

The Character of Christ

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[0:01] So, feelings and faith. Now, Borgman started his book, as we began last week, with a study of the character of God.

What we find is that God presents himself in Scripture as an emotional being, as a God who feels with intense emotion, various emotions, love and hate and grief and pleasure.

Delight and anger. Now, what was his theological reason for starting with the character of God when we're studying human emotion? Why study God?

Because man is made in his image. We are image bearers of this God. And so, in order to understand ourselves, we must first understand him in whose image we're made.

So, that was his reason for starting with the study of God. Now, there's a balancing perspective that's also much needed. It's like two wings on an airplane, and if we only have one, we're going to do a nosedive.

[1:09] Turn to Psalm 50 for this other balancing perspective. Psalm 50.

And God is speaking here to the wicked.

We see that in verse 16. Psalm 50 in verse 16. But to the wicked, God says, what right have you to recite my laws or to take my covenant on your lips?

You hate my instruction and cast my words behind you. When you see a thief, you join with him. You throw in your lot with adulterers. You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.

You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silent. You thought I was altogether like you.

[2:16] But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face. Because I didn't immediately destroy you when you were acting in such ungodly ways, but rather kept silent and was patient with you, you thought I didn't see your sin.

You thought I didn't care about your sin. You thought I wouldn't punish your sin. You thought I was altogether like you. You see his argument here? That's his charge.

You're thinking of me wrong. You think I'm like you. And this is not the only place where God makes this complaint of man. It's found often in Scripture that man is forever pulling God down to his level. Isaiah 29, 16. You turn things upside down. As if the potter were thought to be like the clay. And he charges them with thinking that he is like us.

And so we find in Scripture many places God saying, To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal? There's none like me. So we're warned then to be careful not to make God out in our image.

[3:40] To think he's just like us. So that's the counter balancing point. God is not like us. So do you see it?

The two truths guarding us from error. On the one hand, we are made in his likeness. And on the other, he is not like us.

He is like us. He's not like us. Are you thoroughly confused? Which is it? Well, it's both. And the Bible says both to us, doesn't it?

He's not exactly like anything or anybody.

And that's the very basic meaning of the word holiness. He's other than. He's not like anything or anyone. He's in a category all of his own.

[4:41] So, he must be the one to tell us then, in what ways we are like him, and in what ways he is not like us. Or else we'll go awry and we'll end up with a God of our own imagination.

And as we come to Scripture, we need to be aware of this tendency that we're constantly warned about, and that's to think he's like us. And to bring him down to our level.

Now, do you see what that has to do with our study of emotions? The danger is to impose our emotional experiences upon God. To think that his emotions are just like ours.

So, when this happens to me, I know how I feel. So, therefore, I know exactly how God feels when someone is doing this or that.

Oh, no, you don't. Because God is not like us, he tells us. So, it's important for us to remember both of those balancing truths.

[5:45] Now, it's so important to stay clear of this air of thinking God is like us that the old creeds and statements of faith seem to deny that God has emotions.

Turn in the back of your Trinity hymnal where we have the Westminster Confession of Faith. And chapter 2, it's found on the little page at the bottom, 674, of God and the Holy Trinity.

And it's paragraph 2, I'm sorry, paragraph 1. There is but only one living and true God.

674, yeah. Who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible without body, parts, or passions.

Do you see it? God is without passions. That's a statement that causes Brian Borgman to give a whole appendix to this question.

[7:19] What he calls, and what theologians have called, divine impassibility. Is God really without passions? As some of these old confessions of faith say, that he is.

And he explains it this way. The early Christians lived among polytheists. And their many gods were humanized gods.

They were an awful lot like us. They were petty. They were hot-tempered. They were lustful. They were moody.

They were mischievous. And the God of the Bible is not like that, is he? And to make the point that the one true God was not like their gods, these early Christian apologists said that God is impassable, without passions.

He doesn't lose his temper. He doesn't throw fits and unpredictable temper tantrums like their gods did. Nor is he subject to ever-changing mood swings like them.

[8:29] He's not moody. Aren't you glad he isn't? He's immutable. He's unchanging. He's ever the same.

