

## THE BEAUTY OF GOD

Dear FBC family,

As I noted in our last Bible class, we are about to embark on a massive study of the most supreme subject of all time, namely, the beauty of God. It is the study that the Lord has been preparing me for since the day I became a believer about 36 years ago. Among other requisites, to be able to behold the beauty of God requires a great deal of personal reflection on a daily basis. In order to provide believers with more opportunities to think about the beauty of God daily—and thus be alive to the beauty of life and everything in it—I have decided to write daily snippets on the subject, which I will develop more fully when we formally move into this subject area at FBC in a few weeks (after we complete our faith and hope study). The real challenge, as you might have guessed, will be for me to keep these concise.

### **Beauty of God-01: The Glory of God**

Divine beauty is so infinite, so unspeakable, so transcendent, that Scripture has a special word for it, glory (קְבוֹד, δόξα). Paradoxically, the most sublime revelation of divine beauty/glory is found in the horror of Christ's crucifixion as the crucified "Lord of Glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). The pinnacle of God's beauty is manifested in the beauty of Jesus Christ as He was crucified. In this self-discloser of supreme divine beauty, God embraces pain and death and demonstrates in the most beautiful way, His love for the human race. All of life, seen properly, is beautiful when seen from the perspective of God's beauty highlighted on the Cross. In fact, the Cross as a symbol of God's love is the symbol above all symbols and whoever ignores God's beauty here will inevitably condemn the world and all history to unintelligibility. Christ is the central "form" of God's beauty, John 1:1-18, Heb. 1:1-3. Apart from understanding God's glory, which is both hidden and revealed in Christ, there is no true perception of the true God and thus no perception of God's supreme beauty/glory or of any true and objective beauty of life as such.

### **Beauty of God-02: The Effulgence of God's beauty**

The inexpressible radiance, the incomprehensible splendor of the beauty/glory of God, shines the brightest, par excellence, in the Son of God,

Heb. 1:1-3. God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the effulgence of His glory and the exact image of His person . . .

God's Beauty, Life, Wisdom, Truth, Grace, and Love shine most brilliantly and radiate most completely in the person of Jesus Christ, who is the exact image of God. This effulgence of light continuously shines forth in the pages of the Word of God. However, this Light can only be seen by a select group of people whom God has supernaturally endowed with supernatural power of sight. These are Christians, moreover, only Christians who love Him, those who have a living affective union with God. There are seven dimensions of God's glory/beauty displayed in Jesus Christ: 1) the light of the glory/beauty, 2) the undefeatable conviction of the truth of that glory/beauty, 3) experience of that glory/beauty, 4) objective nature of that glory/beauty, 5) the

Christ-centeredness of that glory/beauty, 6) the mediation of that glory/beauty, and 7) divine attestation to that glory/beauty. The Light is always shining brightly, but the natural man (unbeliever or fleshly/carnal believer who has corrupted his spiritual sight/appetite) simply cannot see it; they are blind to the beauty of God and life as such. Although all men have the opportunity to receive supranatural light to see God's glory, only a few actually prefer the light of the beauty/glory of God over their own "dark lights." Simply put, most human beings (and perhaps most contemporary American Christians) do not see the Light that illuminates glory/beauty of God because they do not like it. They have no appetite for God. They actually prefer the darkness of Satan and his communal illicit delights of the flesh. By nature, a base appetite always precludes any chance of living in the light of God's beauty/glory. Blessed are the pure in sight, for they shall see God's glory both here and in the next life.

John 1:1, In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

1 Corinthians 2:6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

### **Beauty of God-03: The transformative dazzling beauty/glory of God and the Word of God**

God's Word shines with ineffable glory, a dazzling beauty that radiates with the glory/beauty of God. In fact, this glory is so powerful that as the believer gazes at its shining glory/beauty, he is constantly transformed by the glory/beauty from glory/beauty to greater glory/beauty:

**2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.**

At least this is what Scripture teaches. So, why is it that many contemporary believers are blind to such dazzling beauty/glory? What darkness prevents them from seeing the objective splendor, the glory/beauty of the Lord, every time they open and read their Bibles? There are several veils that prevent a believer from seeing the glory, the beauty of God, and being so enraptured by it that they are themselves drawn to and transformed by God's glory/beauty. There are several obstacles that prevent believers from being alive to beauty of Scripture and thus the beauty of God and all of life itself. While the glory is objective and continuously shines forth, there exists many profound subjective factors that preclude the believer from ever seeing it. All men are drawn to the beautiful and until one sees the beauty of God and Scripture as such, he will never truly be drawn to them out of pure love and ecstasy.

