

The Pleasure of God in Bruising His Son

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Preacher: David Wesner

[0:00] Well, in the past weeks we've been considering various aspects of the pleasure of God from John Piper's book, *The Pleasure of God*, *Pleasures of God*.

! And this morning we're coming to the chapter, *The Pleasure of God and Bruising His Son*. But first, just in review, we've seen that God takes pleasure in many items, including in His Son, in His fame.

He aims to make a name for Himself. In creation, He derives pleasure from what He's made, in the very things He's made themselves.

In election, He delights to reveal the glory of His Son to sinners. And as Piper says, in election, the Bible pictures Him choosing God-belittling sinners for His court and rejoicing over the very people who have despised His glory and cheapened His name.

Why would God delight to you sinners? Well, that question goes to the heart of our topic for this morning. *The Pleasure of God and Bruising His Son*.

[1:12] But Piper's chapter title assumes the answer to a fundamental question, and that question is, Who killed Jesus? Please turn to Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53. Who killed Jesus? Well, we could say the Jews did.

Narrowing it a little further, we could say the Pharisees were the ones who killed Jesus. We might put it on Pilate. We could say Satan.

Again, Scripture even reminds us that we had a part in it, and all of these things are true. But ultimately, it was God who killed Jesus.

Acts 2.23 says, where Peter was giving his sermon at Pentecost, This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

[2:16] Ultimately, it was God who had his hand in it. Look at Isaiah 53.10. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. Well, from this passage, it's obviously clear on the surface that it was God's will to crush his son.

He's sovereign, and he does whatever he wills. But was it his pleasure to crush his son? Now, that's a totally different kind of question, isn't it? It may be a parent's will to discipline their child, but we would say that they may need to go to a psychiatrist, or at least to Scripture, if they take delight and pleasure in having to bring discipline to that child.

But that's exactly what Isaiah 53.10 is saying, even though the translators changed the word in order to make it more palatable to our sensibilities. How do we know that?

Well, consider two other passages. Turn back to Isaiah 1.11. Isaiah 1.11. Same word is used here. The multitude of your sacrifices, what are they to me?

[3:42] Says the Lord. I have more than enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened animals. I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

That's our word. No pleasure. It's not no will. That wouldn't make sense. He takes no pleasure in these things. Let's turn forward in Isaiah to Isaiah 62.4.

Isaiah 62.4. No longer will they call you deserted or name your land desolate, but you will be called Hephzibah, a figurative name for my delight is in her, and your land Beulah, a figurative expression for Palestine restored to God's blessing.

For the Lord will, here's our word, take delight in you and your land will be married. So going back to Isaiah 53.10, this is prophesying that the Lord's pleasure is to crush, crucify his son, and then to resurrect him, prolong his days.

So this brings us then to the next question in the heart of today's lesson. Why was God pleased to kill Jesus? Why was God pleased to kill Jesus?

[5:18] Well, all evangelically educated Christians know the first reason to this question, and that's related to the good news of the gospel, that he was killed to please Jesus to justify sinners.

And that's our first point, to justify sinners. Look back at Isaiah 53.6 again. God was pleased to kill Jesus because through his death, the salvation of his people was secured.

We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And keep your place, your finger, if we turn in Isaiah, because we're going to keep coming back there.

What's iniquity? Well, it's sin. What is sin? Well, it's at this point that the story told by different religions starts to separate.

And even within different quarters of Christianity, the waters start getting muddy, don't they? What is sin? Man has a way of taking the edge off of sin. But to appreciate the glory of the cross, we must appreciate the vileness of sin.

[6:36] Every religious book speaks of man's propensity to do bad things and has some kind of an answer or a solution to that. But where the Bible becomes unique is in its universally hopeless conclusion regarding man's rebellion and against his God, his personal inability to do anything about it.

Rather than presenting man as having made a few mistakes along the way, which may be offset through some good deeds that he may be able to accomplish, maybe some religious practices, the Bible reveals man to be alarmingly self-centered and self-seeking.

