

The Glory of God as the Ground of the Mind's Certainty

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the interconnectedness between the Word of God, the glory of God, the satisfaction of the soul, and the certainty of the human mind. It delves into the profound revelation of God's glory in the Bible and the transformative power of seeing and experiencing this glory, leading to a deep conviction and lasting contentment. The speaker highlights the importance of recognizing the divine beauty and truth within the Scriptures, ultimately pointing to the new birth and the profound impact of encountering the glory of God in Christ.

Duration: 1:07:17

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:4, John 1:14, Psalms 19:1, 1 Peter 1:23, John 14:9

Topics: "Interconnectedness of Scripture and Glory", "Transformative Power of God's Revelation"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you, Pastor Craven, Gene, and all the staff who have opened your hearts and church to us, and thank you for coming. And it is an unbelievably wonderful privilege just to make this connection again. I didn't realize this was going to happen, but our connection goes way back.

He showed me a picture that he has of me and my dad, who went to be with Jesus in 2007, and him, so lots of good memories, and especially the one about Carson and Shelley. Thanks for opening your place to them when they needed it. Before I pray, I'm really excited about this message.

I'm excited about all my messages. That's a gift that God gives to preachers. They love what they're about to say.

Nobody else does. But I'm unusually excited about this because I wrote a book in the spring about the authority of Scripture, and God opened windows to me of connections that I'd never seen before between what I've given my whole life to regarding Christian hedonism and the authority of the Bible and how you can know it's true. And so that's what I want to talk about.

You're the first person who's ever heard this message, and I wrote it a week ago, trying to pull everything together from the last six months or so, or nine months, and you need to know I'm excited. So, let's go pray and ask God to do something with it unusual. Father, I know that my excitement is not going to make an eternal difference in anybody's life, but you will, and we have not because we ask not, like Gene said, and I ask you to come, Holy Spirit, in this room and rest, as it were, dove-like, fire-like, roaring sound-like, however you want to do it, rest upon this people so that there's an unusual receptiveness to whatever is true.

I pray that you would help their minds especially. It's the evening. The day's been long.

There's weariness, and this is a demanding message intellectually, and so I pray for minds to be alert. Peter says, gird up the loins of your minds and set your hope fully. So, we need girded minds now, and I pray for hearts tuned and ready to be stirred by whatever beauty you reveal of yourself and your Word.

I ask this in Jesus' name and for your glory. Amen. So, my aim is to show the relationships between four things, the Word of God, the glory of God, the satisfaction of the soul, the human soul, and the certainty of the human mind.

Let me say this again. I want to weave together, like I've never done before, the Word of God, the Bible, the glory of God, the satisfaction of the human heart or soul, and the certainty. We should be certain that the Bible is the Word of God.

I just hope it is. Certainty of the human mind concerning the truth of the Word of God. That's my general aim.

Now, to be more specific, I'll put in a sentence the relationships I'm going to draw out. I'm going to make this point. Namely, that in and through the Word of God, the Bible, the glory of God becomes the ground of the mind's certainty and the goal of the soul's satisfaction.

That's the connections. Or to put it another way, in the Bible, the glory of God reveals itself to be inescapably real and to be incomparably rewarding. Nothing could be more true.

Nothing could be more precious. In one sighting by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, we see the glory of God and it becomes the ground of our mind's certainty and the goal forever of our soul's satisfaction. Now, that involves a massive and wonderful implication, and I'll state the implication four ways so you get it.

Number one, the quest for truth and the quest for joy are one quest. Number two, the path to unshakeable conviction and the path to unending contentment are one path. Third, knowing for sure and rejoicing forever happen by the same discovery, namely the glory of God in the Word of God.

And fourth, the way you know for sure what is true and the way you find your supreme treasure is the same, namely by seeing the glory of God in the Word of God. Especially in the saving work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ authoritatively narrated in the Word of God. So that's the big picture, and the rest of our

time is trying to unpack that.

That is real new to me. That feels really fresh. The connection of the mind's certainty and the soul's satisfaction through the Word of God in the glory of God, I've never preached on before.

