

Discerning Truth and Error about God’s Grace (Pt 6): How God Feels

I. FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS

- A. God feels different emotions related to how His people respond to Him. Some live confused not knowing whether God is mad, sad or glad when relating to them. We do not want to think God is mad when He is delighting over us, thus living in condemnation. Nor do we want to think He delights in us if He is grieved because of our compromise, thus living in presumption.
- B. We receive God’s grace or His righteousness, love and favor because of what Jesus did on the cross, not because of what we do (Rom. 3:21-31). However, we must repent to receive God’s grace. Repentance is a change of the attitude of the heart that turns from sin and to God according to the light of understanding that we have at each season of our spiritual journey.
- C. The pursuit of full obedience is different than attaining it. The Lord is pleased with us from the time that we set our heart to obey and long before our obedience matures. Those with sincere repentance quickly renew their war against the sin they just stumbled in. Sincere repentance is still weak and flawed yet the Lord values it.
- D. Spiritual immaturity is not the same as rebellion. At times they look the same outwardly yet inwardly they arise from very different heart responses. God looks at the heart. The immature sincerely repents in each area of failure that they receive light on. Rebellion says “No” to God without immediate plans to obey. God is angry at rebellion. Pre-meditated sin is sin that is planned out beforehand. It is more than weakness because it has an element of rebellion in it.

II. GOD LOVES UNBELIEVERS

- A. God loves unbelievers even when they have no regard for Him (Jn. 3:16; Mt. 5:45).
¹⁶ God so loved the world that He gave His only...Son that whoever believes... (Jn. 3:16)
- B. God gives blessings to evil people. We do not mistake God’s blessing with God’s approval.
⁴⁵ Makes His sun rise on the evil and the good...sends rain on the just and unjust. (Mt. 5:45)

III. GOD ENJOYS AND DELIGHTS IN BELIEVERS

- A. God loves unbelievers. However, God enjoys believers as they repent or agree with Him.
¹⁹ He delivered me (David) because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)
- B. God rejoices over us in the way a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.
⁴ You shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you...⁵ As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4-5)

- C. Jesus immediately rejoices over us at the time of our repentance. He smiles over us when we begin the growth process with sincere repentance, long before we attain spiritual maturity.
⁴ What man...having a hundred sheep...does not leave the ninety-nine...and go after the one...? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing...6 he calls together his friends...saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents... (Lk. 15:4-7)
- D. God smiles over our life in a general sense, while He deals with particular sins in us. One area of immaturity does not define our entire relationship with God. We are defined by God's passion for us, receiving the gift of righteousness, and by our sincere heart cry to be a wholehearted lover of God. The Holy Spirit imparts a deep "yes" in our spirit if we yield to Him.
- E. When our love for God is weak it can still be true. Weak love for God is not false love. As genuine lovers of God we do not immediately attain to all the obedience that we seek to walk in. Our most sincere efforts to love God are flawed. We are lovely to God even in our weakness.
⁵ I am dark (in my heart), but lovely (to God because of Jesus)... (Song 1:5)

IV. GOD DELIGHTS IN GIVING US COMPASSION OR IN SHOWING US MERCY

- A. Jesus feels compassion over the prodigals on the day they repent. God revealed His enjoyment of the prodigal son by the father giving him the best robes (Lk. 15:22). This newly repentant yet immature prodigal son had many areas of his life that still needed transformation.
¹⁸ "I will...say to him, "Father, I have sinned..." 20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 22 The father said to his servants, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet..." (Lk. 15:18-22)
- B. God delights in showing us mercy. He wants us confident that He enjoys us (even in our weakness) as we walk in sincere repentance. Then we run to Him instead of from Him.
¹⁸ He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)
- C. The revelation of God's tender love gives us confidence that we can stand boldly before God. God gives a repentant believer a new beginning as a "first class citizen" each time they repent. Guilt says that our actions are wrong. Shame says we (whole person) are wrong.
²² Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. (Lam. 3:22-23)
- D. We "push delete" after we have sincerely repented. Jesus paid the price that we might stand before God with confidence of having His favor. This is very different from "pushing delete" on our need to understand why and how we sinned. With confidence that God enjoys us during the process of maturing, we embrace spiritual disciplines and work through the sin issues in our heart with more consistency because we view conviction of our sin differently. It feels like God's tender love for us instead of condemnation.

