

Psalm 149:4

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm 149, we read at verse 4, For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people. He will beautify the meek with salvation.

For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people. Now, I don't know about you, I can't speak for everybody else, but this is one of the things I personally find so hard to get my head around or to take in.

That the Lord stands in judgment upon our sin, yes, no problem. That the Lord has mercy upon us, and purely because of what Christ has done, we are forgiven and we're led into heaven.

Yes, I can believe that too. That the Lord sort of accepts us despite our sins because of what Christ has done, yes, I can accept that too. For we are all so completely unworthy to stand in his presence, but clothed in the righteousness of Christ and washed in his blood, yes.

I can't believe that. But I suppose at the back of my mind and heart, what I have is that the Lord almost, despite himself, lets us in. And despite his purity and holiness, and only because of what Jesus has done, we're there sort of, not quite grudgingly, but despite ourselves.

[1 : 1 6] The idea that the Lord could actually take pleasure in his people, in sinners like us, in sinners like me, this one almost recoils from that idea, or the natural person does.

And even the sinners saved by grace finds it so hard to believe that a holy God could actually delight in sinners such as we are, could actually take pleasure in his people when they are people like us.

Well, of course, the taking pleasure is all, it's all to do with not what we allow ourselves to become. It's not the bad things we do in which the Lord delights.

It's in his children. It's in his people. And why does he delight in them? He delights in them because they are his. He delights in them because they have been brought forth spiritually by him and through him.

Remember how in Isaiah 53, it says at verse 11, He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. As we mentioned in the past, this suggests almost the childbirth element, the bringing forth spiritually of children, those over whom such labour hath been expended, those upon whom the Lord has lavished so much expense and cost and love.

[2 : 4 8] He cannot fail in one sense to love anything. Okay, yeah, I can take a bit of love, but actually delighting, taking pleasure in people like us, well, that's difficult.

It might not be difficult for you at all, but it's certainly difficult for me. The Lord taking pleasure in his people. Now, of course, it also says he will beautify the meek with salvation.

That's part of the same verse. And in the original Hebrew word term, meek, it means poor and afflicted ones. But the term, as you know, Calvin has pointed out, it came afterwards to be applied to merciful persons, people who showed mercy, who showed kindness, and who didn't push themselves.

And the reason for this development is because, as bodily afflictions have a tendency to subdue our pride, likewise, abundance tends to beget cruelty.

And if you think of it as, as people who are the most powerful in the world, or the richest, or so used to getting their own way, it doesn't tend to make them more patient, it doesn't make them more indulgent, of those with less themselves, it makes them more sort of demanding.

[4 : 1 0] And they expect to get their way in, and everything is its price. They can write a check, or they can just pay for whatever they need, and they expect people to get out of their way. They expect people to follow their diktat.

They expect things to be just as they want them, because they are used to being powerful. They are used to being in control. They're used to having it exactly what they want. And if they don't get it, if something crosses their path, or something obstructs them in some way, then they have a tendency to become hostile.

Abundance tends to beget cruelty, whereas affliction has a tendency to subdue pride, and to bring forth that merciful tendency.

This is one reason why the original Hebrew term, meaning poor and afflicted ones, the meek, came to mean those who are merciful, those who are gentle, those who are candy. Now, of course, it's also one of these, you know, it's part of the, an all-encompassing part of the fruit of the Spirit, of which we read in Galatians 5, verses 22 and 23, you know, the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

And, as we pointed out in the past, you know, this is fruit of the Spirit, singular. It's not fruits of the Spirit in the plural. And, I think one thing we should understand by that, is that every aspect of that fruit of the Spirit, could be taken as the whole.

[5 : 3 6] The fruit of the Spirit is love, in which all these other things fit. The fruit of the Spirit is joy, in which all these other aspects likewise fit. And, as you work your way down through it, the fruit of the Spirit is meekness, and love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and faith, and temperance.

They're all aspects, if you like, of meekness. You can't really have one without all the other parts of it. It's an all-encompassing part of the fruit of the Spirit, as all aspects of it are.

Spurgeon has pointed out that no man in his natural state can be meek in the scriptural sense. No man in his natural state can be meek in the scriptural sense of the word.

Because, in our natural state, we're out for number one. We want what I want. I want to have what I want. What I desire. I want my achievement, my accomplishment, my progress. Anything that gets in the way, well, that has to be an enemy, an obstacle to be removed.