So here you just, this is it. Test all things, hold fast to what is good. So it comes in two halves, a familiar one.

John Piper junkies will hear this. You will know it. For almost 50 years of my life now, I have been trying to understand and proclaim and live the relationship between the glory of God and the happiness of my soul.

That's not new. I've been working on that for 50 years. And I said intentionally, I've been trying to understand it.

I've been trying to proclaim it. I've been trying to live it. And I just need to say publicly, I think I understand it and proclaim it better than I live it.

It just needs to be said, because a bunch of you are here because John Piper is some kind of celebrity. Just, if you only knew, if you only knew my failures to live my theology, just call up Noel sometime and ask her. So just know that when you go hear a preacher, he is talking above himself.

I mean, if he's worth his salt, he's talking above himself. For goodness sakes, if I only shared with you what I accomplished, that would be terrible. I should tell you what's here, whether I succeed tomorrow when I get home in showing it effectively to my wife or not.

And you just pray for me that I would do better at being consistent in my life what God has granted me to see with my eyes. So it is my goal for these last 50 years to try to see the relationship between the glory of God and the happiness of man, and to understand it, and to proclaim it, and write about it, and then go home and get a C-minus on implementation. That's still my goal to get that up to a C or B before I'm done.

No joke. Deep down, I think there are reasons for why I gave 50 years of my life to this. I think one of the reasons is the way I grew up down in Greenville, or that way, whatever it is.

And the other reason is because written on every human heart deep down is the truth that the ultimate goal of God in creating the world and redeeming the world is that His glory should be magnified through our being happy in Him. That may sound strange to you, like, that's not written on my heart. Yes, it is.

Deep down under all the repressions, or all the suppressions that Romans 1 talks about, you were made for the glory of God, and you know it. Paul says that in Romans 1 20 to 23. You were made to reflect the worth of your Maker.

I know that about every one of you in this room. You were made by God to reflect the worth of God on this planet. That's why you exist.

You were made to do that by being more satisfied in God than you are in anything else, and you know that. You know that. The reason I know that you know that is because every person knows deep down we magnify the worth of what we enjoy most.

You know that. We magnify the value to us of what we enjoy most. Everybody knows that, and therefore everybody knows He is an idolater.

I'm talking every human on the planet knows this. Every human on the planet knows there's a God. This God is worthy of being made much of because He made us, rules the world, blessed us with untold things in this world.

We know deep down we are made for Him to magnify Him, to show His worth, and we know because we experience it all day long every day, we magnify what we enjoy most. You read people that way. You know what they value by what they enjoy.

Oh yes, you do, and therefore you know it about yourself, and therefore you know you're an idolater because nobody enjoys God the way God deserves to be enjoyed. Nobody without the Holy Spirit's miracle work of new birth enjoys God more than any. You don't need the Bible to teach you that.

It is written on your heart, which is why everybody's responsible in the world, and people will be judged in that the last day God will not have the slightest problem showing everybody to be guilty of their own standards. So I think one of the reasons John Piper has given 50 years of his life to trying to figure this out is because it's written on my heart. I just can't get away from it, and the other reason is because in growing up in Bill Piper's home, Ruth Piper's home, I knew two things beyond doubt.

Number one, I knew because my parents taught me, and then I saw it in the Bible, that God expected me to glorify him in everything. And secondly, I knew by the age of 13 I wanted to be happy. I mean it was true earlier.

I just didn't think about it, but by the time I'm a teenager, I'm thinking I really want to be happy. I really want to be happy. The Bible says whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

My dad probably quoted that verse to me as much as any other verse. Johnny, whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. It's just there.

I never doubted that, ever. That's what God expects of me, so that you've got this blazing certainty in my soul. God expects me to do everything for his glory, and you've got this other indomitable reality in my teenage soul.

I want to be happy. I really want to be happy, and I knew I didn't choose to want to be happy. I just wanted to be happy, which means I'm just wired that way.

I knew deep down John Piper is a wanter. He's a desirer. He's a loner.

He's a yearner. He's a craver. That's who I am.

