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"Preaching grace in the Dispensation of grace"  
A Bible Study

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### "The Happy God!"

BY RICHARD JORDAN

"ACCORDING TO THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF THE BLESSED GOD, WHICH WAS COMMITTED TO MY TRUST" 1 Timothy 1:11

In this verse Paul says something wonderful and wondrous about the nature and character of God. Genesis 30:13 demonstrates that the word "blessed" often carries the idea of "happy"--but not simply happiness based on circumstances; rather a happiness that is deep and abiding, arising from the purest delight and joy. So it is that Paul refers here to "the happy God"

It seems that most of mankind conceives of God as a great ogre somewhere in the heavens, passing His days by going about watching for those who get just a bit out of line so that He can then crack them over the head with a big thunderbolt of wrath. And religion is no real help in this regard!

Recently my oldest son and I were in the large Museum of Natural History here in Chicago. As we toured the section containing the so-called "totem poles" we were both struck by the dreadful and frightening appearances of these gods. There was not a happy face in the bunch!

How glad we were to know the God-- "the true and living God"-- of the Bible, who calls Himself "the happy God" And this is all the more wonderful as we see it in the context of the gospel of grace.

There we learn that as God looks at the cross of Calvary He sees it not as the place of our Savior's defeat but rather of His greatest triumph" for there He declared His righteousness" as Christ paid the just penalty for our sins (Rom. 3:21-26), "take away" the accusing finger of the law (Col. 2:14) and openly and thoroughly defeated Satan and his hosts (Col. 2:15). Thus Paul calls his message "the glorious gospel of the blessed God!"

All this reminds us that God is "happy" as He sees the outworking of His purposes and plans. This is true in prophecy as well as in "the mystery." Consider Zephaniah 3:14-17 in this regard:

"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

"The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.

"In that day I shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.

"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, HE WILL REJOICE OVER THEE WTH JOY; He will rest in His love, HE WILL JOY OVER THEE WTH SINGING."

God promises that as He sees His long stated purpose for the nation Israel brought to fruition H will "rejoice" and "joy" over her-He will be "the happy God, in her midst! Little wonder, then that even after Pentecost we hear peter still beseeching his wayward nation:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord....

"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

"Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:19,25,26).

The time was then ripe for Israel to fulfill her purpose among the nations. Yet, sadly, as we read on in early Acts we see her continuing lack of response. Indeed, her leaders rise up in such open opposition and hostility against the followers of Christ that by Acts 8:1 we are told that there are only twelve believers left in the capital city itself--the very city our lord says is destined to be the city of the great King".(Matt. 5:35).

And as we read we can almost hear the approaching hoof beats of judgment, for the prophets had long predicted that the Father's response to this continued rejection of His Son would be one of wrath and judgment:

"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

'Then shall HE SPEAK UNTO THEM IN HIS WRATH, AND VE THEM IN HIS SORE DISPLEASURE.

"Thou shalt BREAK THEM WTH A ROD OF IRON; Thou shalt DASH THEM IN PIECES LIKE A POTTER'S VESSEL" (Psa. 2:4,5,9).

"The Lord said unto My Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMTES THY FOOT- STOOL" (Psa. 110:1).

In light of all this, I Timothy 1:11 is all the more significant. How is it that Paul can tell us that God is now "the happy God" when His purposes for Israel are yet unfulfilled? It is just here that "the mystery" comes in for God had on other purpose, a secret purpose which He had kept hidden in Himself only to be made known through the "good news" committed to Paul's trust. Thus Paul writes:

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given mo to you-ward:

"How that BY REVEATION HE MADE KNOWN UNTO ME THE MYSTERY...

"WHICH IN OTHER AGES WAS NOT MADE KNOWN UNTO THE SONS OF MEN, as it is now reveled unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;

"AND TO MAKE ALL MEN SEE WHAT IS THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE MYSTERY, WHICH FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD HATH BEEN HID IN GOD, Who created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:2,3,5,9).

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, PROMISED BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN;

"..BUT HATH IN DUE TIMES MANIFESTED HIS WORD THROUGH PREACHING WHICH IS COMMITTED UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD OUR SAVIOR" (Titus 1:2,3).

Today God is "the happy God" as He sees His "secret" purpose being fulfilled during the dispensation of grace. With this in mind it is instructive to consider some of the verses that talk about our pleasing God in this age. Notice a sampling.

We should start with Galatians 1:15,16, where the very manner in which the present program was revealed--that is, through the ministry committed to the Apostle Paul--is said to have been pleasing to God:

"But WHEN IT PLEASED GOD, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace,

"TO REVAL HIS SON IN ME, THAT I MIGHT PREACH HIM AMONG THE HEATHEN. .  
.."

Hence Paul writes to the Thessalonians and to us:

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that AS YE HAVE RECEIVED OF US HOW YE OUGHT TO WALK AND TO PLEASE GOD, so ye would abound more and more" (1 Thess.4:1).

And it is Paul, again, who sets before us the example of the one who seeks only to "please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4), saying

"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; NOT AS PLEASING MEN, BUT GOD, WHICH TRIETH OUR HEARTS" (1Thess. 2:4).

Although "the preaching of the cross" may seem as mere foolishness to the world about us, to the instructed believer--and to his God--it is a heartwarming message of love and grace and Paul tells us that it is God's sovereign pleasure to save those who believe this wonderful message:

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, IT PLEASED GOD BY THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE" (1Cor. 1:21).

And what of the ministry of the believer today? We are told that "God hath set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased Him" (1Cor. 12:18). 1 Corinthians 12 is clear that each member of the Body of Christ has a vital function to fill in the working and well being of the Body as a whole. For more on this see Ephesians 4:11-16, etc. Our God is surely pleased and made happy as He sees His children walking in the "good works" He "foreordained we should walk in" (Eph.2:10, cf.4:30).

