. (**1 Pet 5.6-7**)

Paul - "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ..." (**Phil 3.7-9**)

and, "Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." (**Phil 4.11-12**)

and, "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (**2**

Cor 12.7-10)

As Creator, Father has a right over us and an obligation to us. This is the consequence of coming into His family, of becoming His child. "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." (**Prov 13.24**). This is a corrective rod of love, one that refuses to see His child turn back to the slop (**Lk 15.16**) and to protect your faith (**2 Thes 3.3, Heb 12.2**). And so, does the Potter have no right over the clay? (**Rom 9.21**) Doesn't Jesus offer us a yoke? (**Matt 11.30**)

This is why it is imperative to learn the Character of God, because He surely

will prevail over you, His child. The excellent news is that He is loving, patient, merciful, kind, wise, and righteous. True, our trials are often utterly painful, but should we expect it to be an easy exercise to dislodge the opinions and beliefs of a blind or stubborn heart that conflict with a holy understanding and trust in Him, an understanding and faith He insists upon? To this point Peter points out that it is surely a difficult task for us and for God – “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” (**1 Pet 4.18**)

But more so, we have assurance of His intent and love for us through these difficulties, which glorify Him and benefit us: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (**Rom 8.28**), and that we “might obtain a better resurrection”.

Praying for help

Shall we pray for relief, peace, or faith in deliverance through the One behind it all? The Word tells us to pray for all of these. However, praying only for the parts we want instead of what Father intends will not get us very far. True, Scripture reports many, many times where removal of the problem occurs. However, is there in any of Scripture this response without the inclusion of faith in the Deliverer? It is easy for us to go right to the pain and ask that it goes away, but if it is not faith building, can we expect God to do it? He wants peace for us, but never at the expense of faith in Him (remember Paul, 2 Cor 12.7-10). Father intends us to learn and rely upon and expect peace through faith in Him, as a child. An early removal of the circumstance He superintends is counter to what He tells us to expect, if it removes His

opportunity for us to grow. So, we pray
for relief, faith, and peace in Him.

He knows each of His children intimately and crafts life to fit each one
of us unto His end goal. Learning to
trust Him can truly only come through experience, else it would only be head
knowledge. He loves us and perfectly
protects our faith. His purpose will be
realized for each one of us. In all of
this He calls us to learn Him, to trust Him, to find real peace.

A Personal Note

Several years ago, I found myself deep in the weeds in trials – it was
heading into the hardest point in my life and I felt almost hopeless. Struggling
towards Father, I asked Him for a
lifeline, and He gave me a reprieve I hope to always remember.

Our family went to the theater see a movie, and before the show they
played the following Pixar short film.

As I watched it, I thanked God for His care, and wept. He graciously helped me
begin putting things
into His perspective. God answers, and
He can show up wherever He pleases. He
encouraged me to be still and know He had everything covered.

Hint: Father God drives the truck, the Jackalope is a Jesus figure ☐

The Good and Beautiful God Part 2,

Chapter 3 - Father's Character

04/09/2025

[2018.02.02.TGaBG_.ReCap_.Character.Ch3-P2Download](#)

(Re)cap

02.02.18

The Good and Beautiful God

Part 2, Chapter 3 - Father's Character

Summary

What is more useful to understand about a person - his past actions in a given set of circumstances, or his overall character that resides behind his actions? The record of a person's actions might be an indicator of his character, but knowing his actual character is far superior in predicting what he might do in circumstances that have not yet happened. Given endless possibilities, a universe of circumstances we might face, the best way we'd be able to have reason to trust him would be based upon his character - the fiber of his personality and from which his responses would come.

Key points

Nature and Nurture

In our previous discussion, we considered the influencers in our lives. We asked whether these people had helped, hindered, or left neutral our knowing, understanding, and trusting Father God.