Malachi 3.6 I, the Lord, do not change. How clear do you need to be? And changing emotions just didn't seem to jive with his unchangeableness.

So can you see why early apologists said that God is without passions? Without passions that seem to change. He's immutable. He's unchanging.

In seeking to protect God from the misunderstanding that he's changeable like us, they may have overstated the case and left a different misunderstanding as if God had no emotions at all.

And I say may because I'm not sure what they meant when they said God is without passions. Now our own confession of faith, the 1689 London Baptist confession of faith, as you know, follows the Westminster in many of its teachings and makes changes along the way where we have different views from the from the Presbyterians.

[9:44] But on this point it was the same. God is a God without passions. Now the updated language version that we use here at Grace Fellowship of faith to confess translates that God is without changeable feelings of men.

Now I find that helpful and I just say that to say that I'm not sure what the original writers meant by that. I'm sure if I gave more study to it we could learn more on that point.

But the important point to remember is that there are real differences between God's emotions and our emotions. That much at least we can see from this.

Maybe they overstated it but at least we've got to agree that God's emotions are not exactly like ours. There's never any sin involved in his emotion.

His emotions are always righteous because he is always righteous. They're always principled emotions. It's not just that something comes upon him and he acts out of himself.

[10:57] No, they're always in line with his perfect unchangeable holy nature. His emotions always reflect his unchanging nature and morality.

So we take his wrath as an example. His wrath is consistent. It's not just flying off the handle and you never know what mood he's in. No, it's a consistent emotion in God because it's rooted to his holiness.

And as John Murray says about the wrath of God, it is the inevitable reaction of the divine holiness against sin. Sin is the contradiction of God's being and he cannot but recoil against that which is the contradiction of himself.

This holy revulsion is his wrath and it's consistent. Every sin has this reaction of wrath within God. So that's a little different from our wrath, isn't it? Our wrath is usually an emotion out of control. We lose it. We lose our temper and very often it's when our desires are frustrated or when our supposed needs are not met then we fly off the handle.

[12 : 16] So I wanted respect and you didn't give it to me so bang, I'm full of rage. God has no need-based emotions because he does not need anything, the Bible tells us.

outside of himself. He has no frustrated desires because he does whatever pleases him. Psalm 101, 15, 3.

He has no uncontrollable emotions. His flooding the earth with rage in the day of Noah. That was not a sudden loss of temper. He decreed to do that from eternity past to express his wrath in that way.

And he even announced it to Noah 120 years before it happened. We think we're doing good if we can count to 10 before we blow up.

120 years before he announces it, before he finally expresses it. He is slow to anger. So, his emotions are not exactly like ours.

[13 : 28] But he does enter into relationships with his creatures in time and space. And he's emotionally involved with us.

And he has emotional responses to our changing behaviors. So, though he is not changing, he does have emotions that are responses to our changing behavior, all appropriate to his unchanging nature.

He delights in righteousness and he's displeased with sin. Well, after making all these allowances for the differences between his emotion and ours, we dare not deny his emotions altogether and try to play it so safe as to believe with some that God literally has no emotion or if we do that, we come up with a sub-biblical God.

It's a God not taught in the Bible because God shows us himself that he is a God of deep feeling. So, in the avoidance of the one ditch of saying that God is like us, we veer over into the other ditch where we say he is so unlike us that he doesn't have emotions like we do.

But there are hundreds of scripture texts that we must let say what they mean and not twist them.

So, in summary, God's emotions are different from our emotions but they are similar to man's emotions since man is made in God's likeness.

[15 : 07] God himself compares his emotions to human emotions. We saw that last week, didn't we? As a bridegroom delights in his bride, so I will delight in you.

God makes that comparison. As a father pities his children, so I pity those who love and fear me.

So, he himself has made that connection and I'm just saying that we need to be careful and let God tell us in what ways he's like us and in what ways he's not.

But he does have emotion. Charles Hodg says love of necessity involves feeling and if there be no feeling in God there can be no love. B.B.

Warfield said a God without an emotional life would be no God at all. So, that's all by way of review.

Any questions or discussion before we go on to chapters 2 and 3 this morning?