Further, speaking of resurrection, Paul says:

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:

"But GOD GIVETH IT A BODY AS IT HATH PLEASSED HIM, and to every seed his own body.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. . . ." (1 Cor. 15:38,42).

Each member of the Body of Christ is promised a resurrection body "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil.3:20,21). Indeed, Christ's coming for us will be a "blessed hope" both for us and for our God! Ephesians 2:7 tells us that it is God's purpose

"That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

The happy God--yes! and surrounded by happy saints, for the more fully we recognize and understand "His purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" the more fully we can rejoice in what He is doing today and thus live lives of obedience that truly honor and please Him.

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### REFLECTED GLORY

Oh, make my soul a mirror, Lord,  
Reflecting only Thee-  
Until this life becomes transformed,  
Revealing Christ in me.

And may no spot or blemish mar  
Thy workmanship divine,  
But may Thy Spirit energize,  
And fill this life of mine.

This vessel, Lord, must not fall short  
Of Thy expectancy,  
So do what seemeth good, I pray--  
Be glorified through me!

-Norma Helgerson

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### PLUNGING THE DEPTH OF HIS RICHES

BY PASTOR JOHN VERSTEGEN

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

"For who hath know the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?" (Rom. 11:33,34).

As Paul surveys God's hidden wisdom in temporarily delaying the fulfillment of prophecy in order to form the Body of Christ, he breaks forth in this heart born cry.

He indicates that God's "ways" and, "judgments" are so deep and so untraceable that not even the greatest geniuses of this world could figure them out.

But if God's judgments are "unsearchable" and His ways are "past finding out," how can we know them? How can God expect us to know them? And, who is capable of plunging "the depth of (His) riches" to bring them to light!

The answer is this cannot be understood apart from recognizing the fact that the Bible is the complete Word of God and the final authority in all matters of faith and practice. In it we have the complete revelation of God, His "ways" and "judgments."

Many will object to this by saying that the Bible cannot be the final authority in all things simply because you cannot know all about God and what He desires from reading a book. That, they say, would be like putting God in a box with a sealed lid. But as we shall see, the answer to this objection is to be found by unlocking "the box" and then plunging the depths of God's riches to discover His "unsearchable" and untraceable ways.

In the days of Job, Zophar asked:

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

"It is as HIGH as heaven; what canst thou do? DEEPER than hell; what canst thou know?"

"The measure thereof is LONGER than the earth, and BROADER than the sea" (Job 11:7-9).

Because the people of that day did not have the complete Word of God, these were valid and reasonable questions. There was much that they did not, indeed, could not know about God for the simple reason that God had not then given a full revelation of Himself. They could have read all the books of their day and questioned all the wisest men of the land and still would not have been able to "find out the Almighty unto perfection."

No such condition exists today, however, and to ask the same questions as if there are still no answers is to walk in darkness rather than light. We do have the complete Word of God today (Col. 1:25)! In it, God has given a full and complete revelation of Himself, His "ways" and His "judgments."

In 1 Corinthians 2:9 Paul says:

"...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

How often this passage is used to teach that we cannot now know, nor will we know, the ways and judgments of the Lord until we are finally with Him. But I must object that this interpretation completely misses the point of the passage, for Paul continues by saying:

..BUT GOD HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US... ." (1Cor.2:10).

The complete revelation of God's "ways" and "judgments" though previously hidden, have now been given and are available for the searching in His Word!

In the Word of God, "the box" as some would call it, we have the written record of God's ways and judgments concerning both "the heaven and the earth." For example, we find in Ephesians 1:8-10 that:

"(God) hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

"HAVING MADE KNOWN the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself:

"That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth...."

It is as if the Lord invited Paul into His throne room and there revealed to him all His "unsearchable" and untraceable ways! Hence it is that the Apostle repeatedly teaches that while God's "ways" and "judgments" have been, in time past, "unsearchable" and "past finding out," they are so no longer! God has given a full and complete revelation of Himself, His ways and His judgments in His word.

The question still remains, however, as to who is able to plunge "the depths of the riches" and to search the unsearchable? Who can bring these to light? "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or been His counselor?" to teach us? We need not search far for the answer, for Paul continues by saying:

"...the Spirit SEARCHETH ALL things, yea, the DEEP things of God."

He also says:

"...even so the things of God knoweth no man, BUT THE SPIRIT OF GOD" (1Cor. 2:10, 11).

God the Holy Spirit know what is the mind of the Lord! He has been His counselor (see Rom. 8:27)! The Holy Spirit is able to search the unsearchable and to plunge "the depth of the riches" to bring them to light. He plunges deep into the treasury of God's riches and teaches us by "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," leading us to pray "in the Spirit," i.e., in line with God's "unsearchable" and untraceable ways!

Because we have the complete full revelation of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit, God the Father desires that we know, indeed comprehend, His "ways" and "judgments." His desire is reflected in Paul's prayer:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1 :9).

In the days of Job, Zophar asked, "Canst thou by scorching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" They did not have the completed Word of God and hence were limited in their ability to "find out God." His "ways" and "Judgments" were "as high as heaven, deeper than hell," longer than the earth and, broader than the sea--what could they know and do?

But today, God desires that we "maybe able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18) of His "unsearchable" and untraceable ways now so fully manifested in His Word--and especially through Paul's preaching of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" made known in the mystery committed to his trust (Eph.3:1-9).

All the things, "yea the deep things," that God desires us to know about Himself, His ways and His judgments have been revealed for us in His completed Word. Further, He has given us the Holy Spirit as our indwelling teacher. As we study the Word, the Holy Spirit plunges "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" and brings them to light.

May our earnest prayer be to know and rejoice in these unsearchable and untraceable ways.

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