### **Beauty of God-04: Beauty of God, the Fountainhead of all Joy**

Joy is always a result of obtaining the object of some perceived good. The greater the view of good the greater the joy. Moreover, the greater the view of the good the greater the beauty. This applies to every area of life. What a beautiful touchdown! What a beautiful movie! What a beautiful couple! What beautiful weather! We use "beautiful" when the adjective good is not enough to describe how great something is. Moreover, "beautiful" says something that other superlatives, like great, awesome, fantastic don't. There is a certain pleasure expressed in "beautiful" that may not exist in other superlatives. To see God not merely as good but as beautiful as such is to enter the presence of God with pleasure and wonder. To live in the beauty of God is to live in the fullness of beauty and joy in all of life.

*Psalm 16:11, You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

*Thomas Aquinas, If the goodness, beauty and wonder of creatures are so delightful to the human mind, the fountainhead of God's own goodness (compared with the trickles of goodness found in creatures) will draw excited human minds entirely to itself.*

*Jonathan Edwards, God is the highest good of the reasonable creature, and the enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. . . . Fathers and mother, husbands, wives, children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows. But the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, But God is the sun. These are but streams, but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.*

Everything good, enjoyable, refreshing, fascinating, and interesting derives from God. God alone is the fountain of life. Without Him there could be neither life nor joy, neither abundance nor delights. God is the ocean from which all beings exist and point back to, and everything that exists reflects His beauty in some way or another. However, one must have eyes for this Beauty. Just as one cannot see the beauty of a football game if he does not care for football because he does not see the point of it, so it is with God and His beauty/glory refracted in all of creation and in all the details of life.

For His Glory,

Pastor Don

**Beauty of God-05: The Beauty/Glory of God can only be seen in the objective Total Truth, Whole Truth perspective.**

God's Word is, indeed, great enough to allow an infinity of approaches and entryways. Moreover, no matter how limited or shallow a believer's worldview is, he can enter the glorious chambers of the Word of God. However, once he enters the Word, he must be willing to have his horizon of reality broadened before he can see the ineffable beauty contained therein. Regardless where he enters the Word of God, he confronts a truth, but that truth is part of a very broad truth-picture of God's dazzling beauty (glory) as such as well as all of creation. Given this fact, it is critical that one does not reject any truth in the Word of God for to do so is to destroy one's ability to see the divinely beautiful picture. In sum, one must always be open to the whole truth, total truth perspective before he ever sees the transcendent beauty that objectively shines forth from the Word of God. There are a thousand ways to blind oneself to the beauties that fill the Word of God, but they can all be reduced to personal preferences and concepts of beauty that become lenses from which one looks at the Word of God. Beauty is all about true form, and when the believer brings his own ideas of form and projects them in the Text, he distorts the form of the objective beauty that remains in it for all ages, all cultures, and for all of time—and all distortions are deformities and thus ugly. Not only does such a believer deform the Scriptures and blind himself to the true objective beauty/glory of God, but he also receives added judicial blindness from God Himself:

Matthew 13:14 "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them' . . . 19 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who

hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

However, those who truly seek God for His own sake (= true love) will seek Truth above all else without ulterior motives (which would include personal application to make one feel better or enable one to handle problems better) and thus have the foundation to perceive God's beautiful mysteries:

Matthew 13:23 "But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Lest you think I am using hyperbole in speaking of the majestic, priceless, ineffable beauty of and in the Word of God, consider:

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Psalms 119:72 The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of coins of gold and silver.

Psalms 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.

To see such beauty of God in Scripture and in all of creation requires nothing short of grace in the form of the ministry of the Holy Spirit lifting up the intellect and will into the suprarational and supra-affective realm. This beauty cannot be gained by the most comprehensive exegesis or most pragmatic biblical principles gleaned from the Word. What I am talking about is far above this, which is why Paul prayed for believers' hearts to be supernaturally enlightened—clearly isagogics, exegesis, categories, and even being confessed up would not be sufficient in light of the fact that Paul prayed directly for this supernatural lifting up of the believer into the beautiful/glorious truths of God.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory [beauty] of His inheritance in the saints,

For His Glory,

Pastor Don