I could not deny it, and I didn't know then what I know now, namely that that's the way God made me, and it's not sin. It's human. It's the meaning of humanity in part of its essence.

To be human is to want. You wouldn't be human if you didn't want. Desire, long, yearn, ache, hope.

That's human. That's human. God made Adam without sin as a loner, a desirer, and I never in those years could put the two, knowing I've got to give God glory in everything I do.

I've got to make God look great. I've got to live for the glory of God, and I want to be happy. I want.

I want. I long. I ache, and it was a strange and perplexing thing.

I know. I knew then. I know now that I was made to desire, to seek and find happiness.

I was made to long for and discover joy. I was made to want and attain full satisfaction. That's why I was made.

Namely, I was made to find happiness in God. I was made to find joy in God. I was made to find satisfaction in God.

So, when I was growing up, they didn't fit very well. They felt to be at odds. Give glory to God.

Pursue my happiness and find satisfaction wherever that might be. There were things in the air. I wonder if they're still in the air in South Carolina.

Where are we? Is this South Carolina? Yeah, okay. South Carolina, the flooded state. I've been thinking about that a lot, praying for the folks.

Is it still in the air here that somebody would come to church, a missionary speaker maybe, and they would say, are you willing to lay down your life and willing to lay down your desires and choose the will of God? There it is again. Got to choose. Got to choose.

It's either God or happiness, but they didn't mean that probably. If I had the sense to ask them, do you mean that? They probably would have gave me a good answer, but I didn't ask. Because I knew there were Bible verses that supported what they said.

First Peter 4-2, you should live the rest of your time in the flesh no longer for human desires before the will of God. That's the Bible, not a missionary speaker. Mark 8-34, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

The thought that God never intended for His greatest glory and my greatest happiness not to be alternatives, the thought that He never intended them to be alternatives, never entered my mind. It just felt like they were, and that's the way it was going to be, and I had to choose. The thought that God might be glorified in my being happy in Him never occurred to me in those years.

And then I turned 22 and went to Pasadena, California, and my world changed forever. Three waves broke over me to turn things around, and I'll describe those to you. It was a terrifying time and an exhilarating time.

You know, when your mind is being dismantled and your theology, your vision of God, your understanding of your own soul is being ripped to shreds and put back together, it's painful. So a lot of tears. I remember going home after certain classes.

You can picture my desk. I put my elbows on the side of the table, and I would go like this and cry. I couldn't even put my finger on.

It was just when you're being unraveled intellectually, things you've been assuming for 20 years are just being unraveled by Bible, by Bible, just Bible. Men's opinions, who cares? But when Bible starts unraveling your brain, that's worth crying about and hoping. So it was a terrifying and exhilarating time, and the rest of my life was totally changed, and I would not be here if these waves had not broken over me.

So here's what God did, and I hope He's done it for you or will. Number one, I saw first that the pursuit of God's glory was not only supposed to be my ultimate goal, but that it was God's ultimate goal in everything that He did, which upped the ante of my duty off the charts of the universe. Like, whoa, this is not just a good idea that God has for humanity.

This is who God is in His own pursuit of His own glory. I just saw it cover to cover in the Bible. God does everything He does from predestination to consummation to uphold, display, and communicate His glory.

That's what God does. Isaiah 48, 9, For my name's sake I defer my anger, says the Lord. For the sake of my praise I restrain it for you that I may not cut you off.

For my own sake, for my own sake I do it. How should my name be profane? My glory I will not give to another. I think that is the most God-centered two verses in the Bible.

That is the most God's God-centeredness two verses in the Bible. Zillions of God-centered verses in the Bible. This is the most God-God-centered.

That God's being God-centered in this verse. I'm doing everything for my glory. I will not share it with anybody.

Get on board or you're out of here. And when you're not prepared for that, that doesn't sound nice. It's not the God in my Sunday school.

Nobody ever said that to me. Nobody said that to me in Greenville, South Carolina. That God exists for God.

That God pursues His own glory in everything He does. And so my 1 Corinthians 10, 31 orientation on the glory of God just got blown to smithereens until I saw, okay, if that's really true, then He's not just saying I should live for the glory of God. He's saying I should join God in glorifying God.

