

The Pleasure of the Lord.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief: Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand " (Isa. 53: 10).

Hamilton Smith

(Extracted from Scripture Truth Vol. 42, 1965-7, pages 194-9)

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Three great truths stand out clearly in the above words of the prophet Isaiah. First, it is revealed that God has His pleasure; secondly, we are told that the pleasure of the LORD is going to prosper; thirdly, we learn, that the pleasure of the LORD will prosper in the hand of one Person — the Lord Jesus Christ.

From the beginning of the world's history, God has had His pleasure, but it has not prospered in the hands of men. There have been men of God, who, on occasions, have done great deeds, and in particular acts have wrought the will of God; yet it could not be said that the pleasure of the LORD had prospered throughout the ages. All things were created for God's pleasure (Revelation 4: 11); but sin marred the fair creation. In Noah God established government to restrain the evil of the world; but at once God's pleasure is set aside, for the one who was set to govern others failed to govern himself. The law was given to regulate man's conduct toward God and his neighbour, to secure the blessing of man on the earth; but at the outset man breaks the law with the golden calf. God establishes a priestly order to intercede with Himself on behalf of guilty man; at once the priest fails by offering false incense. God institutes royalty, and the kings lead the people into idolatry. God sends prophets to recall the people to Himself, and they stone the prophets. He places the government of the world in the hands of the Gentiles, and they use their power to exalt themselves. At last God sends His Son, and the Kings of the earth and the rulers of the Jews take counsel together against the LORD and His anointed. They nail the Messiah to the Cross. Thus it becomes manifest that the pleasure of the LORD has not prospered in the hands of men. Nevertheless the words of the prophet remain in all their inspired force; the pleasure of the LORD is going to prosper, but it will be in the hands of one Man, CHRIST.

Fixing then our gaze upon Christ we shall see, first, that the pleasure of God for man is set forth in absolute perfection *in Christ*: secondly, we shall learn that the pleasure of God is secured *by Christ*.

THE PLEASURE OF GOD SET FORTH IN CHRIST

To see the pleasure of God set forth in Christ, we need, first of all, to look back, and " consider Him" where He was in the midst of a world of sinners; then to look stedfastly on Jesus where He is in the glory of God.

Looking back at His wonderful pathway through this world we see the Lord Jesus, a Man amongst men, in whom God was well pleased. We hear Him say, "I do always those things that *please*

Him" (John 8: 29). In the midst of a world of sinners, who but one who is a Divine Person as well as perfect Man could utter such words? Others might say, " We desire to do the things that please God," but only the Son could say, "I do always those things that please Him." The One who speaks thus must be either the Son of God, or an impostor. This the Jews clearly understood; but, alas, refusing to own Him as a Divine Person, they are compelled to charge Him with being an impostor, for they say, "Thou hast a devil," and "then took they up stones to stone Him."

Faith, however, delights to own His glory, and see in Him "the Word become flesh," "the glory as of the Only begotten of the Father". Tracing His footsteps on earth as we see at last a Man according to the pleasure of the LORD. As one has said, " Men seek their own glory. He sought His Father's alone. Men do their own will; His Father's will was His only business.... Think of One who for three and thirty years of His sojourn on earth never did one thing to serve Himself, spare Himself, exalt Himself, but for every moment of His life *was* and *did spoke* and *thought*, and *felt*, exactly as God would have Him."

If then this blessed Person could truly say, "I do always those things that please Him," the Father could, with great delight, justify such words, for after those thirty years in private at Nazareth, the heavens open over Him, and the voice of the Father is heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And again, when the three and a half years of His public life draw to a close, we hear the Father's voice declaring on the Mount, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Thus at last we see on earth One who is altogether lovely and wholly for the pleasure of God. Moreover, as we look at Christ in His moral perfections, we see all that God desires to be set forth in a Man, and nothing short of His perfection will meet the pleasure of God for man. It is God's good pleasure to have a great company of people morally *like* Christ.

But we not only look back to see the moral perfection of Christ shining out in the midst of sinful men, in a world of sorrow and death, but we look up and see Jesus crowned with glory and honour in that scene where all tears are wiped away, where "there will be no more death neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain", and, as with Stephen we look up through the opened heavens, and see "the glory of God and Jesus" at the right hand of God, we see that it is the pleasure of God to have us with *Him*.