In the debate of nature versus nurture, we are born with dispositions (nature), yet must learn command over our actions. Actions are filtered through our beliefs, our

Narrative, shaped by our influencers (nurture).

We cannot escape the truth that our interactions with persons who play a role in our life make impressions that color and steer our viewpoint. Yes, we alone are responsible for our actions. Yet, the basis of who we are that informs our actions are shaped much by these influencing people in our lives.

Sizing up our influencers

So, consider your influencers, the people who have closely interacted with you, those who have helped shape you.

How would your influencer compare to the following description?

(S)he is someone who I believed had a clear view of the truth, conducted their life very well without mistakes, had a steady hand and never failed in responsibilities, always put my interests first regardless of mood or circumstance, never failed to seek reconciliation nor held a grudge, could always be trusted to be near to respond, and always protected me despite the cost.

This would be an amazing person.

And, if an influencer, would be a priceless and mighty force in your life. Yet, the truth is that a person of this sort is rare, and by strict definition, impossible. Placing the measuring stick next to the best person you have ever known, experience shows us that real people traverse the scale, all the way down to the despicable.

Sizing up Father

Now, carefully consider that statement again, and rather than a view towards your human influencer, look through it towards Father God:

Father is someone who I believe has a clear view of the truth, conducts His life very well without mistakes, has a steady hand and never fails in responsibilities, always puts my interests first regardless of mood or

circumstance, has never failed to seek reconciliation nor held a grudge, can always be trusted to be near to respond, and always protects me despite the cost.

The statement reflects this month's study which included restatements of the Lord's Prayer:

God is near, present

God is pure, Holy

God is powerful and the King Who rules His realm

God cares, provides for us

God pardons our sins against Him

God protects, rescues us from trials and evil

Our Father in
heaven, hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom
come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today
our daily bread.

And forgive us
our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not
into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 6:9-13

Who He Is; Who we believe He Is

Do you sense any hesitance in seeing Him that way? If so, you're a fellow, fallen

human.

The goal of this exercise, and more so the Goal of the Lord Jesus Himself, is to help us see the inconsistencies of our heart in relation to the truth He tells us about the Father He knows.

This is the Father Who strives to rescue us, to bring us back to our intended place before Him.

Last month, we read that the models (influencers) in our lives, good or bad, can be a blessing – if we take care to test our narrative and weigh it against the true Model. Jesus taught the Prayer to reveal Father to us, and also to help us see the inconsistencies between our views and Reality. His Goal is to help us know, understand, and trust the Father He trusts. This long transformation is our Sanctification.

Can we believe Jesus' explanation of Father? Can we realize the contrast between His (and our) Father and the influencers who have shaped our expectations of God? Here, we are to see the truth about Father, and repent of the notions that might stand in our way:

God's fatherhood must define what human fatherhood ought to look like, and not the reverse.
(James Bryan Smith)

The Good and Beautiful God Part 1,

Chapter 3 - God is Trustworthy

04/09/2025

[2018.01.05.TGaBG_ReCap_Trustworthy.Ch3-P1Download](#)

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1.05.18

The Good and Beautiful God

Part 1, Chapter 3 - God is Trustworthy

Summary

Just because someone has attributes, it does not automatically equate to their intent and treatment toward you. A wise man might give his thoughts or keep them to himself, a wealthy man could give or keep money, a violent man may choose or not to rob you. Knowing God's Character is foundational, but trusting Him and His response is another issue.

Beginning Chapter 3, we start to have a look at how trust works, why it develops, where it can fall off of the rails, and why it is important to consider our stance before Father. His intent is to show and convince us that He is Trustworthy.

Key points

Understanding someone's character is an important issue. Knowing what to expect from that character and trusting it is a whole other issue.

Perhaps one of the main, universal drivers shared by every human is a desire for the avoidance of pain.

Beginning at that premise, we can possibly trace the beginnings of every behavior, decision and hope. And perhaps

this is because the existence we experience in life is the polar opposite of the state of existence for which we were intended – one of peace surrounding a perfect God Who knows no deficiency. We just weren't made for this fallenness.