This is God's main mission in the universe. Creates the world, redeems the world, saves the world, makes a new world for the magnification of His glory. Get on board.

Join Him. This would be another talk we could do. I think the fullness of the Holy Spirit, that is come Holy Spirit means get God in you glorifying God.

You can't do this the way you should, but God in you can do it. The Holy Spirit was sent, why? According to John 16, 14. To magnify Jesus Christ, to glorify Jesus Christ.

I will send the Comforter and He will glorify me, Jesus said. Well, who's the Spirit? He's the Spirit of Jesus glorifying Jesus. He's the Spirit of God glorifying God.

We must have the Holy Spirit in order to glorify God by the power of God who is totally devoted to glorifying God. That was a wave that broke over me and was like a Copernican revolution. You will know where you line up in whether you're at home with that or whether that sounds, I don't know if I want to go there.

Brad Pitt, Michael Prowse, C.S. Lewis, a bunch of others I've got catalogued not in this talk, all threw God away because of his self-centeredness until God changed C.S. Lewis and maybe will change Brad Pitt. Don't throw God away if that sounds strange to you. That's wave number one.

Second wave that broke over me in my 23rd year was the discovery that my desires were not too strong but too weak. And the remedy for my early perplexity did not lie in getting rid of my desires but on bluffing them on God. That was revolutionary to me.

But your problem longing, aching, yearning, wanting, John Piper, is that you don't yet want like you ought to want. I will come to you and I will put a fire under the fire of want. You wouldn't want.

You don't know what want is. I'll show you what want is. And he puts his glory in front of you.

He fills you with his Holy Spirit and you discover what want is. C.S. Lewis was the one who unlocked the door. I'm standing in Vroman's bookstore on Colorado Avenue having read, I think, Mere Christianity and that was all in college.

I look at a table. I think they were on sale or something while they're out on the table. A little blue book called The Weight of Glory by C.S. Lewis.

I pick it up and I open to the first page and read this. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial but not about self-denial as an end in itself. Boy has it got my attention.

We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do contains an appeal to desire. If there lurks in the most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit this notion crept in from Immanuel Kant and the Stoics and has no part in the Christian faith. Are you kidding me? No part? I thought it was the part.

Has no part in the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by a holiday at the sea.

We are far too easily pleased. I have written many times, books don't change people, paragraphs change people. That's all you remember when you're done with the book.

That, that's enough. That's world-shaking. Whatever else was in the book, that changed the world.

And then I saw it, of course, as you have all over the Bible. As a deer pants for the flowing streams, so my pants, so, not my pants, start over again, get that one right, edit, or leave it, it's funny. As a deer pants for the flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God, my soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When shall I come and behold God? Psalm 42. Psalm 43, then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy. Psalm 37, delight yourself in the Lord, give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 100, verse 2, serve the Lord with gladness, to sin to serve the Lord another way. Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice, Philippians 4. So, the mandate, the mandate from God, to enjoy God, was not, to my amazement, marginal. This was central, this was pervasive.

Being satisfied in God was not icing on the cake of Christianity. It wasn't to caboose at the end of the train. Don't mean to be offending anybody, except a little bit.

It was the essence and the heart of Christianity. Christianity, now get this Southern Bible Belt people, Christianity, Presbyterian, Baptist, you name it, Christianity is not a willpower religion. It is not a religion of decisions to do what you don't want to do.

It is a supernatural work of God by which you are born again, so that you want God more than you want anything. And if you don't want God more than you want anything, you're not a Christian. That's what the new birth is.

It takes hearts that are in love with the world, and puts them in love with Christ, and His Father, and the Gospel, and the glory of being saved and promised to go into everlasting paradise of joy. And if it's a ho-hum, boring, insignificant thing to you, and everything else in the world is real to you, you're not a Christian. I don't care how many decisions you've made, how many aisles you've walked, how many cards you've signed, I don't care what you do, what church you go to, that's not Christianity.

That was the revolution for me. It is very threatening, yes it is. It's terrifying to learn that my heart has to be changed in order to be a Christian.