In other words, the Bible claims that every human being is born into this world with an insatiable lust for self-glory and power. Again, Isaiah 53, 6, we all like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to his own way. That's the essence of sin. God's the captain of the universe. As its creator, he has the right to make all the rules and to demand total allegiance and complete obedience by every single one of his creatures.

Why does man find this requirement so repulsive? Well, that's the root of sin.

[8:00] That's the root of the issue. That very repulsiveness that we all feel is screaming to us, we are sinners, and telling us what sin is. It isn't that I lied, necessarily, though that is sin.

It isn't that I did some bad thing to my brother. At its root, it's this rebellious spirit. Go to any playground, and with a little observation, you're going to very quickly see the pecking order among those children, aren't you?

Why? Because from the earliest age on, we all have this desire to be on top. We all want to be king of the mountain. We all want to be boss. It's the root cause of playground tussles, and also the cause of world wars.

Pity the younger brother or sister of the child who ends up at the bottom of the pecking order on the playground, because that child will take it out on the younger brother and sister, and make sure they know who's boss.

This propensity continues into teenage years. It's what fuels the gangs, and many of the problems we have in the teenage years. As we enter the workforce, we become more sophisticated, but that same drive is still there.

[9:16] We all want control and power. Anyone who's worked for more than a few years knows the emotional struggle we go through when we're passed over for a promotion that we think we deserve. Why?

What difference does it make? Well, the difference is, rooted deep in our soul, is this desire for power, fame, control. We want people to serve us.

We want the glory. That is what is so evil about sin. This instinctive nature to be top dog is the opposite of the spirit honored by God.

What does he tell us he honors? One who's humble, broken, submissive, a servant. We can go on and on with the synonyms.

That's what God desires. That's the example Jesus gave while he walked the earth. Here's the point. All of us are rebels against our creator of the first order. And anyone who chooses to ignore God's commands is a mutant.

[10:20] Every sin is nothing less than lawlessness, an act of high treason against our commander-in-chief. 1 John 3, 4, everyone who sins breaks the law.

In fact, sin is lawlessness. It's as if the ship's captain says, mate, let down the anchor. And we say, no, I'm going to throw over a hook and go fishing. Such rebellion is intolerable.

And every one of us, by daily choosing to ignore God's claims in our life in a thousand different ways, is declaring ourselves to be rebels against our creator. John Piper summarizes our sin in this way.

We have exchanged the glory of God for something else, for images of glory, like a new home or car or VCR or computers or vacation days or impressive resumes or whatever makes our ticker tick more than the wonder of God's glory.

But for the cross to make sense, we must marry correct understanding of sin to proper appreciation for God's righteousness. And that brings us to the second point of why was God pleased to kill Jesus and that is to demonstrate the glory of his righteousness.

[11 : 33] To demonstrate the glory of his righteousness. Justice is a crucial aspect of God's character. God is just.

That's just a statement of fact. Genesis 18, 25, will not the judge of all the earth do right? And the very definition of justice is that those who are innocent are exonerated and those who are guilty are condemned.

Proverbs 17, 15, acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent. The Lord detests them both. Well, why can't God just forgive?

Because it calls into question his righteousness. Piper says, the reason God's righteousness is impugned when he passes over sin and does not judge it is that sin is an attack on the worth of his glory and God's righteousness is his unswerving commitment to uphold the worth of his glory and promote its fame in all the world.

If that didn't click with you, let me approach it from a slightly different angle. In a day where slander and character assassination, especially just coming out of the elections, is considered acceptable and normal, I would say that we might have a tendency to minimize this offense.

[12 : 56] But let me just ask you something. What is of greater worth than a good name? What's of greater worth than a good name? Those of you who are still quite young may not yet have appreciated that question.

I've been pointedly reminded of it again and again over the past few months as I've sat in interviews and tried to impress potential employers, tried to sell myself.

And you know, one of the questions that have often come up has gone something like this. Is there any criminal activity that a background check would reveal? Well, thankfully, I've been able to answer no.

But at the same time, I have repeatedly thought as I've answered that question, what if there were? It'd be over. I wouldn't get a second look.

As soon as I do one stupid thing and get caught, my reputation would be ruined for life. And what of those who have been unjustly condemned and now must live with that the rest of their life?

