

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical and Southern Studies

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1 The righteous Lord, supremely great,
Maintains his universal state;
O'er all the earth his pow'r extends,
All heav'n before his footstool bends.

2 Yet justice still with pow'r presides,
And mercy all his empire guides;
Such works are pleasing in his sight,
And such the men of his delight.

3 No more, ye wise, your wisdom boast;
No more, ye strong, your valor trust;
Nor let the rich survey their store,
Replete with heaps of shining ore.

4 Glory, my soul, in this alone,
That God, thy God, to thee is known;
That thou hast own'd his sov'reign sway,
That thou hast felt his cheering ray.

5 My wisdom, wealth, and pow'r I find
In one Jehovah all combin'd.
On him I fix my roving eyes,
Till all thy soul in rapture rise.

6 All else which I my treasure call,
May in one fatal moment fall:
But what his happiness can move,
Whom God the blessed deigns to love?

Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)

The Majesty of God's Happiness

“Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?”

Job 22:3

The eternal affection in the Godhead is one of perfect happiness, and the works that that One true and living God produces issues in His perfect happiness; after all He is the only eternal Being, and only He exists in perfect harmony with Himself. These are declarations supported by sacred Scripture. There was a profound statement made by Dr. Robert L. Dabney, “Since God is the original Cause of all things, all the happiness amidst His works is of His doing; and therefore proves His benevolence.” God’s happiness has no limit and

is underived. He is totally sovereign and His resources are infinite in Himself. He is the blessed or happy God even when He is angry with the wicked. God cannot be unhappy for all things are according to His will in the armies of heaven and upon the earth. His happiness flows from His infinite perfection!

Before getting ahead of ourselves we need to go back to the context of our verse which asks if the Almighty is pleased! We know that Job had some friends or at least they thought of themselves as friends; however, these friends cause him a great deal of grief by using moral arguments to convince him of sin so that he would be forced to apply to God for mercy. They had put God in a box, as One who was confined to one alternative: sin causes all afflictions. They thus forced the conclusion that Job was against God. Jesus had dealt with His disciples wrestling with a similar issue, they questioned, did this man sin that he was born blind or was it the sin of his parents? The answer Jesus gave, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). Why was Job suffering? God’s providence allowed it to show his faith and allegiance to Him. The Lord’s answer to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as *My servant Job* hath. Therefore take for yourselves seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to *My servant Job*, and offer for yourselves a burnt offering; and *My servant Job* will pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like *my servant Job*” (Job 42:7-8).

So contextually Eliphaz’s question to Job, “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?” Our answer is entwined in the opening paragraph. Eliphaz is confronting Job and asking him if the Almighty is taking pleasure or happy in his righteousness (as self-righteousness) with the underlying idea being, no He is not happy? Thus, Eliphaz does not grasp, of course, that it is not Job’s righteousness that the Almighty sees, but it is the righteousness of Christ that was imputed to him as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Isaiah framed it this way, “Surely, shall one say, *in the LORD* have I righteousness.... *In the LORD* shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory” (Isa. 45:24, 25). The key is to be “*in the LORD*.” The Almighty God’s pleasure or happiness is in righteousness for He is holy and therefore happy with righteousness. “Thou shalt no more be called Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate, but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee....’ Thou shalt be called *my delight, or my pleasure is in her*.... ‘*Hephzibah (means) My pleasure is in her*” [Joseph Caryl]. Happiness!

Our ways may please the Lord as Job’s did. In the wisdom literature one reads, “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7). This means that when a person is clothed in Christ’s righteousness the ways of that

person shall please Jehovah. Not only is there happiness in God but with God for “whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he” (Prov. 16:20). The God who is eternally happy is the only being who can provide eternal happiness. “Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 144:15).

“Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous?’ ... It is not; the Lord indeed takes pleasure in his people, not as sinners, but as righteous; and as they are considered such in Christ, he is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake, and with it, being agreeable to his nature, will, and law; and with his people in Christ, in whom they are accepted, having imputed the righteousness of his Son unto them, and so they stand before him unblamable and irreprovable, and he takes pleasure in the work of his own hands upon them, called the good pleasure of his will, in the new man formed after his image in righteousness and true holiness, in the graces of his Spirit, and in the exercise of them, faith, hope, love, humility, fear of God, &c. it is a pleasure to him to hear their prayers and praises, and to observe their ready and cheerful obedience to his will; but then all this gives him no new pleasure, or adds anything to the complacency of his mind; he would have had as much delight and pleasure within himself, if there had never been an holy angel in heaven, or a righteous man on earth; he has no such pleasure in either as to be made more happy thereby, or so as to receive any ‘gain’ or profit from it, as the next clause explains it” [Dr. John Gill].

Years ago, an eighteen-year-old lad, the son of a minister, in the west of England, went out on the beach for a ramble in search of seaweeds. Pursuing his walk, unconscious of all but his immediate object, he at length discovered that the tide had flowed in, and he was enclosed between the cliffs and the advancing waters. Taking out his pocket Bible, he wrote on the flyleaf: “In danger—surrounded by water—if help does not speedily arrive, I must be drowned. But Jesus, to whom I gave myself five years ago, is with me. *I am perfectly happy.* May He bless and comfort my beloved parents, and bring my dear little brothers and sisters to Himself, so that we may all meet in heaven.” The lad’s body was discovered the next day, and the Bible was taken from the pocket of his coat.