I think it's just a necessary balancing. Carl. Hmm. So, for all eternity before even God made the earth he has been an emotional being and within the persons of the trinity that love and delight was flowing freely between them.

[16 : 23] How different from the God of Islam. Good. There? Hmm. Hebrews 4 is not a God who is unable to sympathize with us.

Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Father is not unable to sympathize with us in our weaknesses and in all their afflictions he too was afflicted.

Good. All right. Well, so we start with the study of God wanting to know about human emotions.

That's where we're headed but first the foundation.

What is God like? We've been made in his image. Now we go on to what is the perfect God-man like? The living word Jesus Christ.

And so the character of Christ is next under purview because Jesus Christ is God in human flesh.

He's God he's man and as God he is the perfect reflection of the father and of this divine nature that

we've been studying he's the image of the invisible God the fullness of the deity dwells in him in bodily form so everything that we've just been studying about God is true of Jesus the emotions that God has is true of the Lord Jesus who is himself God but he is also the perfect man now that brings something new to the table it tells us he is as much man as I am a human being and that tells us that he shared in all our non sinful human emotions every one of them the full range so in watching

[18:18] Jesus Christ we're seeing what it means to be an emotional human being we're seeing more than just God has emotions now we get to see a real man and what he's like and his emotional makeup and what our emotions should look like because this is the man that we are to be conformed to John says in 1 John 2:6 whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did we must be conformed to him in our thoughts in our words in our actions and yes in our emotions our emotions are to conform to Christ as well now he's very brief on this point because when we come later to the specific emotions we're going to see Christ brought up at that point and his emotions as the model for our emotions as we study those specific emotions so that's the second point we're trying to understand who we are in our emotions we're made in

God we're made God so we study God the Lord Jesus is not only God he's man and so we're getting closer to man now we see a real man a perfect man and what emotion what part emotion played in his life and then he comes thirdly to the written word the written word that which is exhaled from the mouth of God and his point here is to simply say that the Bible does not read like an instruction manual it doesn't read like a catalog or a tax document just doling out facts in some emotionless way granted there are places where there are regulations that don't seem to be all that emotional but when you take the whole of God's word it is not an emotionless instruction manual is it no God speaks to us in the Bible with passion with emotion and that is reflecting his own emotions but he also speaks to us in a way to stir our emotions and to cause us to make a suitable response to what he has said to us with such passion

I don't know when the last time you've read the story of Joseph when he's down in Egypt and his brothers come for grain and it's toward the end and they're in the home there and they've had the meal and he's still keeping his identity hidden from his brothers and oh but it gets him and he's got to step out of the room for a while and he weeps and weeps and then he clears his face and he comes back into their presence until he can stand it no more and he just blurts out I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt I was on the stair master working out I just broke down crying this is emotional stuff you know he could have just put it very emotional less eventually

Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers end of story but he doesn't he takes us into the room and he puts Joseph there in the room with his brothers and we feel what Joseph feels That's the way he communicates with us and whose heart does not ache with David when he cries at the death of his son oh my son Absalom my son my son Absalom would that I had died instead of you oh Absalom my son my son you know it could have read like an obituary but instead he's grabbing for our emotions and the Bible is full of this God speaks to us as emotional beings he communicates with us in a way that grips our heart and moves our emotions as we said last week the prophets don't just say now you guilty of idolatry he rather says you're guilty of adultery and I'm the jilted lover you see he grabs the emotion in condemning the sin of idolatry the language is designed by God to reveal his own heart his own emotion and to move theirs and to move ours as we read the Bible so God has emotions and deep feelings that's the first thing secondly the son of God as perfect God and man exhibits powerful emotions thirdly the Bible itself which is what God exhales what comes out of his mouth is a book where God communicates with us in a way to reach our hearts to move our emotions and all of this ought to make us see that according to God our emotional state is an important aspect of who we are that's how he treats us in his word and since God does not ignore this aspect of our life neither should we so you see he's building his argument is called a biblical anthropology and the emotions well at last we come to a direct study of us men anthropology