[14 : 09] I know there's many who have suffered that. Yes, they have to serve jail time, but after that, they've still lost their good name. But just don't take my word for it.

God also weighs in on the subject in Proverbs 22.1. A good name is more desirable than great riches. To be esteemed is better than silver or gold.

The point's this. There can be no greater sin than to desecrate the good name of our creator. If this be true of us, what of God's reputation?

Failure to justly deal with man's sin, to simply overlook it, as some suggest he should do, would result in God desecrating his own good name. Piper goes on, when sin is treated as though it is inconsequential, then the glory of God is treated as inconsequential.

When God passes over sin, it looks as though he is agreeing that his glory is of little value. But if God acts in such a way as to deny the infinite value of his own glory, then he commits the ultimate outrage.

[15 : 24] He desecrates what is infinitely holy and he blasphemes what is infinitely sacred. He joins the sinners of Romans 1.23 and exchanges the glory of the immortal God for the creature.

This prospect is so terrible that if it came to pass, there could no longer be a gospel and no hope for there would be no righteous God. Why was God pleased to kill Jesus?

Yes, to save for himself a people, but more fundamentally to demonstrate the glory of his justice. In other words, killing Jesus on the cross brings fame to his name.

It's one thing to say that person's the most prolific athlete great I've ever seen. It's quite another to go and sit in person and watch them put on a total show against some of the greatest athletes in the world.

God is just. That's a fact. How brilliant is the quality of his righteous character? Well, if we travel to Golgotha, we see it demonstrated in its most radiant brilliance.

[16 : 36] Here we begin to understand that he will stop at nothing to do what is right. There isn't a sliver of compromise in God's character. Man's sin must be dealt with.

Justice must be served even if the cost to God is incomprehensible. And that makes his glory and his justice shine all the brighter and brings glory to his name.

God would have been no less righteous to require every fallen demon and every human being to suffer hell, to pay the penalty himself for his own sin.

And most will receive this sentence and bear this fate. But an aspect of one's character will shine brighter when its exercise requires great personal sacrifice.

For example, it can be said of a person that he is a man of his word. But as Proverbs reminds us, when the same man keeps his oath even when it hurts, now that shines a spotlight on that character quality of him keeping his word no matter what.

[17 : 51] Circumstances don't make the man. He was no less of a high character because he kept his word when it hurt. But the light shines on it.

What he is is made further known by the difficult circumstances, by the personal cost. And so it is with God. He is just.

He does not need to prove his righteousness to anyone. It is a fact of his being. But when he poured out his wrath on his own son at Calvary to vindicate his justice, when he required his own son to suffer hell for certain individuals whom he chose to be recipients of his mercy, wow, there is the spotlight.

That illuminates the glory of God's righteousness like nothing else. And because God is out to make a name for himself, because he wants the glory of his person to be known, he was delighted, pleased to bruise his son on the cross.

Well, why was God pleased to kill Jesus thirdly, to perfectly bring justice and mercy together?

That's our third point, to perfectly bring justice and mercy together. Listen to Romans 3, 23-26.

[19 : 12] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.

He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

What happened on the cross? Well, we could summarize it in this way. God is angry. He is very angry towards sinners.

Why? Because as we've seen, we have desecrated his glory. Can you recall a time when your blood pressure started rising, when you learned of something horrible that was done to an innocent person, and add to it that maybe they were helpless?

Now magnify that outrage by considering God's perfect knowledge. He sees the depths and the ugliness of sin like none of us ever could. Consider his thrice holy character.

[20 : 22] We're sinners. We are black spots on a white canvas, and we look across the canvas and see something, a deeper shade of black, and we're abhorred.

Our thrice holy God sees it. What rage, what anger must come from him as he experiences in full knowledge and understanding and the sin, the causes us to bubble up with anger.

And then purge from that if we can, and we really can't, but try to purge from it any human sinful expression. And if we do that, we now have but a cloudy picture of the wrath God feels towards sinners.

And let's not humor ourselves with the trite saying that God's anger is towards sin and not the sinner. Just listen to three passages. My anger will be aroused and I will kill you with the sword. Your wives will become widows and your children fatherless. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague.

