

God's good pleasure *for* the Church & God's good pleasure *in* the Church

I am overwhelmed with the first chapter of Ephesians. It shows how greatly God desires the church. God determined before the foundation of the world to have the Church Class. Before the foundation of the world, God thought of the blessings He would bestow upon the Church this side of the veil and beyond. Before the foundation of the world, God was also meditating upon the joys He would personally receive from the Church.

Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ--all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

With all the trials, hurts and disasters, **all** of you up until now, have experienced. How many of you regret the Christian life? None I am sure.

Why not? Like Br. Paul we thank the Lord for the “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” that far off-set the tragedies and/or gave meaning to those tragedies.

*V.4 According as he hath chosen us **in him** (in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

“In him” or in Christ in V.4 refers to the Body of Christ. Before the foundation of the world—before God created man, God chose to have **the body of Christ** who would be “holy and without blame before him in love”. We could apply “before Him in love” to our present justified standing. But, because of the following verses I believe “standing before Him in love” refers to our eternal **loving** relation with God beyond the veil.

Again, how could we develop this holiness and love without those trials we just spoke about? But, we know, there are overwhelming compensation.

Verses 5 & 9 uses one Greek word- St. # 2107 -for the two-word phase “good pleasure” in connection God's will or purpose. I'm not a Strong Concordance fan. I prefer other Gk. Dictionaries, but Strong is the most definitive on the Gk. for “good pleasure.”

Strong deals with both the objective and subjective use of “good pleasure.” V.5 deals with its objective use concerning the Church. V.9 shows its subjective use relating to God.

V.5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will—according to the good pleasure of His will,

In V.5 “good pleasure” is used **objectively**, according to Strong, to denote the **kindness** God is bestowing on the Church as they fulfill God's predestinated will or purpose for them.

We enjoy many aspects of the **kindness** of God as we fulfill His predestinated Purpose for the Church both this the veil and throughout eternity.

*V. 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his **good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:***

This is incredible. Here St. #2107 “good pleasure” is used in the **subjective** sense to denote, according to Strong, the **delight God** enjoys from the Church.

In V.9 Paul speaks of the “mystery of His (God’s) will” or purpose. In Col. 1:27 Paul identifies this mystery of God’s will or purpose as the mystery hidden for ages and generations, which is “Christ in you the hope of glory.”

The mystery is—we are Christ. Christ is more than one. There are many members in Christ. The **body of Christ is the mystery of Eph. 1:9.**

This mystery class—**the Christ**—will bring “good pleasure” Gk. **Delight** to God. Actually as we will see later—much, much **delight** to God. It boggles my mind. Think of it. God predestinated the church to be a great source of delight to Himself.

This reminds me of the NASV on Psalm 16:3

*“As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is **all my delight.**”*

Isn’t that mind-boggling? We will hang that thread and come back to it.

One of the “good pleasures” from God that we have enjoyed this side the veil is the fellowship of saints.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF SAINTS

Whether a few years or over half a century your fellowship has been precious. The following is a bouquet of scriptures that emits the fragrance of this fellowship.

1 John 1:5,7 God is light, and in him is no darkness at all....But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...

What a joy to walk *together in the light of Present Truth*—sharing its joys, its comforts and its responsibilities—as we watched the world disintegrate around us.

2 Corinthians 7:3 You are in our hearts to die together and live together.

Over the years, we observed your zeal in dying daily, as you lived and grew as a new creature. In our hearts, we *died together and lived together* with you —sometimes with tears.

Philippians 1:4,5, 7 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now... I have you in my heart; inasmuch as in my bonds... ye all are partakers of my grace.

Through *prayer fellowship*, by the Lord's bookkeeping, the Philippians were partners with Paul in prison. Through *pray fellowship* we have mutually shared each others joys, opportunities of service, trials and at times tragedies.

2 Corinthians 4: 12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

At times, *your sacrificial services* on our behalf brought *life and strength to us* as new creatures. We cherished the times sacrificial “death worked in us, but life in you.”

