



Part 2: Pleasure

Pleasure in the rest of the Scriptures

God's Pleasure in His people:

Psalms 149:1-9

Zephaniah 3:14-20

God's Pleasure in Christ:

Isaiah 42:1

Matthew 3:13-17

Eternal Pleasures:

Psalms 16:1-11

Forsaking Pleasure:

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Delight in the Lord:

Psalms 37:1-11

Life in all its Fulness:

John 10:10

The Love of Pleasure:

Proverbs 21:17

Worldly Pleasures

Galatians 5:16-25

The Delight of God:

Proverbs 11:20, 12:22

Passing Pleasures of Sin:

Hebrews 11:24-26

Delight in Abundance:

Isaiah 55:1-13

Pleasure in Ecclesiastes

Exactly as he has done with wisdom before it, the Preacher now wants to expose us to the two-sided reality of the idea of pleasure. However, where with wisdom the focus was on the positive benefits alongside a warning of not putting too much weight on our wisdom, the focus with pleasure is most definitely on the negatives that come when we build our lives around it. This fits in perfectly with our pleasure-obsessed, pleasure-seeking society where one of the primary mottos is 'if it feels good, do it'. The danger of someone viewing pleasure as their ultimate goal in life, and standing or falling on how 'happy' they feel is massive in our culture, and the Preacher wants to expose the emptiness of this view of life so that we won't get caught in its trap.

Look around at our society - doesn't this seem to be exactly where we are? We're some of the richest people on the planet, even the poorest among us generally have a standard of living far outweighing much of the world, and yet are we happier for it? No - in many ways we are far more depressed than we have any right to be as the prescription levels of mood-enhancing drugs will almost certainly show you. We've completely bought into the lie that pleasure is the ultimate and we're beginning to pay the cost for our foolishness.

It isn't even that God is against pleasure - far from it, He speaks in His word of 'fulness of joy' and 'life in all its fulness'. These aren't the words of some miserable deity who is dedicated to making others miserable too. No, the truth is that God wants us to be happy, and while many might twist that truth to mean what they want it to, it doesn't change the fact that it is still true - what we need to understand is first where that pleasure comes from, and second exactly what it looks like. Firstly, the truth the Preacher would want us to know is that true pleasure can only come in relationship with God. He is the fountain of life, and it's only as we learn to live with Him at the centre that we will ever experience true and lasting pleasure. Second, the reality is that though pleasure is at the heart of God's plan for His people we still live in a broken world, and He has plans and purposes to work out in and through that brokenness. What that means is that ultimate pleasure will have to wait - not for long when you compare life to eternity, but we must be patient, look ahead, and not get caught in the lie that if something hurts it's not in the plan or will of God.

Lastly, the exhortation of Ecclesiastes when it comes to pleasure is liberating. God isn't against pleasure, so when the opportunity comes to enjoy life in the context of a relationship with God - go ahead, knock yourself out, and have as much fun as He'll allow you to have!