- E. God understands our weaknesses far more than we do. He does not discipline us to the degree that we deserve nor does He change the way He feels about us as our weaknesses manifest.
- ¹¹ *For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him...¹⁴ For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps. 103:11-14)*
- ³⁸ *Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath; ³⁹ For He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away... (Ps. 78:38-39)*

V. GOD'S ENJOYMENT IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS APPROVAL

- A. God's enjoyment of a believer is not the same as His approval of what they do. The fact that God likes us does not mean He overlooks all the areas of our lives that need change. He corrects areas in our life that He disapproves of in order to remove that which hinders love from growing in us.
- ¹⁰ *He (disciplines us) for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (Heb. 12:10)*
- B. God has tender patience for a season with believers who do not quickly repent. They must not confuse this with His approval. Jesus gave Jezebel and her disciples in Thyatira time to repent.
- ²¹ *I gave her (Jezebel) time to repent of her immorality...²² I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent... (Rev. 2:21-22)*
- C. Divine correction is not rejection but is proof of His love. God hates the sin yet delights in the person He disciplines. To be disciplined means God cares and has not given up on us.
- ¹⁹ *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:19)*
- ¹² *Whom the LORD loves He corrects, as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)*
- D. It is a terrible thing to “get away with” sin long term because that means God is giving that person over to their sin. God's discipline is proof that He has not given up on us (Rom. 1:24-28).
- ²⁴ *God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts... (Rom. 1:24)*
- ³² *When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:32)*
- E. God feels our pain in the times that we receive His discipline in our lives.
- ⁹ *In all their affliction He was afflicted...in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. (Isa 63:9)*
- F. God is grieved or sick at heart over lukewarm believers who despise His love and goodness.
- ¹⁶ *Because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth. (Rev. 3:16-17)*
- ³⁰ *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. (Eph. 4:30)*
- ¹⁹ *Do not quench the Spirit. (1 Thes. 5:19)*

VI. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES DO NOT EARN US GOD'S FAVOR

- A. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our heart we are not loved less by God but we do suffer loss in several ways. We minimize our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, the spirit of revelation, God's power, fellowship with God and others, and receiving eternal rewards.
- B. God's grace not only gives us confidence in His love, but also in His zeal or jealousy for our holiness. God's jealousy for us requires that we live in wholehearted love and spiritual discipline. He insists on that which deepens our relationship with Him and results in our greatness.
- ⁵ *Do you think the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit...in us yearns jealously"? (Jas 4:5)*
- ¹⁴ *For the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14)*
- C. Spiritual disciplines do not earn us God's favor but give us the opportunity to show our value of the relationship. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for relationship with Him. God sees our hunger for Him as our love for Him.
- D. Jesus discloses Himself to us based on our responses of love and desire for Him. God gives more to our heart but does not love us more when we live in spiritual disciplines.
- ²¹ *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...and I will manifest Myself to him. 23 If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn 14:21-23)*

VII. GOD IS ANGRY AT REBELLION.

- ¹¹ *God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day. (Ps. 7:11)*
- ¹¹ *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn...and live. (Ezek. 33:11)*

VIII. SUMMARY

- A. There are three different mindsets in the Church today. First, some teach high standards of holiness yet with an impatient and intolerant God (mean God). Second, some teach low standards of holiness with a very gracious all accepting God (kind God). Finally, the Scripture exhorts us to teach high standards of holiness that war against sin in our relationship with a very kind God.
- B. There are three different responses to sin in the Church today. **Response #1**, Sin is not important (this is the compromise of the liberal). In other words, God understands and overlooks sin without disciplining the one who sins. **Response #2**, Sin is the most important reality about you (this is the error of religious legalism). In other words, sin is too important in that your sin defines you more than God's grace because it is more powerful before God. **Response #3**, Sin is serious, but if repented of it is forgiven and thus not as powerful as God's grace. Gratitude for receiving grace motivates us to seek God with wholeheartedness.