But meekness, in the scriptural sense, has this gentleness, this long-suffering, this self-control, which prefers other before ourselves, which submits to the Lord, and any chastisements of his, recognizing our unworthiness, this meekness before God, and meekness before men, is not a work of nature.

[7 : 0 2] It is a work of grace. It is that which the Lord has done, and the Lord delights in his workmanship. He delights in what he has done.

The Lord taketh pleasure in his people. They are his people, not by nature, not by their human nature, but by grace, by his work, by his adoption.

And because they are his workmanship, his fruitfulness, his children, that's the reason he delights in that. Now, some of you will know, for example, that we certainly were at our eldest son's graduation in Aberdeen.

Now, literally hundreds of people were graduating that day, and there was something like 180 people graduating in his particular ceremony. and, you know, some people had higher degrees than him.

Some people were getting master's and doctorates and goodness knows all what, and other people got a higher grade of degree than he did. And other people were, you know, not being unkind, more smartly turned out than he was on the day.

[8 : 14] But that didn't mean, I thought, oh, look at that one. I wish my son was like that. Oh, if only he was getting a better class of degree like these people. Oh, yeah, I wish he was better. I wish he was this.

I wish he was that. No, I see all these people politely waiting for them to take their turn. Oh, he comes now. And myself, and my wife, and anybody else, but I was there for him on the day, you know, there, there are keys.

Him coming up, him getting his food, him getting his award. Why? Not because he's better looking or better dressed or got a higher degree than all the others. It's because he's ours. It's because he's your own particular child.

You delight in that graduate more than all the others. Some of whom achieved higher marks, some of whom have got higher quality degrees, some of whom maybe turned out better, but that doesn't matter because you're not there for these 180 other people.

You're there for your own child. And you delight in your own child. Not because of any particular qualities in them, but simply because they are your own.

[9 : 22] You wait for them. You watch for them. You delight in them. You glory in their achievement. You delight in what they do. You weep with them when things go wrong. You mourn with them when they have a disaster.

And you rejoice with them when they rejoice. And yes, they have faults and we have faults. And the Lord knows we all have faults. But he delights in his children because they are his.

The Lord taketh pleasure in his people. If, say, an artist or a craftsman was submitting work for an exhibition and he or she goes into the huge big gallery or whatever and there's all these people's sculptures and artwork or the stuff they've worked on and their productions, they're all there set out and you go through one gallery and through another and you can see all these things people have done and then you see your own work there.

Oh, there's mine there along with all these other people. That's my name. Maybe it's not as good as other people's. Maybe other people have got higher standards but that's your own there in the world and we glow off pride because it's your own.

I'm sure now this is an Olympic year. I don't know when the Olympics are due to start. I mean, you may have watched previous Olympic opening ceremonies perhaps especially the one that was in London and you know, you've got the parade of all the different countries coming in with their teams and their flags and so on and you see them all beginning with alphabetically Afghanistan, Albania and Belgium and so on Canada, China and your work down and all the way through now.

[10 : 57] Finally, oh, there's our team. There's the flag of United Kingdom. There's our team. Well, there's so-and-so. Hopefully they'll do well. Maybe they'll get a goal this time and you get a wee lift for your team.

Why? Because they're more successful. Not necessarily. Because they're a better team, better athletes? Probably not. But that's your country. and so you delight in your country you delight in your team you delight in your work you delight in your child the Lord taketh pleasure in his people precisely because they are his the previous verse is let them praise his name in the dance let them sing praises unto him with the timbre and the harp for because the Lord taketh pleasure in his people in other words the exuberant expression of delight in the Lord which this dancing refers to is precisely because the Lord takes pleasure in them now we tend not to associate dancing with worship and religious worship and so on but there are occasions when it of course has been expressed we think of Miriam of course and the women of Israel after they had been brought forth across the Red Sea and the Egyptians who were trying to kill them were destroyed in the Red Sea

Exodus 15 verses 20 and 21 Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances and Miriam answered them sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea and the women danced for joy because they had expected to be destroyed and instead they were free and alive because the Lord had delighted in his people likewise when David is bringing up the Ark of the Covenant from its place before or the house that it was in or Laminadad or the house of Obadi he done the Gittite into the city of David we read 2 Samuel 6 verse 13 it was so that when they had bare the Ark of the Lord had gone six paces he sacrificed oxen and fatlings and David danced before the Lord with all his might and David was girded with a linen ephod so David and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouting over the sound of the trumpet and as the Ark of the Lord came into the city of David