Thus as we look at Jesus, we see the pleasure of God set forth in Him. We see that it is God's pleasure to have a great company of people saved from the wreck and ruin of this fallen world to be *like Christ* in His moral perfection as set forth in His path down here, and to be with Christ where He is in that home of light and love.

THE PLEASURE OF GOD SECURED BY CHRIST

Alas! this wonderful presentation of the pleasure of God in Christ made manifest the true condition of man under the power of sin Satan, and death. The natural man desires to be left alone to go his own way, do his own will, and gratify his lusts. Naturally we prefer the pleasures of sin to the pleasure of God. The light of the presence of Christ only proved that men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. The light was too strong for sinful men, and so they rejected Christ, nailed Him to the Cross, and put out the light of the world.

Thus, as we look upon Christ in all His moral perfection — His holiness, love, grace, gentleness, patience, meekness, and lowliness — every trait of His lovely character, every word that fell from His lips, every act and every step in His perfect path, only convicts us of being exactly the opposite. How

then is it possible for God's pleasure to be secured by having a people who are morally *like* Christ, and suited to be with *Christ* in glory?

There is only one answer to this great question. The pleasure of God for man can only be secured by the death of the One who is altogether for His pleasure. This, indeed, was realised by the prophet Isaiah, for he says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." One has said that "He who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked was pleased to put His righteous Servant to grief — not, of course, because the death of agony was a pleasure to look upon, but as a means to the fulfilment of a great purpose". Thus immediately that great sacrifice is accomplished, the pleasure of the LORD begins to prosper. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin," and not till then, the pleasure of the LORD shall begin to prosper. Before God could secure, out of a world of sinners, a people made like to Christ for His pleasure, God's holiness had to be met and our sins removed. This great work was done when His soul was made an offering for sin, and "He was wounded for our transgressions". So, in the New Testament, we see the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, and we read. He "offered Himself without spot to God" to meet the holiness of God; and of believers it is written, "He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification."

This great work being foreseen by the prophet, he tells us the results that will follow. He says, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, *he shall see his seed*. For the natural man death would cut off all hope of a seed, but by death this blessed Man secures a seed. So we hear the Lord, Himself, saying, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12: 24). Thus He secures His seed - a spiritual seed — composed of a great host of the redeemed gathered out of all nations, who at last will sing the new song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5: 9).

Then we read, "*He shall prolong his days*." Death that ends the days of fallen man, becomes the means of prolonging the days of this perfect Man. What a seeming paradox is this! As one has said, "He is 'cut off from the land of the living'; is buried, and yet He shall live and have continuance of days." The resurrection is the glorious answer to this paradox. It is no part of the pleasure of God that man should lie under the sentence of death, any more than that he should come under judgment for his sins. We see Jesus delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, and we hear Him say, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I became dead, and behold *I am living for evermore*, and have the keys of death and of Hades." The Psalmist can say, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even *length of days for ever and ever*" (Psalm 21: 4). Thus we see the pleasure of the LORD, not only set forth in Christ, but secured by Christ.

We look on beyond all the failure of man and we see the day is coming when, as the result of all that Christ is, and all that He has done, the great host of the redeemed will be like Christ and with Christ. Then, indeed, the words of the prophet will be fulfilled, "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (N.T.). What a day of triumph will that be, when at last all His people are gathered home, when every trace of the wilderness journey is past, and they are presented to Christ all glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but are holy and without blemish. Then indeed, He will rise up and say, "I am satisfied", and the pleasure of the LORD will be accomplished. We shall be there "According to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1: 5, 6).

Such is the eternal pleasure of God for Christ and His people, that will be most surely accomplished. In the meantime, as we pass along our way to the glory, God is working in us both to

will and to do of *His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2: 13-16). It is God's good pleasure that even now there should be an answer in His people to all that He has purposed for them. It is His pleasure that the flesh with all its murmuring and reasonings should be set aside, secondly, that Christ morally should be displayed in us by a life that is blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke; thirdly, that we should be a witness for God by shining as lights in a dark world, and holding forth the word of life in a world of death. If then this is His good pleasure for believers while yet in this world, may we join with the Apostle in praying that we may be made perfect "in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is *well-pleasing* in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever" (Hebrews 12: 21).