[21:40] The arrogant cannot stand in your presence. You hate all who do wrong. God's wrath burns against all who have sought to elevate themselves and their glory above him.

Which, by the way, includes every one of us. And being a righteous judge, God's wrath must be satisfied. Justice must be served.

But while we must not minimize God's hot anger towards sinners, we must likewise highlight another aspect of his amazing character that's spoken of throughout Scripture, and that is his love. God's desires of calling out from these wicked, hell-deserving sinners, a people unto himself, that he will make righteous. He wants a people that will dwell with him and enjoy him for all eternity. Clearly, for this desire to be realized, mercy must be extended, which is a problem for justice. So at the cross, cross, we see the two brought together in a way that no human could have ever invented. [22:54] We see these two stupendous aspects of God's character, justice and mercy, brought into perfect marriage. The Son, who is the glory of the Father, stands in for his people.

He propitiates God's wrath on their behalf. He appeases God's righteous anger for their unthinkable rebellion. He satisfies justice by himself, enduring just punishment, which they deserve.

Thus, justice is served. God's wrath is appeased, and the people for whom Christ died may dwell for all eternity with him. If your finger is still on Isaiah, look at verse 5 of Isaiah 53.

But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Look down at verse 12. There I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors.

[24:01] for he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. Now go back to verse 9 where we started. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth, yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. Well, why was God pleased to kill Jesus?

Fourthly and lastly, to bring a people to enjoy the glory of the Son for all eternity. Have you ever taken some friends, or maybe a small child, to some fantastic place that you've been, that maybe you went there when you were younger, and you're just bubbling over with anticipation of seeing them experience the excitement of seeing it for the first time themselves.

For those of us who are parents, we understand the experience of, and now that I'm getting older, I can start to appreciate, you know, you always talk about how older people like kids around, I could never understand that.

you know, they make things new. They take things that are old to us, and it becomes new to us again. I mean, I'm simple, for me maybe it's taking some friends to Sherman's ice cream, to experience that for the first time.

[25:46] Now listen to the language that Jesus uses when talking to his father about the day when his chosen people will arrive in heaven.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. Do you hear it?

Do you hear that excitement? Jesus can't wait to show something off to those for whom he's about to die. He wants them to see the most stupendous sight in all the universe.

And what is it he wants them to see? Himself in all his glory. No veil, just his glory. He's longing for that day when we will finally see him as he is.

I believe it's this joy that is at least partially alluded to in Hebrews 12:2. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[27:05] As a way of conclusion, I want to take the time to step back and draw out some application. what we've been considering these past weeks using John Piper's outline, The Pleasures of God, is the meat and potatoes of Christianity.

The church is to be the pillar and the foundation of the truth and these truths are the foundation of the foundation. Again, they're the meat and potatoes of what genuine Christianity is all about.

I can eat a candy bar and experience an immediate rush. But when I sit down at a steak dinner, night after night, those things go down to the bones.

They produce healthy cells. And that's the way it is with these truths. We need to ever be bringing them into us. And sometimes, I can walk away from the table and 30 minutes later do not even remember what I ate.

But the nutrition the truths provided keep ruminating within me. However, I found myself this past week asking how these things should be affecting my conscious behavior.

[28:23] You know, the question of so what? I say that reverently. We've seen the so what. It's stupendous. It's marvelous. It's what life is all about.

But when it comes down, when I walk out the door and tomorrow I walk into my situations in life, is there something I can consciously take with me from this?

I felt like I've been missing something, some important application. How is contemplating the truths regarding the pleasures of God, what He takes pleasure in, going to affect me and how I live tomorrow?

allow me to return to the joy set before Christ that we just considered. We'd be mistaken if we passed over the whole spectacle that occurred on that middle cross as purely an endurance that had to be suffered to get to the good stuff on the other side by Jesus.

The cross itself brought glory to God. The cross itself brought glory to God. God's How do we know that? Well, from passages such as John 12, 27, and 28.

[29:37] Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name. Then a voice came from heaven.

I have glorified it, and will glorify it again. What was the thought that passed through Jesus as he contemplated the horrendous ordeal that he was about to suffer?