I have to have values that are new, passions that are new, desires that are new, joys that are new. New things make me happy. I don't need to start going to church.

Yuck! Who wants to call that Christianity? It's not. That was a revolution for me. My desires were not too strong, they were too weak, because to become a Christian is to be given a new heart, which means new passions, new desires, new longings.

Jesus now is your highest treasure. I count everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord, is normal Christianity, not graduate school. Third wave that broke over me, the most important, the one that put them together was the discovery that God's pursuit of God's glory and his beckoning me to join him in it, and the not only permission, but rightness and necessity of pursuing my happiness in God above all things, were not only not at odds, they were one.

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him is the summary of my 50-year pilgrimage. I saw it simultaneously in a class with Dan Fuller. I saw it in Edwards.

I saw it in Philippians, and it just... Here's Edwards, Jonathan Edwards, my most...if I were to write, Gene, if I were to write my most influential whatever person, it would be Edwards. Probably my dad subconsciously, but Edwards consciously. Here's what he wrote, God glorifies himself toward the creatures in two ways.

One, by appearing to their understanding. Two, in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing in the manifestations which he makes of himself. God is glorified not only by his glory being seen, but being rejoiced in.

That was it. I'd never read a sentence like that in my life. I'll say it again.

God is glorified not only by his glory being seen, and thus understood truly, but by his glory being rejoiced in. Never seen it. When those that see it, delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it.

His glory is then received by the whole soul, both by the understanding and by the heart. That was another Copernican revelation. Are you kidding me? If that's true, my quest for the either-or is over.

There is no either-or. It's not get on board with God's passion for God and his glory, or get on board with your joy. That was a paralyzing and false dichotomy.

Here's what I saw in Philippians. Edwards is not your authority, not mine. The Bible is.

So, here's where I saw it in the Bible. Philippians chapter 1 verse 20 goes like this. Very familiar.

You know it. You don't even look it up. You test that I'm quoting it right, because you know it.

It is my eager expectation, Paul says, verse 20 Philippians 1. It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Question, how is Christ magnified in Paul's body, according to this text? Answer, whether by life or by death. Question number two, how is Christ magnified in his body? By death.

Answer, because when he dies, it is gained. Now, logic is not working yet for me. There's a missing premise.

How does this work? The missing premise is given down in verse 23, where it says, my desire is to depart and be with Christ because, finish it. Come on, it's the Bible. Yes, thank you.

It is far better. It is far better when I die. Okay, now the logic goes like this.

My passion is that Christ would be magnified in my body as I die. How can that be? Because as I die, I lose everything on this earth and call it gain because I get Jesus. Now, what's the connection between the enormous satisfaction he feels right there in Jesus and Jesus being magnified? That's what I saw for the first time.

It says, I want Christ to be magnified. He will be magnified when I die. Why will he be magnified when I die? Because when I die, I'm saying gain satisfaction on the way in the presence of Jesus.

Therefore, Jesus is looking really good right now as I die. Get that? You get that? Christ is most magnified in Paul's dying because in his dying, he's most satisfied in Christ. That's not John Piper's theology.

That's Paul's theology. Christ is made to look really good on the deathbed as the dying one looks into heaven and says, no offense family, but gain. May God help us.

May God help us die that life. I know it's not that easy. I know it's not because you don't always have your mind.

You can't remember this text at that moment. Tubes poking in everywhere. You may be unconscious.

I know it's not that easy, which is why we love his keeping, right? We love his keeping through the last perhaps senile years when we're not making any sense to ourselves or anybody in God knows heart. Those are my three discoveries when I was 23 years old, 22, 23, and for the last 50 years or so, that's what I've been trying to work out the implications of. Namely, God is most glorified in us when we're most satisfied in him, and therefore I don't have to choose in my teenage dilemma between living for the glory of God and living for John Piper's ultimate joy and fullest happiness.