Found both in Scripture and the hopeful tales spun by mankind, in 'Heaven' there is no need, pain, loss – only joy, gladness, provision, peace. It seems in the end, we are all drawn to this. Even the Lost hope for the dead to be 'in a better place'.

A correct understanding of Scripture will repair the fallacies we attribute to God. Yet, the Goal of God and His Word are not simply to rescue us from Hell – it is to move us increasingly into relationship with the God with Whom we will reside, once the wrath we're due has been addressed.

The report of Creation heralds perfection. Everything began "very good" (Gen 1.31). Scripture is replete with assurances of God's goodness. We are told He is right, fair, full of mercy, even good intent. There is little room for argument concerning His Character. However, to varying degrees we are faced with a disconnect between God's Character and how we trust He will respond to us. Now, 'varying degrees' is an enormous understatement. As we consider Jesus' trust of Father and learn to compare it to our own warped state and outlook, we face a seemingly bottomless chasm of mistrust. Father understands this, and His work is to continually invite us to bridge that ravine with Truth and confirmation. We are His workmanship (Eph 2.10), and the works He brings us to walk in only succeed as we engage these works trusting Him (Jn 15.5). These exercises build our trust in His Character and response.

For we are His
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared
beforehand, that we should walk in them. **Eph**
2.10

I am the vine;
you are the branches. Whoever abides in
Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do
nothing. **Jn 15.5**

**Father calls each and every human towards a primary
Goal, and every Believer participates in their progress towards that Goal.**

Father of course understands this, and goes to endless lengths to help
and to accommodate us towards the Goal.
Laying a foundation of Who He Is through Scripture, the next course of
bricks begins. He teaches us to trust
that He will not keep these attributes to Himself, but instead work to in us to
“taste and see that the Lord is good”.

Oh, taste and
see that the Lord is good! Blessed is
the man who takes refuge in Him! **Ps 34.8**

God’s goodness is a given, yet not until we would taste and take refuge
are we blessed. Why? Because knowing of His Character is one
issue, while trusting His Character as directed towards us is a whole other
issue.

In the same way that an expert in a field who doesn’t have hands-on
experience is incomplete, so too are we if we thoroughly know the reports of
God in Scripture yet lack a trust borne out of an engaging experience with Him.

**How will we grow to know what to expect from
Someone Who is unseen?**

So herein lays the problem: How would we hope to grow in our

understanding of and trust in an invisible Person? Without reservation, we can agree that a knowledge of Him through the Scriptures is essential, lest we would know of and believe in a God other than the One written of. But remember, we all begin this Walk ignorant of Him, and ignorant of the Scriptures.

Consider the universal progression every human is called to tread:

- Recognize there is a God
- See the Scope of His presence and involvement
- See our core opposition to Him and His ways
- Hear His call and His demand to repent and return to Him
- Acknowledge our need for Him
- Ask for Rescue from our fallen state
- Recognize this newly reconciled relationship
- Cooperate towards a progressively changed 'heart'
- Patiently help others to realize the same you've learned
- Prepare to meet Him

Notice that this cycle applies to us across the spectrum – whether we're not yet Saved, or if we've followed Him all of our life since Salvation. The Lost finds rescue in the cycle; the Saved finds progressing Sanctification. In both scenarios, the participant is called to and learns to trust Him.

The cycle of knowing, understanding and trusting Him is an upward ascending and increasing spiral, like a spring small at the bottom growing larger at the top. As He nurtures us, all steps of this cycle are played over and over again in an expanding success. We can even locate ourselves in this progression before or after receiving Salvation – the cycle number you're on might be different, but the process repeats and remains the same because the

Goal remains the same. It is a lifetime-long road, but He is caring and patient.