Philippians 2:17, 18 Yea, and if I be offered(poured) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

We can understand Paul's joy in being apart of the Philippians' sacrifice and service because we have experienced the *joy of sacrificing together with you* in the King's service.

1 Thessalonians 3:7, 8 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

WE thank the Lord for all the times *your steadfastness* in the Lord and the Truth *inspired us to live more vigorously* as new creatures.

We rejoice to have shared so much of the Scriptural meaning of the past century with you but the best is yet to come.

1Thessalonians 2:19,20 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his presence? For ye are our glory and joy.

Like Brother Paul we cannot think of receiving the crown of life alone — without our brethren. “*For ye are our glory and joy.*” Until then—let us pray together and walk together in Truth and love.

Back to meeting the Heavenly Father and Eph. 1:9

Eph. 1:9 *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in **himself**:*

As we said before it boggles my mind, but the reality is God has predestinated the mystery class, the glorified Christ, to be a source of great delight to **Himself**.

Eph. 1:18 *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his [God's] calling [to us], and what the riches of the glory of His [God's] inheritance in the saints,*

Many have missed the point of this scripture completely. And the reason is because it is so awesome. Can you grasp this—**God views the church as His inheritance.**

Zeph. 3:17 *The LORD thy God in the midst[St.#7130 nearest (at home with)] thee is mighty; he will save[St.#3467 succor], he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love[for the church], he will joy over thee with singing.*

Read these phrases slowly. Let them sink in. Zeph. 3;17 outlines—

The Good Pleasure of God that He has reserved for Himself.

God will sing love songs to the Church throughout eternity. I think this means that the Heavenly Father will enjoy sharing with the Church His innermost sentiments and emotions of love throughout eternity well he is at home with the church—resting lovingly in the mist of them.

Now I am going to read a group of scriptures concerning God's estranged relationship with Israel that gives just a slight insight into the depth of God's love—the depth of God's tenderness and compassion, depths of His loving understanding, depths of His longsuffering, His nostalgia as He longs for reconciliation.

A Glimpse Into The Incredible Sensitivities of God's Love

Hosea 9:10; 11:1 (NRSV)

Like [as pleasing as] grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel,
Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season,
I saw your ancestors...
When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.

What tenderness—while God is punishing Israel, He recalls how He first loved Israel as a son while back in Egypt. Then in the wilderness, Israel was as refreshing as a cluster of luscious grapes. Yet, the more God dealt with Israel the more they disobeyed.

Hosea 11:2-4 (NRSV)

The more I called them, the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms;
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.

God continues His expressions of nostalgia. Do you enjoy remembering when you taught your child to walk? Do you remember that warm wonderful feeling when you would lift your infant child in your arms and touch their cheek to yours? God is saying—this is how I felt about Israel even while they were disobeying me.

Israel continued to pervert the laws of God. Severer punishment must be inflicted, but not without its toll on God. God's heart sinks to the depths of sorrow. As he withdraws his loving protection, God exclaims in **Jer. 12:7**, “ I have given the *dearly beloved of my heart* into the hand of her enemies.”

They were scattered to the ends of the earth. God's punishment is most severe upon Ephraim, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. But the Creator and God of the Universe is suffering with Ephraim in this dispersion, as noted in God's further expressions of nostalgia.

Jer. 31:20-21 (JPS)

Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me, a child that is dandled!
Whenever I have turned against him, my thoughts would dwell on him still.
That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love.
Declares the LORD.

Have you ever dandled your child on your knee? Even while Ephraim (Israel), is cast off from favor, God's thoughts in tender nostalgia continue to dwell on Israel. With a yearning heart, God speaks of Israel as a son who will be received back in love.

What insights into the depths of the tenderness of God's love! *In R. 1832 Br. Russell observed that God had the ability to actually feel emotionally the tragedies of man.* Of course, as Br. Russell observed, we realize that God's ability to actually emotionally feel the tragedies of man—even those resulting from man's disobedience—does not disturb His peace of mind. His fatherly love that shares the sorrows of His human family contains no anxiety over their eternal welfare. With divine serenity His wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all and in His serenity He knows His Divine love and power will attain that end.