[24:18] The study of man started with God the God man the written word now man but what is man? Anthropology answers that question or seeks to answer that question Charles Darwin's answer is that we're just a more developed ape and that evolutionary line is followed by the discovery channel the history channel nova and the greater number of textbooks and university scholars all knowledge falsely so called as the bible tags it Jost was reading the Princeton review I guess you don't read a book like that but it was a book called word smart building an educated

vocabulary so if she's using words out of your league then you'll know why she's reading this book it's a book to help expand your vocabulary okay if you're studying for the

SAT you need vocab this is the book to get and if you just want to impress your employer this is the book to get had the entry creationism this ought to be interesting a fallacious theory holding that the book of Genesis contains a literally accurate account of the beginning of the universe and origins of human beings not a theory we would expect that but a fallacious theory so this evolutionary understanding of man does not lead us to a true understanding of our emotions we will never understand our emotional makeup if we start with the fact that we are just a more highly advanced ape because apes aren't made in the image of God are they so we're off beat right away and I trust that you see then why why so much of human knowledge on the soul of man is is just knowledge so called folly because the foundation is wrong and so our author says we must continually ask what does the bible say about man we're going to study anthropology what is man we must come to the word of God and he says this quote what the bible says about us and who and what we are is not only the most important source of such information it is the sole authoritative source of information so you may go to the world and find a nugget of truth about the emotions but there is no authority there whatsoever the only authoritative word on what man is is found here when we're dealing with the soul when we're dealing with the issues of what is man the world in their blindness find as someone said even a blind pig can find an acorn or something once in a while but we come to the scriptures to have the truth set before us so the bible sets forth man in four distinct eras of history so it's not as easy as just saying what does the bible say about man well what phase of man do you want to talk about man as he came from the hand of the creator man as he was after the fall man as he was after redemption in christ or man as he will be in eternity in heaven and it's based on thomas boston's classic work human nature in its fourfold state so there's four states of human nature so what is man well let's go through the four states and we're looking especially to see what it will teach us about his emotions so man in his pre-fall state and you can read it in genesis 1 he's made in the image of god in the likeness of god he's made now what does this mean borgman says there is both something he's called to do and it's something that he is when he makes man in his image he says okay now you procreate and fill the earth and subdue the earth and this is something man is called to do man as image of god is to image god by exercising dominion being fruitful and filling the earth with other image bearers little glory reflectors of god man is to reflect god throughout the world in his god-given roles and responsibilities so that's the image of god is something that man does he's called to do but it's also something that he is he is the image of god and so by his very makeup his attributes his characteristics in the original creation reflected the image the character of god we are emotional beings because god is an emotional being and we are made in his image and so man was called to express emotions to image god in the world now in his pre fallen state he was perfect ecclesiastes 7:29 god made man upright upright morally perfect without sin so man came from the hand of god with all of his faculties working in perfect harmony as they were created to work the mind correctly perceived truth and reality there was no distortion as man looked out on his world he saw it as it really is no deception his emotions properly responded to the truth and to the reality that he saw and his will in turn was properly motivated by his perfect emotions stirred by truth

Thomas Boston sums up man's understanding was a lamp of light his mind was a lamp of light his will in all things was agreeable with the will of God his affections his emotions were orderly pure and holy man's affections were pure from all defilement free from all disorder and distemper because in all their motions they were subjected to his clear reason and his holy will so emotions were directed by clear reason and holy will to do the will of God everything working as God intended not one emotion out of place now that was only true of the first parents Adam and Eve and it didn't last for long so we come to the second phase in the history of man man in his fallen state when Adam and Eve fell into sin by disobeying God they plunged all their descendants into sin and so we receive two things from Adam condemnation and death that's one thing the condemnation of death and a nature that's polluted by sin we're totally depraved that doesn't mean we are as evil as we could be it means that depravity and sin has infected the whole of man not just a part of man it's not just that that sin has affected a little corner of man no it's it's leaven that has gone through the whole lump and there's not a part of man anymore that is not infected by sin all his faculties his mind as it thinks his will as it chooses his affections as he desires and his emotions it's all put out of order and so the mind that used to see things clearly is now darkened the scriptures say and they don't it

doesn't see things as it as they really are and it's controlled by an anti-God bias and enmity against God