To increasingly engage in the above requires trust in God, yet a God we are to progressively know better. And so the question was posed: Consider other people in your life who represented an influence over you. For instance, what characteristics did (presumably) your Dad have, and how do you recognize the effects your view of God the Father? Why? Because we begin life ignorant of God, perhaps first learning about influencing characteristics from our Dads. In traditional families, we will first know more of our Dad's/Influencer's character before learning Father's. This foundation preemptively colors our understanding and attitude about authority, grace, God, and how we can expect Him to respond. Not intended in the least to be psycho-babble, nor an excuse for our choices, we cannot seem to escape what even Sesame Street teaches toddlers – to know something new, build upon something similar you already understand.

From Scripture, we are also instructed to learn from parallels in the same way – Moses' instructions of the Tabernacle and Laws were a shadow (Heb 8.4-5), sound leaders are to be imitated (Heb 13.17), and we have Jesus' example to follow (1 Pet 2.21).

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." **Heb 8.4-5**

Remember your

leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. **Heb**

13.17

For to this you

have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. **1**

Pet 2.21

The Influencers in our lives, good or bad, can be a blessing - take care to test your narrative and weigh it against the true Model.

We trotted out the question concerning our Dads' influence on our view of Father, and got answers across the spectrum - good characteristics leading us to God, bad traits informing us of a problem in contrast to His traits, and even a neutral influence neither good nor bad.

In our group's case, they all influenced our path to God. Perhaps we all know of someone whose Influencers

have helped to spin them off into destruction, or even a very good person who has still failed to embrace God.

If we agree that the universal progression every person is called to tread listed above is true, and that our view of God is effected by our Influencers, then we can acknowledge it is imperative to run all influences - what we read, hear, associate with, believe - through the sieve of Scripture. We must derive what is called right by the

Truth, and repair our perceptions. On

the topic of trusting Father, what things are snagging you?

A personal experience.

I was gently asked, "I notice you refer to God the Father as "Father". Would you please explain that?"

After more thought, my answer is that I conclude it is Scriptural (Rom 8.14-17), a term of glad submission and endearment, and an expression of a personal relationship He beckons me to.

For all who are
led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears
witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then
heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in
order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Rom 8.14-17

I perceive a godly Dad as one who strives to be wise, provides
instruction and direction, protects, and insists on God’s way in patience and
love. Imitating Jesus, he would do
everything he could to live up to his role in the world (not just in the home, and
beyond being only a ‘spiritual leader’) as prophet, priest, and king. All of these
attributes and responses are
perfectly declared and demonstrated by Father God. I love His Pure dealings with
me, and His
forging of these same attributes in me as His child.

Those who have influenced me throughout my life have not been many of
these things – both persons of bad character overall, and even fellow fallen
Believers who are learning holiness like I am.

But in a clear and absolute way, I recount how God has increasingly been
that perfect Father for me. It is not
that He has increased, but instead He has helped me increasingly embrace Who He
fully Is and recognize His dealings with me.

The outcome of any progressively Sanctified heart includes a repaired
understanding of Him, and with repentance, an ever wider lens that sees
Him. Father, our Heavenly Father, works
towards fulfilling His intent to grow each of us this way. He has been consistent and

true to me, and
this is why I choose to reverently call Him Father.

Consider early Church father Polycarp's response to those who would have him deny Christ. There stood a man who had learned to trust God, and I want to know Him in the same way.

The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee; — reproach Christ." Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" At the stake, to which he was only tied, but not nailed as usual, as he assured them he should stand immovable, the flames, on their kindling the fagots, encircled his body, like an arch, without touching him, and the executioner, on seeing this, was ordered to pierce him with a sword when so great a quantity of blood flowed out as extinguished the fire.

My privilege of a growing closeness to Father cannot be special or unique – I read in the Word that this relationship is intended for every human being who would embrace Christ, obey the Spirit, and trust Father.