Decades ago when I first read R. 1832, I began searching for a set of scriptures that would say more than, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whomsoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," etc. —scriptures that would spell out in emotional words the depths of His emotions. When I finally put these scriptures together, tears welled up in my eyes. I scarcely mention them, because so often the reaction has been a shrug of the shoulders. **But these scriptures are very precious to me.**

Do we have the sensitivity to appreciate these holy emotions of God's love? We need to develop not only love, sympathy, etc., but a great sensitivity of love, sympathy, tenderness, and understanding. God wants a Divine family with whom He can share His eternal feelings. I think God will want to share so much with the Divine family that He knows intelligent beings on other planes could not have the sensitivity to understand, let alone appreciate.

In the flow of Divine conversation with the church throughout eternity, I think God will share the tragedies of history with us. What the Heavenly Father felt when Lucifer rebelled, even though God knew he would. After all, they probably dwelt together for eons. Remember how Jesus loved Judas to the end? What He felt after daily talking with Adam in the cool of the evening, only to experience that Adam loved Eve more than his Heavenly Father. What He felt in His aching heart as He watched His only begotten Son, with whom He worked together for eons, creating the universe, suffering at the hands of sinners.

God will share with us what He thought, as a God of justice when, also as a loving Father, He turned His face from fellowship with His Son. How those piercing words—"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—cut deeply into His already suffering fatherly heart. What a relief for the Father accompanied the words, "It is finished," and a surge of joy received the words, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Yes, I believe this was all a part of what Br. Russell meant in his oft-quoted statement, "With what fatherly emotions the Father sent His Son on that errand of mercy."

I think the Heavenly Father will want to share with the glorified Church all these fatherly emotions of love. It will be a joy to the Heavenly Father that the Church will have the capacity, the sensitivity of heart to understand their Father's emotions of love.

I hope this little glimpse of eternity will spur you on in the Narrow Way.

Failure is *Never* Final—*If*

The past year, month or week might have been a partial failure—even a complete failure—but remember tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your new creature life. If there is sorrow or pain in your heart, don't suppress it. Do your grieving now. Face, accept, and resolve your pain; get up even if you have to drag yourself up, and go on. To do this effectively, there are several valuable qualities you need to have.

Give God a chance. If you feel like you have failed or believe you've done wrong, ask God to forgive you—**and be sure to forgive yourself.** Then turn your failure into a stepping-stone in your development as a new creature. Use your failure as David did to gain insights into your fallen human nature so that you will be able to understand and help others now and in the Kingdom. Psalm 51—vs. 13, 19 (Kingdom)

Have the right attitude. Attitude is what makes the difference between a painful experience becoming a failure or a success. You can let the failure leave you timid and afraid to step out again for fear of being hurt or you can determine that your failure will be your teacher.

You can allow your failures to hurt you or help you. True, you need mountaintop experiences from time to time to give you encouragement, but you don't grow through these. It is in the valley of your disappointments and through your failures that you are given the opportunity to take stock of your new creature life and move toward a greater level of growth and maturity.

Remember that failure is an event, not a person. Because you may have failed in your marriage or job, in another relationship, or other situation in the narrow way, doesn't mean that you are a failure as a person. *Not at all.* Realize that the only real failure is not to try, or **not to keep on trying**, or not to get up one more time. The important thing is to learn from your past, to use it as an opportunity to grow, and to move ahead. Remember, a just man falls seven times but rises up again. Proverbs 24:16

When a bone is broken and heals, *that healed break* becomes the strongest part of the bone. The same is true of your broken or failed experience—where you have been hurt, have fallen and failed, or are afraid. When you bring these to God for His healing, *His strength* is made *perfect* in *your weakness*. 2 Corinthians 12:9