It was much higher than the way I often seek to endure a trial. The way I often seek to endure a trial is it's not going to last forever.

I need to look to the other side. I'll get through it. No. Jesus focused on the trial. And what did he focus in on the trial? This is bringing glory to my Father.

God's He said, that's stupendous. That's what got him through it. As we look at other statements he made, we get a picture into his heart.

[30:42] John 13, 31, when he, Judas, was gone, Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. Or how about in his prayer in John 17, 4, I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

Do you feel Jesus' pulse? He lived and died for God's glory. It was foremost in his mind at every moment of every day.

It was at the front of every prayer. What about us? Why do we do what we do? For those of you in college, why are you going to school?

What is front and center in your mind? Is it so that you can receive a degree? So you can engage in some type of work for which you have an aptitude?

Or are you viewing this period of your life as God's appointment to glorify him in that place? I mean, that's it. That's front and center. That's what it's all about.

[31:51] Everything else is window dressing. Why do any of us go to work each day, be at home or within a company, so we can earn money to raise a family or buy the necessities of life or some pleasures, so we can raise good kids?

These are all obviously secondary purposes with which we're commanded to concern ourselves, but they're not front and center. when we allow ourselves to walk a little bit with Jesus, we should be struck by one who is obsessed with his father's glory.

It was always foremost in his mind. Can I say the same? Let's be rudely Let's be rudely honest with ourselves. What is our rock-bottom motivation for every specific thing that makes up our lives?

If we boil it all down, what is our motivation in this thing? We must answer that on a thing-by-thing basis. This is getting to what I started with of how does this go into Monday morning?

How do I take this with me? Well, what's the focus of this entire book? If we could summarize everything that John Piper's been saying down to one phrase, what would it be?

[33:17] You can't use the pleasures of God. Well, it's the glory of God. God's pleasure is in bringing glory to his name, and therefore our pleasure should be in bringing glory to his name.

Let me state the obvious, that until I have Jesus' mindset, I'm a carnal Christian at best, until my first, my front and center thought as I enter each activity, every life change, every opportunity, until

that thought is, this is primarily about glorifying my Father in heaven.

I don't even have a Christian pulse at that point. Now, I'm not saying I'm not a Christian, but in that moment, if I'm doing something without the glory of God being the front and center of my mind, I'm missing the main point.

Do I have a heart that wants my Abba Father to be glorified? Really glorified? Am I seeking to constantly press my mind down the path of singing his praises?

This is effort, this is work, because we're fallen creatures, we want our own glory. And so am I taking an active role of pressing my mind of every event that occurs in life, every smell, sight, everything I taste, of using that as an opportunity to turn my mind toward God and glorify him in it? [34 : 57] Do I stop often throughout my day to pray to him? And not just about my own problems and desires, that yes, we are to bring them to him, and as we do even the smallest of things, we bring him glory in even in that.

But do I stop and just contemplate him in those problems to passionately seek his glory in those difficulties? Do I view the most vital aspect of my prayer in Bible times as renewing my awe for him? Folks, this is Christianity. Everything else is a sham. And I know I have too often settled for something less.

My central motivation for life should not be about where I'm going to live, what I'm going to do, who I'm going to marry, but about God's glory. All those other things will take care of themselves. themselves. And yes, again, I am to bring the big events and the little events to God. And he's glorified by my demonstrating my weakness and my dependence upon him through such prayers. [36 : 19] But my heart and every prayer should be God's glory central. my motivation should be for the expanding of his kingdom. My passion should be the hallowing of his name.

There's a reason the Lord's prayer begins that way. And we get our cue for what this practically looks like through Jesus.

Piper summarizes it this way. What is it that God ultimately takes pleasure in?

His glory. The fame of his own name. Do I want to bring my God pleasure? Every one of us this morning who's a true believer does.

So how do I do so? Again, it's not rocket science. I do so by desiring and seeking his glory and by seeking every hour, every moment, every event, to put him central in my thoughts and to lift up his name, to hallow his name.

[37 : 42] Let us go out from here and bring our God pleasure by passionately seeking his glory. We're dismissed.