

Title: **WHAT PLEASES GOD?**

Text: Isaiah 46:10

Reading: *Lindsay Campbell and James Jordan*
Psalm 115:1-18

Date: Sunday Evening — November 16, 2008

Subject: *Divine Sovereignty*

Introduction:

What pleases God? That is my subject tonight. What pleases God? You will find my text in Isaiah 46; but before I read my text, I want you to turn to Psalm 115.

There are certain things about God which are believed and held in common by all conservative “Christian” religions. All who profess to be Christians believe, or at least profess to believe, that...

- “*God is Spirit,*” eternal, immutable, and independent.
- God is holy, wise, and good.
- God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.
- God is just, true, and faithful.
- “*God is love,*” merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and forgiving.

These are characteristics of God’s nature, attributes of his Being, which all religious people, to one degree or another recognize and applaud. Both Baptists and Methodists believe these things. Presbyterians and Pentecostals, Episcopalians and Catholics, Campbellites and Russellites, Adventists and Mormons all acknowledge these things to be true. Neither Quakers nor Papists would deny any of these attributes of God. Every man, woman, boy or girl, who professes to believe in God will tell you that these things are so. You believe them; and I believe them.

ANOTHER ATTRIBUTE

But there is something else, another attribute of God, essential to his character as God, an attribute that most religious people refuse to acknowledge. In fact, they despise it. Though they sing, “O How I love Jesus,” with beaming faces, when a preacher dares tell them that this attribute is at the very core of his Being, essential to his nature, they become enraged.

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

Here is the one attribute of God's Being which distinguishes him from all the imaginary gods of men. In fact, if you will read the Book of God one more time, you will find out that it is this attribute of his Being to which God himself most often points when showing the difference between himself and the idols of men that are called gods.

Because God himself has chosen to use this one attribute above all others to distinguish himself as God, when I am asked to answer the question, “Who is God?” it seems most reasonable to me to answer it by setting forth this one distinguishing attribute of his nature.

Proposition: He who truly is God is totally sovereign. — The God of the Bible, the one true and living God, the God we worship, trust, and love, is an absolute sovereign, in total control of all things, at all times, always performing his will and pleasure.

(Psalms 115:1-3) “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake. (2) Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God? (3) But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

(Psalms 135:1-6) “Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD. (2) Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God, (3) Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good: sing praises unto his name; for *it is* pleasant. (4) For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure. (5) For I know that the LORD *is* great, and *that* our Lord *is* above all gods. (6) Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

(Isaiah 46:3-4) “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb: (4) And *even* to *your* old age I *am* he; and *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.”

(Isaiah 46:5-11) “To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like? (6) They lavish gold out of

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. (7) They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. (8) Remember this, and show yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors. (9) Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (11) Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.”

(Isaiah 46:12-13) “Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness: (13) I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.”

The Lord our God is absolutely and universally sovereign. And I am here to assert in the plainest, boldest terms possible that **ANYTHING LESS THAN AN ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN IS NOT GOD**, but only the idolatrous figment of man’s depraved imagination, an image carved out of one of the trees in the dark forest of man’s idolatrous imagination.

When I assert that God is sovereign, I am simply declaring that he is God. God almighty has the right and power to do what he will, when he will, with whom he will, as he will. **The god of this apostate religious age is anything but sovereign.** This religious generation is well described by the prophet Isaiah. – “*They pray unto a god that cannot save!*” Modern religion has set aside the sovereignty of God to make room for the autonomy of man. Today, men everywhere deny the sovereignty of God’s will, in order to exalt the imaginary freedom of man’s will.

The fact is, the god of the “enlightened” church of the 21st Century is a weak, helpless, frustrated, effeminate idol that commands and has the respect of none! The god of the modern pulpit is an object of pity, rather than reverence.

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

- If God loves everyone alike, and some still perish in hell, his love is meaningless and irrelevant.
- If Christ died for all men alike, shed his blood to redeem all men, and some are not redeemed, his blood is meaningless and irrelevant.
- If God the Holy Spirit is trying to save all men by the operations of his grace, and some are not saved, his grace is meaningless and irrelevant.

Those things describe the god of this age. They describe your fathers' god and your neighbors' god. They may even describe your god. But that is not the God of the Bible. A weak, helpless, frustrated god, is no more God than the totem poles of barbaric tribesmen.

The God of the Bible is an absolute sovereign. It is written of him, — “All things are of God.” You can take those words just as far as your imagination will allow; and when you have gone the full length of your mind's imagination, you have not even begun to get started measuring the magnitude of those words. — “*All things are of God!*”

- In Creation (Pro. 16:4).
- In Providence (Matt. 11:20-25; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:13-26; 11:36; Eph. 1:11; Ps. 76:10; Ex. 34:24).
- In Salvation – “*Salvation is of the LORD!*” (Rom. 9:16; Eph. 1:3-14).

When we talk about God's sovereignty, we are simply declaring that God is God. Divine sovereignty means that God always does exactly what he wants to, that he always does all his pleasure. In fact, that is exactly what he declares. We read it in Isaiah 46:10. Do not miss the context in which our text is found. The Lord God is here challenging anyone to bring forth a god like him. He is declaring that it is his sovereignty, his absolute, universal, unimpeachable sovereignty that separates him from all the idols of men.