The Good and Beautiful God

Chapter 2 - God is Good

04/09/2025

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[The Good and Beautiful God](#)

Chapter 2 – God is Good

Summary

Most any Christian you ask will agree (confess) that God loves us, that He is Love, that love showed itself on the Cross. In the midst of good fortune, we often hear about His blessings. During the hard times the common anthem is “He has a plan”.

While all of the above is very true, we have an opportunity to discover that these statements are actually topical – just the tip of the iceberg – if we’ll take time to further consider His Word, His explanation and demonstration of His Character. Chapter 2 introduces us to a bit more of the topic “God is Good”.

Key points

Prelude

Our Author Smith began his walk no different than any of us. He recognized God as Ultimate, confessed his own sin and need, and called on Jesus for His offer. He also, until one day, had little direct experience with God outside of a quiet Christian life. To this point in his walk, he agreed/confessed of His love. But, when real trial was visited upon him and his family, the next leg of his walk began as the Lord helped him understand a bit more of His Character and Intent. Early on, Smith discovered that there are many degrees of depth – as well as a range of opinions – on how God deals with us. But most importantly, he came away with a personal report, an experience, of God’s care for him.

This is uncomfortable, what do I need to do to make it go away?

Removing ourselves from uncomfortable situations (or placing ourselves

into pleasurable ones) isn't difficult to appreciate. Our world, from day one, is a constant

reinforcement of cause and effect: If it burns my hand, move it away; If I'm cold, put on a jacket; If I'm hungry, eat; If I don't want a ticket, don't speed; If I don't want to be struck in the nose, show respect. Conversely: if I don't want to be fat, eat less; if I want to get there faster, speed; If I am in jeopardy, take preemptive measures. Our lives are replete with taking care of business and responding in some sort of action.

So, when difficulty visits us, it is natural to seek a way to avoid, or solve, or endure the situation. Pain, fear, loss, death – all of these are not what God left us with on Day Six of Creation. It's also not what we can expect once everything is straightened out in the End. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. **(Rev 21.4)**

But for now, in this Age before the Gathering occurs, we are in a place of tension. Somehow we have to reconcile a natural desire for peace and comfort v/s understanding God's Character and Intent towards us v/s how we are to respond to trials and heartache.

Who sinned?

Or, How does God see things and how should I respond?

This Chapter shares the Smith's experience following the diagnosis and the ultimate death of their daughter. He shares the responses of other Jesus followers, and the range of theology about God is sadly lacking. We also shared around the table our own experiences with responses given to us like this.

Ask 10 people to explain something abstract (as opposed to the answer to a math equation) and we can expect 10 different viewpoints. And, the more complicated the topic, the

wider ranging (read: the farther from the truth) the answers might be.

Now, ask 10 people, even Christians, about an aspect of Almighty God. But wait, in His case it doesn't mean there are no definitive answers – this is why He has given and protected the Scriptures, and has given the Spirit, and deals directly with each of us personally. The answers from those 10 people will directly correlate to their exposure and experience with Scripture, Spirit and personal experience. Perhaps it is even safe to say that any number of people, if thoroughly experienced in these three things, will come to much the same conclusions about that aspect of God we've asked them about. Why? Because He is seamless, pure and consistent in His expression of Who He is. Yes, the ways He demonstrates it to us as individuals might be different, but the Truth behind the demonstrations run true to His Character.

God is Good and He loves me. This situation is terrible. Can this be reconciled?

Sink low enough into a difficulty, or spend enough time suffering an injustice, and we might likely find that our comfort in 'God loves me/He has a plan' is challenged. Have any of us ever found ourselves boxed into this problem?

1. God loves me
2. God is Sovereign and all powerful
3. This is a horrible pain/injustice/your need here

Is it possible that even the most devout Follower could come to a place where he would ask God "Why haven't you fixed this for me?" After all, He has the means to, and He says He loves me, right?

What is God working to accomplish?