They are one because God is most glorified in me when I'm most satisfied in him, and you know that is true because you live it every day. You know if you want to test somebody and what they are valuing most, you look at what drives their joy, what thrills their hearts, and that is what they value and what they make much of, and that's what you make much of, what you are most satisfied in, which brings me now to February and the new book that I wrote and the whole other half of this message. It's really not half.

The next part of this message, somebody says to John Piper right now, wow, you just staked a lot on the Bible. How do you know it's true? You treat the Bible, you treat a book written by men as the Word of God. How do you know it's the Word of God? I mean you just talk like you would stake your life on the truths of that book, and I would.

How do you know? And here's the amazing thing. To make that point, to answer that question does not take us in a different direction than we've been on for the last half hour. Rather, to repeat myself, the quest for truth and the quest for joy are one quest.

The path to unshakable conviction and the path to unending contentment is the same path. Knowing for sure and rejoicing forever happen in the same discovery, namely the glory of God in the Word of God. And the way that God has planned for us to know for sure what is true and the way that He has planned for us to find our supreme treasure is the same way, namely by seeing the glory of God in the Word of God, especially in His saving work.

So, the book I wrote is, Lord willing, going to be called when it's published next February, March, A Peculiar Glory, subtitle, How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness. And to put it in a sentence, the way the Scriptures reveal their complete truthfulness is by embodying in their words and in their meaning the self-authenticating glory of God, so that whoever has eyes to see can see it and know this is the Word of God. The glory of God is really there.

It's really there. It's not in the eye of the beholder. That's what the world will say.

It's not in the eye of the beholder. It is objectively in the Word of God. And if the veil is lifted from the eyes of our heart, that's a phrase from Ephesians 1:17, where Paul is praying that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened.

If the veil is lifted from the eyes of our heart, we see the glory of God in the Word of God, and we know, just as we know, the sun is up. How would you prove that the sun is up? Run an experimentation on the speed of the earth since yesterday afternoon? You would say, there it is. I see it, and you stake your life on it.

And it's that kind of spiritual seeing. So, what turns out is that in the Word of God, the glory of God is both the ground of the mind's certainty and the goal of the soul's satisfaction. The glory of God shows itself to be inescapably real to the mind, no denying it, and incomparably rewarding to the heart.

So, when your eyes are opened, nothing could be more true, nothing could be more satisfying, both in one seeing of the glory of God. So, let me take the rest of our time and give you some maybe, I don't know how many I've got, four or five quick analogies or glimpses of what I'm talking about, because that just sounds theoretical. Well, maybe that's theoretically true.

Maybe the words work, but I'm not sure I haven't experienced what you're talking about, which may sound scary. Ever since I got serious about the question, how we can know the Bible is true, like about, you

know, the end of my teenage years when you start, how do we know? How do we know? I'm being asked to shape my whole life around this or maybe stake my whole life on this, and how do you know? Ever since I got serious about the question, how can you know that the Bible is true, it has seemed to me that the most urgent question isn't how to answer the objections of the new atheists or the old atheists, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, etc., but rather the most urgent question has seemed to me to be, how is it that an uneducated Muslim villager in the bush of Nigeria can hear the gospel, believe it, believe it, three weeks later die for it without being a fool? That's to me way more urgent. How can the tribesman of Papua New Guinea, can't read, never seen a book in his life, after six months of the Bible being narrated, remember these, seeing these videos, these great stories, after six months of the Bible being narrated, explode with faith in what he's heard as the gospel is told from the scriptures, and be ready as another tribe disagrees to give his life and not be a fool? How can he know so much, so well, so sure he will die for it? That's to me the urgent question, and I think God answers that question in the way he has shown me and Jonathan Edwards has shown me, namely, that a divine glory self-authenticating beauty of God in the scriptures shines forth from the Bible through the gospel and authenticates itself in the hearts of those in whom the Holy Spirit is removing the sinful blinders.

So, I'm going to give you about four or five analogies so you can test this now. Is this true? Does this have any anchor in my experience? Can I catch on to what he's saying so I could follow this in experience, not just talk? Number one, these are glimpses or sightings of what I'm talking about. Jonathan Edwards saw the issue clearly for me.