Michael Saul's daughter looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord and she despised him in her heart in verse 20 we read that when David returned to bless his house so Michael the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said how glorious was the king of Israel today who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself and David said unto Michael it was before the Lord it was for the Lord that David danced it was for the Lord that Miriam and the Israelite women danced you see this doesn't really bear a lot of resemblance to what we nowadays associate with so much that is called dancing and a lot of I'm not being overly puritanical or negative here but it is a fact that a great deal perhaps the vast majority of what we now call dancing with its musical accompaniment and so on has a sexual element to it and is not always of the greatest purity this is not what is being talked about here this is almost an explosion of gratitude to the Lord it's the neatest thing you can compare it to is if let's say your team or your sporting event and you're sitting in the stadium and you're watching the winning it's really tense and then either they get a goal or they score a point or whatever and you're saying oh thank you tremendous brilliant no you explode out of your seat you say yeah it's an explosion of joy an explosion of supreme victory when defeat might have been expected when disaster has followed before remember when David tried to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem before a man died because they did it not according to God's word and David was afraid of the Lord and he was depressed because of that and this time they tried to do it right this time they tried to do it according to God's word and according to the Levites and the priests carrying the Ark instead of putting it in a cart and so on and because they did it according to God's word

God accepted it and when they offered the sacrifices and David saw that God was receiving them instead of people dying there was life and there was joy and he explodes into this joy and this dance of delight and it says there if you remember dance with all his might and Ecclesiastes of course tells us there's a time to weep and a time to laugh a time to mourn and yes there is a time to dance but the expression of that dance is an outpouring an irrepressible outpouring of joy and gratitude to the Lord which just sitting still just doesn't cut it just mere singing just doesn't cut it it's a complete explosion it's a complete overpowering sense and there's just too much to be kept in the body that's the sense in which praising his name and the dance means exploding it to the Lord it is effectively such worship as cannot be contained such is the power within of it and this is quite different from worldly or secular or self-indulgent or sexual nature type dancing this is to the Lord and that's what

[17:12] David is saying of course when his wife says look at you today behaving yourself inappropriately and lewdly in front of members of the opposite sex and so on he says this was for the Lord this was to the Lord that I was dancing and that is the sense in which we have here that let them praise his name in the dance don't just say hey let them dance for all they like let them do in any kind of dance they want in any kind of music they want in any kind of behavior they want no let them praise his name in the dance let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and heart this is the context this is the expression of it and it is in whole fairness comparatively rare even in the Old Testament there these are the only instances that can be you know summed up just now there may be others that have been missed but it will always be in the context of worship of the Lord explosive exuberant worship of the Lord why are the Lord's people thus delighting in such a way that they simply can't keep it in and it is because the Lord takes pleasure in his people the Lord delights in them and we can't escape the fact that God does delight in his children it's a scripturally recorded fact in 1st Chronicles 29 verse 17 we read

I know also my God that thou tryest a heart and hast pleasure in uprightness as for me in the uprightness of my heart David says here I have willingly offered all these things and now I have seen with joy thy people which are present here to offer willingly unto thee that was pleasure in uprightness the Lord takes pleasure in the obeying and doing of his will remember Psalm 103 tells us likewise bless the Lord ye his angels that excel in strength that do his commandments hearken to the voice of his word bless ye the Lord all his host ye ministers or servants of his that do his pleasure bless the Lord bless the Lord all his works in all places of his dominion bless the Lord oh my soul the Lord takes pleasure in the obedience and faithfulness of his children the fact that they are his and the fact that they desire to obey him and serve him delights him he does not delight in their sins those of you who are parents you know that there will be times and there have been times in the past when your children have done that which you have forbidden them to do when they are disobeyed or when they've been bad and when they've had to be chastised or punished and you don't delight in the chastising and you don't delight in their disobedience or rudeness or cheat or whatever it may be but you don't love them any less you don't delight in them any less you hate the bad thing they have done just exactly as the Lord hates the sins of his children but loves his children nonetheless he taketh pleasure in his people when we see again going back to Isaiah 53 we see something again here of the pleasure that the Lord takes verse 10 yet it pleased the Lord to do what to bruise him does that mean the Lord some kind of sadistic pleasure in the sufferings of his son no of course not he hath put him to grief when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed his children he shall prolong his days in other words he will move forever and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand what is the pleasure of the Lord how can the Lord delight or please be pleased in the suffering of his only beloved son well only this as we read a few minutes ago verse 11 because he shall seal the travail of his soul this suffering this sacrifice of his only beloved son will bring forth a progeny a seed children to the Lord who can legitimately be his by adoption who could not be his by nature but are made his by the power of what Christ has done the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand the Lord takes pleasure in the bringing forth of his children from darkness to light from death into life from non-existence into the fullness of life again those of you who are parents there was a time when none of your children existed maybe we're not parents but we have been children and there was a time for our parents when we did not exist and they went along quite happily as a husband and a wife and whatever and they didn't have the family that they did and then their children came into the world one by one and the love that they had for each other didn't become diminished or chopped up and reduced