At the most basic and simple human level, if I will show my love to someone it will probably revolve around their comfort and pleasure. This is the stuff of romance novels, the sweeping off of feet. But what of a love with a deeper view, perhaps something like wanting our children to learn how to handle a budget? In this case the result might sometimes be they can't immediately have what they want. Parents would likely see the degree of pain the children experience as reasonable and necessary. This parent would be loving, yet there is pain.

What is God's main, bottom line goal in Creation? That He would be acknowledged, praised,

glorified, worshipped as the One and True God.

What is Father's main, bottom line goal for us and Creation? In the Westminster Catechism, the answer to Question

One is a common - and excellent - answer: That we would glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Both cases contribute to His goal.

As we are involved in this, and as we are lacking as fallen people, and as He loves Himself and loves us, we enter Salvation to begin our training out of our wrong beliefs/actions, and into our understanding, faith and trust of Him. As a child learning to budget experiences pain (followed perhaps by financial peace through godly obedience), should we not expect pain as Father teaches us through difficulty while keeping the End Goal in view? If so, our list might now look like this:

1. God loves me
2. God is Sovereign and all powerful
3. This is a horrible pain/injustice/your need here

4. I know and am learning He is Good and Trustworthy
5. He will even provide me comfort as I suffer His teaching trial
6. As I learn to trust Him, I too can learn to say I 'Count it all joy' (**Jas 1.2-4**)

This is why we have Jesus to lead the way, even when we would ask God "Why haven't you fixed this for me?" For He too asked Father this same question: "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done." (**Lk 22.42**), and again in obedience on the Cross "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (**Mk 15.34**)

Even Jesus, perfect, learned as a Man to trust and obey Father: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." (**Heb 5.8**). Can we expect that our course would be any different than that of the Second Adam, Who we follow and have Salvation through? If Father loved Jesus, and He also loves us, then we have hope of reconciling the 'God is Good and He loves me / This situation is terrible' issue.

Because, remember He also tells us:

The eternal God
is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;

Deut 33:27

The steps of a
good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. Though he fall,
he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand.

Ps 37:23-34

If I say, "My
foot slips," Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. In the multitude of my

anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul.

Ps 94:18-19

My help comes
from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

Ps 121:2

He heals the
brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Ps 147:3

Fear not, for I
am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I
will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Isa 41:10

When you pass
through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not
overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor
shall the flame scorch you.

Isa 43:2

And we know that
all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the
called according to His purpose.

Rom 8:28

And,

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give
you the kingdom.

Lk 12.32

The list goes on and on.

Some final thoughts.

And so, we can find reconciliation with His love and our suffering. We can say “This happened because God had a plan”, while also saying “Though this happened, God has a plan on what to do about it”.

There is much more to consider on this topic. John Piper, on the eve of his cancer surgery, scribbled out his booklet “Don’t Let Your Cancer Go To Waste”. In it, Piper makes a good argument that even ‘bad’ things are a gift from God. He reasons that as Sovereign, it isn’t possible for anything to pass Father’s notice – He can stop an event, cause an event, or let an event proceed that comes out of the fallen world. Was Piper’s cancer caused by God, or allowed by God, or not stopped by God? Piper chooses to anchor his opinion in Father’s Sovereignty and love, concluding that whatever reason He chose, He did indeed choose it. And on that, Piper thanked God for His gift of cancer. Piper saw it as deemed proper and necessary for His child John, in pursuit of God’s main goal of glorifying Himself and in helping John to see things increasingly His way. Piper counted it all joy, and we can too.

The Good and Beautiful God

Remainder of Chapter 1 - How We Change

04/09/2025

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The Good and Beautiful God

Remainder of Chapter 1 - How We Change

Summary

Jesus offers a new life, one that is full. One that is close to our intimate Father and all that entails. Stepping into the Family is the beginning, but we begin a long walk of realization, of His progressively showing us the things in us that interfere with this close relationship He intends for us to have with our Holy Father. This requires change in us, not on the surface but at the 'heart' level. But how? Who can change one's 'heart'? The answer is God alone, and this chapter explains the mechanics of who we are and how we might cooperate with God, find true change, and begin actively growing closer to the One Who loves us best.