He was a missionary to the Indians after he was evicted out of his church, and he was a missionary to the Indians from 1751 to 1758. So, he's the greatest mind America has ever produced. Most people agree about that.

This is the greatest intellect America has ever produced, then or now, in a little teeny town ministering to a few dozen Indians. And this is what he wrote about that experience even before he got there. Miserable is the condition of the Housatonic Indians and others who have lately manifested a desire to be instructed in Christianity if they can come at no evidence of the truth of Christianity sufficient to induce them to sell all for Christ in any other way than by the path of historical reasoning.

That was a complicated sentence. If I keep reading, it might get clear. The mind ascends to the truth of the gospel, but by one step, and that is its divine glory.

Unless man may come to a reasonable – that word carried a ton of freight for Edwards – a reasonable, solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel by the internal evidences of it, by the sight of its glory, it is impossible that those who are illiterate and unacquainted with history should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all. When I read that in seminary, I said, that's right, which is why I never had the motivation to spend too much time on sophisticated intellectual apologetics. I believe in them with all my heart.

I think God uses them in settings where people are educated. But the issue in the world today for billions of people is if they hear the gospel read from a holy book, and they're called upon to follow the Jesus of the holy book, the Bible, and they believe and are tested with their lives two weeks later, will they be idiots for dying, or will they have a reasonable persuasion, this is true? That's the issue in apologetics at the grassroots. Edwards is arguing that the path to a well-grounded, reasonable conviction of the truth of the gospel is the path that a Nigerian villager or a Papuan tribesman can follow because their eyes are

opened to see in and through the word of God, and the glory of God becoming their mind's certainty and their soul's satisfaction.

Number two, have you ever pondered your own experience of Psalm 19 verse 1, the analogy of seeing the glory of God in nature? So, I'm drawing an analogy for you now. I'm arguing that when you have eyes, as you read this book, the glory of God is mediated in and through its words and meaning to your mind and through the eyes of your heart, so that you see divine glory and know this is of God. That's what I'm arguing.

And now I'm suggesting that all of you have tasted a little bit like this when you've at the galaxies, because here's what Psalm 19 verse 1 says, the heavens are telling the glory of God. Do they to you? If they do, you get it! Be careful, because my guess is some of you, what you really see in the heavens is the glory of the heavens. The Bible says the glory of the heavens is a window onto something you cannot see with physical eyes, but only with the eyes of the heart, namely God's glory.

Do you see it? Does nature and your own physical eyes become for you a kind of lens through which then another reality, God, is mediated to a Spirit-awakened soul that can see and spiritually assess the value of God's glory? Here's the way Paul talks about it. I referred to this earlier about things being written on John Piper's heart back in those days that I thought were written on everybody's heart. Okay, this is the text I was talking about.

What can be known about God is plain to them. Everybody, he's saying, because God has shown it to them, for His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and His divine nature, which is a big term, have been clearly perceived in the things that have been made since the creation of the world. So, they are without excuse for although they knew God.

Wow, what a statement. Everybody in South Carolina knows God, period. And in Africa, and in Asia, and in South America, and in Australia, and even lurkers on Antarctica.

Everybody knows God, the Bible says. Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him, which means they must have known they should, or they wouldn't be responsible. But he says they're without excuse.

So, what we're supposed to get from the nature, the world, is God is glorious, which is what Psalm 19 says. So, I'm just laying it out there for you. Do you see the glory of God when you look at nature? If you do, and I hope you do, because this is a little more accessible.

We kind of get this a little better. If you do, you have a handle on what I'm talking about. Namely, if the world of God makes you responsible to see in it the glory of God, and thus know God made the world, how much more the Word of God will make you responsible to see in it the glory of God that it is the Word of God.

That's the analogy I'm drawing for you, and I press it on you. I urge you, if this makes sense to you with regard to nature, pray that it will begin to make sense to you with regard to the Bible. That's number two.

Number three glimpse is the incarnation, God becoming flesh, and the analogy between, okay, there's a man, Jesus of Nazareth. You can touch him. He eats.

He gets tired. He sleeps. He walks.