and somehow subdivided it just grew it grew to encompass each new child and each new one that was brought into the world they delighted in them and yes there is always a measure of discomfort and pain especially for the mother when each child is born but as Jesus says when the child is born she forgets as it were the pain and the suffering for joy of the child she holds in her arms there is delight there is pleasure in that baby in her arms and the love that she will have for her husband and he will have for her simply expands to encompass this new life and any new lives that are added thereafter it is not reduced it's not like one pie or one plate that's been chopped up and a little bit to you and a little bit to you so there's less now for the original couple there's more it's rather like two candles in a room and you've got all these unlit candles as you light each extra one the amount of candle power doesn't reduce just because it's being divided it increases as the light is spread the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand the Lord delights takes pleasure in his people in his children now he delights especially in that meekness that which is an ornament as Peter puts it you know it says let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price and I think it's Spurgeon again who said you know just the Lord loves his children but just as

Jacob loved all his sons but the meek are his Josephs upon whom he delights to bestow the cult of many colors this is what it says the Lord take a pleasure in his people he will beautify the meek with salvation he will save and deliver and you might think oh wait a minute just a second not all Christians are especially meek not all the Lord's people are renowned for their meekness no they may have other gifts they may have great strength and ability to argue for the Lord or great zeal or great strength and stamina in spreading the gospel maybe they're not renowned for being meek but the meekness will be in there it may be more expressed and more prominent in some than others but it will be in there as part of the fruit of the spirit and all that we can see perhaps is some some Christians who may seem to have very little meekness if you knew them before they were Christians you would see what they were by nature and there wouldn't be any meekness at all there and meekness shouldn't be mistaken simply for timidity it's not just shyness or repiety sometimes people once they come to know the

Lord they will shine up with it in a way that they didn't before when somebody knows that they are in love and that love is reciprocated it is sometimes said they positively glow when that radiates and when one comes to know the Lord we rejoice and delight in the fact that the Lord takes pleasure in us not for any goodness not for any virtues that we may have the Lord didn't choose any one of his children because of anything he saw in them he chose them just for love's sake ah yes but there must be some reason some purpose what have you behind it I know that we say in human times love is blind God is not blind he knows what he's doing he delights in his children he delights in what they bring to him what they offer to him as they are changed in their heart all that they bring to the Lord just as this is perhaps more appropriate for grandparents rather than for parents but if you think in terms you know it's refused this illustration before let's say your little grandchild presents you with this piece of paper on which there's basically a splattered mess of paint or cream and you look at this and you say oh that's lovely dear what is it and they say oh this is me here and this is you and this is our house and there's the garden and there's the garden and that's us doing the thing we did with the trip we went oh right