Key points

Prelude God mercifully explains to us what mankind has strived to understand for millennia - how are we made? What makes us tick? Why do we do the things we do? And Who better to explain, than the One Who made us?

A multitude of philosophies and approaches have developed through our

history on the topic of our behavior and how to see it change. Questions have to be answered concerning how we work before anything can be said of how to bring about change. Consider the options: Are people innately 'good' or 'bad' on the inside? Are we solely responsible, or can 'the Devil make me do it'? Is change a matter of shaping habit and behavior alone? Does God change and grow us, regardless of our participation (or lack thereof)? Our Creator provides us with answers to these questions in His Word to us, his children.

Tossed about the sea of these questions, life can be miserable – especially to the person who is aware of his faults, the outcomes of his behavior, and the need to change.

Misunderstanding how we are made leads to ineffective attempts to change – and the misery of desperation, perhaps even disenchantment with God. To be stuck in an awareness of need – and a longing need for help and answers – leaves one with a miserable resignation to a sad existence. But it doesn't need to be this way, if we will follow our Lord's instruction and position ourselves to receive His help.

The Mechanics of the Human 'Heart' Jesus stated that "what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart" (Matt 15.18a). The 'heart' is described as responsible as the seat of who we are, and what God is primarily concerned about in us. Consider that a search for the word 'heart' through the Bible produces 862 instances. A few that are relevant to Father's concern of our heart condition include:

(Before the Flood) Gen 6.5 "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his **heart** was only evil continually."

(To the king

Abimelech on not taking Sarah into his bed when warned by God) Gen 20.6a “Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your **heart**”

(Given from God

by Moses to the Hebrews) Deut 10.12-13 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your **heart** and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?”

(Jonathan’s

armor bearer responds to attack the garrison) 1 Sam 14.7 “And his armor-bearer said to him, “Do all that is in your **heart**. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you **heart** and soul.”

(David’s plea) Psa 139.23 “Search me, O God, and know my **heart**!

Try me and know my thoughts!”

(God states) Jer 17.10 “I the Lord search the **heart** and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”

And, (Concerning

Father’s Work through the Spirit) Rom

8.27 “And He who searches **hearts**

knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the Will of God.”

Father calls the root of our person the ‘heart’, and shows much attention to it. Perhaps the clearest

passage attesting to this is 2 Chron 16.9a, “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose **heart** is blameless

toward Him.”

The ‘Will’ and its role in our behavior What role do we think our ‘Will’ plays in our behavior? Without God’s explanation of our heart, it would be easy to assume that our Will is responsible for our actions. Consider the terms ‘Will power’, or ‘setting your Will’ to do something, or the ‘Will is weak’. These terms seem to indicate that our Will alone is responsible, but in consideration of the vast passages of the heart, it cannot be held responsible.

Bending our Will to bring about change results in a short-lived outcome. Yes, we can do pretty much anything for a while – some of us more so than others depending on the circumstance – but in the end, we all eventually come back to show our true colors, or the reality of our state of heart.

Our book’s author suggests that the Will is ‘the hinge on which decision is made’, ‘responding to the impulses’ of the things that influence it. Maybe a good description, but can we add that the Will – while it can be strained for a while to affect behavior – is really the outward-facing outcome we see as a result of the heart behind it?

Isa 50.7 states “But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have **set my face like a flint**, and I

know that I shall not be put to shame.”

Using the Will to support a behavior and hold it in place for the time being isn’t a bad thing. Isaiah has a courageous heart that rests in God’s help, and he sets his Will as a flint to assist in his intent – but it is not the seat of his intent.