[33:10] Romans 8 7 and we set up ourselves as the determiners of truth and reality and we declare our our autonomy our intellectual autonomy and independence from God I am the wise one and I determine what my truth is that was the mind you see it was affected the emotions they became perverted and twisted by sin so that we love darkness rather than light John 3 19 we love sin and we hate God you see the whole thing's twisted we love what we ought to hate and we hate what we ought to love sin did that and it did it to every one of us so that our emotions are all a stir and all a mix we enjoy the rotting roadkill of sin and we're repulsed by the T-bone stake of divine joys Borgman and then what about our will that faculty of choice remember sin does not just affect a part of man just his mind just his emotions no it's shot right through his will too is now in bondage to sin to his own nature and so that faculty of choice is dominated by sin we're unwilling and unable

Romans 8 7 says unwilling and unable to submit ourselves to God's law our will refuses to go God's way and that's why we choose to go our way and would have all the way to hell the proper relationship of our emotions to our mind as it thinks and to our will as it chooses got all out of order so that what we find is that emotions can now overpower our mind we know that we shouldn't do that but we do it anyway because we want to and we feel like it things are out of order the emotions are out of line when they determine what we will and will not believe that that doctrine of God just doesn't feel right with me that's sin that's wrong that's out of place when our emotions determine what we will and will not do what we will and will not believe the emotions have gone awry and that's what the bible teaches us about man in his fallen state and man's sin and guilt creates all kinds of emotional baggage that he never knew before doesn't it so David talks about his bones wasting away he'd sinned and he was quiet he would not confess his sin his health is gone his bones waste away he's groaning all day long day and night

God's hand was heavy on me my strength was sapped as in the day of in the heat of summer his sin had physical manifestations it had emotional manifestations many find their way into doctors offices and drug stores trying to deal with the emotional upheaval of sin and guilt its effects upon man's soul so we talk of people being worried sick don't we that's more true than you may have realized emotions have not somehow escaped the fall sin has polluted and affected them all and that's why they can be such a source of temptation and trouble to us so man as he came from the hand of God man after the fall what about man in his regenerate state God's work of salvation is a work on the whole person does sin creep into every part of man the redeeming grace of Christ follows sin to every atom of man's being we sing it at Christmas don't we he makes his blessings flow as far as the curse is found and the curse found its way into my mind my will my emotions and regenerating grace goes just as far the mind the will the emotions and so our minds are being renewed

Romans 12 2 they're being put back into touch with reality our wills are being brought into conformity with God's will he is working in us both to will and to do according to his pleasure and our emotions as well are being reconstructed and redirected back into their proper place and harmony with the mind and will so in regeneration the emotions are touched and regeneration always manifests itself in godly emotions we've been memorizing some of them in the beatitudes blessed are the poor in spirit it's an emotionally low man his view of himself is a low view regeneration causes that and so regeneration is the renewal project of the soul begun now it's not perfected is it it's not perfected yet at this stage and so we'll see some of the old fighting with some of the new but the change has begun it's a radical change although not yet a perfect change and so the fruit of the spirit love joy peace those are emotions folks and those begin to be produced in us by the holy spirit mourning and grief and hatred for sin love for christ his words people his day you see the radical transformation has begun and then we come to the last the fourth stage man in his future his eternal state and only then will this process be completed then we shall be where we should be would be and then we shall be what we should be things that are not now nor could be soon will be our own for when we see him we'll be made like him and that likeness to christ will perfect our minds never again another deceitful thought proud thought never again an emotion out of place never again the will ever choosing anything but righteousness and that will be our condition forever so where are you today that's just the broad view of anthropology what is man we're not in the garden we're after the fall are some of you still there then you saw yourself most of us are after regeneration the work begun going on and that's where we live and we live in anticipation of a day

when our emotions will be completely healed and put right but until then we lay hold of our unique opportunity right now to glorify

God by exhibiting emotions that are like the Lord Jesus in a fallen unholy world this is our opportunity to glorify God as his likeness is radiated out from us even in the area of our emotions well our time is gone Pastor Jason will be bringing the next couple lessons on the emotions as we continue next week so be praying for him we're dismissed