He's a man, real man, not a masquerade man. He's a real man, and he is. Do you see that? Ninety percent of the people didn't.

John 1:14, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. No wonder Jesus said, blessed are your eyes, and when Peter confessed him, he said, flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. My Father did.

He said, my Father took away the sinful blinders that tough us up and keep us from seeing divine glory wherever it is, Bible, nature, in this case, Jesus. John 14:8, Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father. It's enough, and Jesus said to him, have I been so long with you, Philip, and you don't know me? That gets you crucified and takes the breath of believers away.

Have I been so long with you, and you don't know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us? Let this sink in. Jesus was a man the way this is a human book.

It's a real human book. Real words, real grammar, prepositions, verbs, subjects, objects, participles, in Greek, in English, real human book. Jesus was a real man, and God will hold every single soul in Palestine between 30 and 33 AD accountable for whether they saw God or not, and whether you see God or not.

That's the third analogy. It is a weighty matter. Number four, and this is the last one, and perhaps the most important one, and I'm almost done.

The final citing or analogy is between seeing the glory of God and thus the truth of God in the book and seeing it in the gospel, which is the main story of the book, right? So, I've got a text in mind. This text was enormous for Jonathan Edwards, and his sermon about it, The Divine and Supernatural Light, has been enormous for me, but here's what the text says. Second Corinthians 4:4, the God of this world, that's Satan, the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

So, if God would be pleased to remove the blindness, what would you see? Here's the phrase again, the light, there's a light. It's not a physical light. It's not physical light.

If this is all gibberish to you, you don't know who you are yet as a human being. You're just walking like an animal through the world on your senses. You're a human being in the image of God.

You have written on your heart things about you that give you capacities. If God would just strip away the sinful crusts over the eyes of your heart, you would know yourself capable of seeing and enjoying things that as a mere human, a mere fallen creature, you can't. And what would you see? You would see, it says, the light of the gospel.

So, the gospel that is Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was raised from the dead for our scriptures, for our sins according to the scriptures. That gospel has a light shining out of it.

It shines in Papua New Guinea, shines in Nigeria, shines wherever it is faithfully spoken from the book. It shines, and what is it a light of? It is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. So, the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, is at the heart of the good news, which is why we can know it's true.

And the best news of all is, two verses later, God takes away the blindness. I'll read you verse six. God who said, let light shine out of darkness.

In other words, He's comparing it to the first creation, let there be light, and He's comparing that to what has to happen in me. God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. That's the new birth.

That's the new creation. That's how you become a Christian. God stands over the tomb of your Lazarus-encased soul, and He says, Lazarus, come forth! Or, John Piper, live! And the first mark of your living is, you are glorious.

You are beautiful. You are undeniably true and my treasure. That's the new birth.

That's what you see. That's what you feel. When you have a new mind and new heart, the Christ who just raised you from the dead is your all.

We sang it. I heard you singing it. I hope you meant it.

So, concluding sentences. In becoming a Christian, being born again, God reveals to us in the Word of God, reveals to us in the Bible, both the ground of the mind's certainty and the goal of the soul's satisfaction. He opens our eyes to see that the glory of God standing forth from the properly understood pages of this book, that glory is both inescapably real, you can no more deny it than you could deny on the broad noon day that the sun is up.

It is inescapably real, and it is incomparably rewarding. In one miracle moment, the sight of His glory implants – I get that phrase from James 1.18 – implants solid conviction and sweet contentment. The quest for the fountain of truth and the fountain of joy, the quest for the fountain of certainty and the fountain of satisfaction are over.

They are one fountain, not two. They are the glory of God. The light of that glory, in the light of that glory, we know for sure and we rejoice forever.

So, Lord, as these thoughts from your Word are laid out, I ask that you would cause people here to be born again. Because it says in 1 Peter 1.23, we are born again through the living and abiding Word of God. All flesh is like grass, and its glory is like the flower of grass.

The grass withers, and the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever. And that Word is the gospel that was preached to you. That's how people experience the miracle of their eyes opening to the truth and the beauty of your Word and your gospel and yourself.

Do that, I pray in Jesus' name.

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