Influencers of the Will - what drives our behavior Our author writes that the Will instead responds to 3 primary, underlying influences: The Mind, the Body, and the Social Context. These three things are all warped by our fallenness, the result of the

sin of us and in the world. Mind, Body
and Social Context are all creations of God, and were perfect when
created. The introduction of sin warped
these things, and we now respond accordingly.

Jesus, too, possesses these three things. In His sinless case, however, they remain
as
the 'Manufacturer' intended - and so is the outcome of His actions. Jesus' Saving
Work is the basis for seeing
these things redeemed back to their correct intent, and thus we can grow into
an increasingly closer awareness of God, and have a full life - "I came that
they may have life and have it abundantly." (John
10.10b)

Jesus' goal is that all three things in each follower would be brought
to heel, to increasingly be repaired and changed, back to the way Father
intended. This change is a cooperative
act of each believer responding to the initiating Grace of God, Who states He
wants us to repent and return to our original purpose of seeing, trusting,
valuing and Worshipping Him.

Understanding the cooperative nature of change is important. God does not change
us without our
participation, and we cannot change ourselves without God's Work of Grace. He
alone has the means to change the heart of
a cooperating believer of Christ.

Specifically, **the Mind**
relates to our worldview, our beliefs, our attitudes that drive our
responses. Our part is to hear his Word
and embrace the challenges to our differing perceptions, then to repent.

God's Grace = Giving of the Truth, His promise to help us gain wisdom. "If any of
you
lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach,
and it will be given him." James 1.5

Our cooperation = Read, strive to understand, work to recognize the use of the Word. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Rom 12.2

The Body - be it the flesh, emotions, desires - influences our decisions, often towards the wrong conclusions. Aside from the basic 'sins of the flesh' are pain-avoiding and pleasure-seeking influencers as we seek shortcuts to a false peace, and thus play out through the Will - Prov 30.7-9 "Two things I ask of You; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny You and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.", and, Prov 7.21-22 "With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast"

God's Grace = Jesus' instruction (command) on choosing Him over ourselves - "And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." Lk 9.23-24

Our cooperation = Choose to know Christ as superior to all other things - "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ" Phil 3.8-9

Social Context - We are in large part a product of our nurture, the outcome of the way

we were raised, that we live, and what people and their ideas - contrary to

Father's - that we embrace - Tim 1.3-4 "As I urged

you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge

certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves

to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the

stewardship from God that is by faith.", and, 2

John 6-7 "And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is

the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should

walk in it. For many deceivers have gone

out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the

flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.", and, 1 Cor 15.33 "Do not be

deceived: "Bad company ruins good

morals.""

God's Grace = A command that we separate from influences that we hold

more dear than God; that falsely inform us - "Whoever loves father or mother more

than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is

not worthy of me" Matt 10.37, and, "Whoever walks

with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." Prov 13.20

Our cooperation = Choose friendship with godly influencers who also fear

and pursue God - "As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan

was

knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." 1 Sam 18.1, and,

"A friend loves at all times, and a

brother is born for adversity." Prov 17.17,

and including Jesus, "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not

know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I

have heard from My Father I have made known to you." John 15.15

Father cares greatly about our Heart, because it is the seat of who we

are. He seeks those after His own heart

(David, per 1 Sam 13.14a). Our closeness to Him is in direct proportion

to our holiness. Yes, we are forgiven
and can stand before Him on Christ's Work.
But consider a life of seeing Him now through an active cooperation of
knowing his Word, repenting and being changed, and expecting to see Him.
"Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it
is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will
love him and manifest Myself to him." John
14.21

The Good and Beautiful Life - Introduction

04/09/2025

The Good and Beautiful Life may be a new book title, but it's not a new concept. Rather, it is a message at the center of Jesus' ministry and embraced by the Church through the centuries. Yet, it has seemingly been forgotten, beginning in the 20th century.