[27 : 24] I see okay that's lovely and you stick it up with a fridge magnet and what do you use it oh as soon as they've gone hopefully stick it in the bin no you don't you treasure that because they did it for you and it may not be the finest work of art that would grace in our gallery but it represents the love and devotion and effort of your little grandchild or your little child or whatever it may be and because it's there in pride of place on your fridge because they did it for you and they showed their love for you and you delight in that love even though in and of itself it may not be exactly a brilliant work of art 2nd Corinthians chapter 8 verse 12 which we often make reference to for if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath and not according to that he hath not the lord delights in his people the lord taketh pleasure in his people he will beautify the meek with salvation you see when people come to the lord they don't just love him but as john tells us we love him because he first loved us it is in many ways a mutual appreciation society and that love just grows and grows and grows and grows you know it's like it's like if you invest money with a high interest return thing you know money to do that and then let's say you invest in a thousand pounds and your interest rate means that that then increases by so much percent and now you've got a thousand plus the original interest and that increases the amount so you get more interest next time and that increases again so you get more interest next time and it's like that with the lord and with the love of his people that is god's initial love for us and then as john says we love him because he first loved us and that mutual nest egg is a part of love then grows and increases and matures and there is more power in the love and more endurance in the love it's why although the young probably can't understand it why those in old age who are old and wrinkly and have perhaps been married for say 50 years or something are truthfully able to say that they love their spouse more than they did on the day of their wedding and the young look at that that's ridiculous because you know look at the love and look at the photograph yeah I can see why they love each other then because you know that young and beautiful and handsome or whatever that thinks come on look at them now but the love has increased it has matured it is layer upon layer it has grown it is strengthened just like the love of the lord for his people and their love for him let them praise his men in the dance let them sing praises on them with the timbrel and the harp because for the lord taketh pleasure in his people he will beautify and meek with salvation you see when they are the lords they do all manner of other things the high praise of the lord be in their mouth a two-edged sword in their hand what is the sword that we are told about in the new testament is the sword of the spirit which is the word of god it is quick and sharp with an two-edged sword dividing asunder into the dividing asunder of soul and spirit to execute vengeance upon the heathen well what is the ultimate revenge upon the heathen and punishments upon the people is it not to show the emptiness of all the false gods of the world by giving to them and offering them the true god and the true salvation there is not vicious punishment here there is the delight and opportunity the vengeance upon the heathen is vengeance upon the false gods it is the opportunity of salvation to execute vengeance upon them to bind their kings with chains their nobles with fetters of iron is this not to demonstrate

to the rulers of this world how far they can go and the extent to which beyond they cannot pass they can put the apostles in prison but they can't keep them there the door swings open and Peter walks out into the open street they can whip the apostles of God but they can't silence them he ought to obey God rather than men they said they can put Paul in silence in the innermost dungeon and yet the earthquake loosens all their fetters and the jailer springs in terrified and he says do thyself no harm we're all here and he comes in and challenges what must I do to be saved it doesn't matter how many you kill you can kill the body but you just usher their souls into glory you can burn the bibles but you can't take it out the people's hearts the tyrants will die the tyrants will be bound and laid in the grave but the word of God is not bound it binds their kings with chains it shows them the extent of their power and the limitations of it to execute upon them the judgment written this honor of all his saints praise ye the Lord now when we read the word judgment we think oh condemnation but as we pointed out often in the past the word that is translated as judgment in the Old Testament translates pretty much into the word justice in the New it's not oh the Lord pouring out wrath upon the nations it's the Lord doing exactly what is perfect and right for the believer and for the unbeliever the unbeliever departs this life rejecting and hating the living God does he want to spend an eternity with his God he has spent his life rejecting is God going to force his hand and frog march him into a glory where he doesn't want to be no the Lord gives him exactly what he desires he wanted nothing of the Lord in this world he will have nothing of the Lord in eternity he will be in a place where the comfortable presence of the Lord does not go behold the goodness and severity of the Lord but the Lord taketh pleasure in his people he will beautify the meek with salvation

Zephaniah tells us chapter 3 verse 17 the Lord thy God in the midst of he is mighty he will save he will rejoice over thee with joy he will rest in his love he will joy over thee with singing just as the Lord's people are taught to praise to glorify to dance and explode with joy over him let them sing praises and then the Lord rejoices over his people with singing for the Lord taketh pleasure in his people he will beautify the meek with salvation yes there's nothing in us which is worthy of God's love but then every couple that ever fell in love always look at themselves and think well what on earth do they see in me why would they want me but love isn't concerning well that's okay they've got that quality take the box they've got that take the box they satisfy that take the box yep okay I think I'm balanced yep this is the one I'm going to commit my life to love is not like that love involves the whole body and soul and mind and person and when we give ourselves to the Lord it is because he has first given himself to us for the Lord taketh pleasure in his people not for any good in them save the good that he has his stone upon them save the grace that he had implanted in them save the life into which he has brought them there is nothing in them but what he has given them but he delights in them and takes pleasure in them because they are his let's pray

All right good yeah thank you well I think made it perfect I do have to go to my attention on and do bless me