(Isaiah 46:5) “To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?”

(Isaiah 46:9-10) “Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, (10) Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

Divine sovereignty means that nothing ever comes to pass except that which God brings to pass according to his own, sovereign, eternal, immutable pleasure. He who is our God is that great and glorious God who works all things after the pleasure of his own will (Eph. 1:11).

Everything that comes to pass in time God purposed to bring to pass in eternal predestination and effectually brings to pass in his sovereign providence, “*According to the good pleasure of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his grace!*”

GOD’S PLEASURE

Realizing that those things are so, I want to know this – **What is God’s pleasure? What is it that God is pleased to do?** I know that the “*secret things belong to the Lord.*” I am perfectly content to leave the secret things secret until he is pleased to make them known. I have no desire to pry into that which God has chosen not to reveal. But I do want to know as much as I can about what he has revealed; for “*the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children.*” Does God tell us what his pleasure is? Does God reveal in his Word what he is pleased to do? Let’s look into the Book and see.

HERE ARE FIVE THINGS REVEALED IN THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH GOD DECLARES HE IS PLEASED TO DO.

HIS PEOPLE

1. 1 Samuel 12:22 – “***It hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.***”

(1 Samuel 12:22-24) “For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. (23) Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: (24) Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.”

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

If you and I belong to God, if we are numbered among his people, if we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, it is because “*it pleased the Lord to make you his people.*” **HOW?**

- **He made us his people By divine election special adoption.**

(Psalms 65:4) “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.”

(John 15:16) “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

(2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: (14) Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 John 3:1) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

- **The Lord God made us his own by sovereign regeneration and effectual calling.**

- John 3:1-8

(Ephesians 2:1-5) “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

(5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)”

- **Our God made us his people by willing, voluntary surrender to and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by graciously working in us the sweet gifts of repentance and faith.**

- Psalm 110:3

CHRIST’S FULNESS

2. Colossians 1:19 – **It pleased God to put all fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

(Colossians 1:18-19) “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. (19) For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;”

The triune God has given the Lord Jesus Christ, our God-man Mediator, preeminence in all things and over all things, and put all fulness in him, so that he might be preminent in the faith, praise, and adulation of his saints forever. – “*All fulness*” is in Christ.

- **All the fulness of the Triune God is in the God-man Christ Jesus.**

(Colossians 2:9-10) “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

- **All the fulness of covenant grace is in Christ our covenant Surety.**

(John 1:14-16) “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (15) John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. (16) And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

(Ephesians 1:3-7) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

(2 Timothy 1:9) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

- **All the fulness of God’s salvation is in our great Savior.**

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

- **Indeed, all the fulness of Heaven’s glory is in Christ our Redeemer.**

John 17:5 “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

John 17:22 “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”

CHRIST’S DEATH

3. Isaiah 53:10 – **“It pleased the Father to bruise him,” to crush his darling Son to death as my Substitute!**

(Isaiah 53:10-12) “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(Galatians 3:13) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.”

Whenever you think about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, remember these four facts, these four words, which define and explain what took place at Calvary 2000 years ago.

- **SOVEREIGNTY** – “*I lay down my life.*” “*The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*”
- **SUBSTITUTION** – “*For the transgression of my people was he stricken.*”
- **SATISFACTION** – “*Then I restored that which I took not away.*” (Righteousness and Redemption).
- **SUCCESS** – “*He shall not fail!*”

CHRIST REVEALED

4. Galatians 1:15-16 – **It pleased the Lord to reveal his Son in me.**

(Galatians 1:15-16) “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, (16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

Salvation does not come by a decision, — saying a prayer, — walking an aisle, — doing good works, — baptism, — or anything else preachers tell you to do to “get saved.” Salvation comes to poor, blind, hell-bent sinners

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

by the sovereign interposition of God, by divine revelation, by God the Holy Spirit revealing Christ in you!

(2 Corinthians 4:3-6) “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

(Genesis 1:1-3) “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (2) And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (3) And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

(John 17:3) “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”

When God the Holy Spirit comes to a sinner in effectual, irresistible, saving power and grace, he does some teaching, convicting, reproofing, and convincing.

(John 16:7-11) “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (8) And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of **SIN**, because they believe not on me; (10) Of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of **JUDGMENT**, because the prince of this world is judged.”

If God ever saves a sinner, that sinner saved by God’s free grace knows...

- Who Christ is.
- Why he came (Matt. 1:21; Heb. 10:5-14).
- What he did (Heb. 9:12, 26).
- Where he is now.

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

- What he is doing. – *“The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand!”*

GOSPEL PREACHING

5. 1 Corinthians 1:21 – **“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”**

God saves sinners through the instrumentality of gospel preaching, by the preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified. – Not by preaching, but by GOSPEL PREACHING!

Illustration: *The Man Who Worked at Matthews*

(Romans 10:17) “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

(James 1:18) “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

(1 Peter 1:23-25) “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (24) For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: (25) But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

(Ephesians 1:12-13) “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”

APPLICATION:

1. Sinner, come to Christ, and confess him before men. – *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.”*

WHAT PLEASES GOD?

2. Children of God, rejoice in the great and glorious sovereignty of our God. Our faith and confidence in him is a well-founded faith and confidence.
3. Preachers, Preach Christ!

Amen.