

Nature and Character of God

What Is God Like?

August 25, 2019

I. The nature and character of God as seen in **Psalm 16:11**

- A. Today, we will continue our study on the nature and character of God, and we will look at His nature and character through the words in **Psalm 16:11** . . . “You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”
- B. This psalm contains three truths about the nature and character of God, and David uses them to describe his experience with God. These three truths are:
 - 1. **First**, You will make known to me the path of life.
 - 2. **Second**, in Your presence is fullness of joy.
 - 3. **Third**, in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

C. Prayer

II. First statement: **You will make known to me the path of life**

- A. This statement contains two primary truths about God’s character and nature that should drive us to love Him and worship Him.
 - 1. **First**, God knows the path of life.
 - 2. **Second**, God willingly and freely tells us what He knows about the path of life.
- B. The first primary truth is implied by the fact that **God makes known** the path of life. The logic is simple, for God to **make known** the path of life, He **must know** the path of life.
 - 1. Jesus made four statements, that when put together, give us a larger perspective on the fact that God knows the path of life.
 - a. In **John 6:44-45**, Jesus said, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. [45] It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.”
 - b. In **John 14:6**, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

- c. In **John 10:10**, Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
- d. And in **Matthew 7:13-14**, Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. [14] For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
2. What we learn from Jesus’ words is that there are only two paths available for us to take, the path of life or the path that leads to destruction.
 - a. Of the two paths, it is the thief, that is, it is the devil, the world, and our flesh who are invested in knowing and showing the way to this path of corruption, destruction, and death.
 - b. In the same way, it is God who knows the path of life, and who knows the way to the path of life, and who knows what is required to travel the path of life, and who shows us the way to the path of life.
3. My point is that these statements from Jesus enlarge our understanding of David’s words by showing us that God not only knows the path of life, He knows the way to that path, and He warns us against being duped, deceived, or fooled into thinking the other path could ever bring us to life.
4. Do you need a greater reason than this to revere God, love God, listen to God, obey God, and worship God?
- C. But God does not stop with knowing the path of life and the way to the path of life. He **freely shows us the way to the path of life and tells us what we need to know to travel the path of life**.
 1. Why? Because He wants us to travel the path of life rather than the path of death!
 2. Imagine, though we are rebellious, sinful, selfish, and distrusting of God, He wants us to know about the path of life, and how to get on it, and how to travel it.
 3. This is a testimony to the God’s compassion, grace, slowness to anger, lovingkindness, and forgiveness.
 4. You see, God is good, and in His goodness He freely shows us the way to having what is good – in this life and throughout eternity.
- D. So why is God so intent on having us travel the path of life?

1. Let me offer you two reasons.
 - a. **First**, because He loves us.
 - b. And **second**, because this is what we were created for. In other words, we were made to travel the path of life rather than the path of death. And of course, life is best when we travel the path we were created to travel.
- E. For example, Adam and Eve were created in such a way that eating fruit from all the trees of the garden – with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – was the best way to sustain their lives.
 1. The reality is, their body, mind, and heart were not created to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 2. Therefore, since they weren't created to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, eating from it would be to use their body, mind, and heart in the wrong way.
 3. And as God previously warned them – using their body, mind, and heart in a wrong way would result in the unwanted outcome of corruption, destruction, and ultimately death.
 4. In other words, involving themselves in something they were not created to be involved in resulted in unwanted outcomes – not only for themselves, but for all humanity.
- F. This brings us back to the question, “Why is God so intent on having us travel the path of life?” I believe it is because He loves us, and out of His love for us He wants us to live a life that is abundant, rather than living a life we were never created to live. You see, when we live contrary to what we were created for, it results in experiencing the devastating and destructive consequences of sin.
 1. So how does this apply to us? Consider –
 2. God did not create us to find life in someone other or something other than Him. He did not create us to live selfish, self-absorbed lives. He did not create us to find security in money or power. He did not create us to gain our sense of well-being from fame or from the acceptance and approval of others. He did not create us to be angry, controlling, or manipulative. He did not create us to dull our pain or find comfort in such things as food, drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, shopping, the accumulation of possessions, or getting bigger and better things. When we live in these ways, we are using our bodies, minds, and hearts in ways that work against what we were created for, which is why they damage and destroy us.

3. God did not create us to be fearful, anxious, worried, stressed, resentful, bitter, malicious, and vengeful. He did not create us to be boastful, conceited, arrogant, disrespectful, and unloving. When we are these things, we are using our bodies, minds, and hearts in wrong ways, and these wrong ways bring about corruption, destruction, and death.
- G. Now I could go on, but I suspect you've gotten the point. And so I will restate David's first statement from Psalm 16:11, "**It is God and God alone who knows the path of life and who freely makes known to us the path of life.**"

III. Second Statement: **In Your presence is fullness of joy**

- A. This is a profound statement, for it tells us that the fullest amount of joy possible is experienced when we are in the presence of God.
1. In other words, we don't need anything more than being in God's presence to know this unsurpassable amount of joy.
 2. Think about this for a moment. God alone, that is, God plus nothing that this world has to offer, or God himself, is so completely satisfying, so entirely fulfilling, that just to be in His presence fills you with the greatest amount of joy possible.
- B. Now, to get a better understanding of what this means, we will look at several other statements David made leading up to his statement that in God's presence is the fullness of joy.
1. We read in **vs 2b**, that David said, "**I have no good besides You.**"
 - a. In other words, David sees God, and God alone, as his good. He said something similar in **Psalm 73:25**, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, **I desire nothing** on earth."
 - b. And so I ask, is God, himself, your good, or must you have other things besides God, himself, or God, alone, to feel loved, secure, happy, and content?
 2. Moving on to **vs 5a**, David says, "**The LORD is the portion of my inheritance.**"
 - a. Here is the picture David is painting. When someone dies and leaves their inheritance to the family members left behind, each person gets a specific portion or share of the inheritance – and that is all they get.
 - b. And though God is not dead, David is saying that God is his portion – and though it is all that David is going to get, **it is**

also all that he wants. In other words, David is so satisfied with God, himself, or God alone, that he wants nothing more.

- c. And so I ask, is God enough for you? For too many years, God was not enough for me. It is not that I didn't want God, but I also wanted things other than God, including things God didn't want me to have. And if I didn't get those things in the ways and times I wanted, I would waver between **unhappiness** and **anger**. Why? Because I believed God alone was not enough. And so I ask, what do you believe? Is God, himself, enough for you?
3. Moving on to **vs 8a**, David says, "**I have set the LORD continually before me.**"
 - a. I can assure you that David was not setting the Lord **continually** before him when he got involved with Bathsheba or had her husband killed.
 - b. And I can assure you I am not setting the Lord **continually** before me when I am choosing selfishness and sinfulness over God and godliness.
 - c. And yet, I know from experience, that God himself, and intimate fellowship with God, is so incredibly wonderful and so incomparably satisfying that there is absolutely nothing better or even equal to it – including the most tantalizing and gratifying sin the devil and the world can offer.
4. Sadly, knowing the path of life and experiencing the path of life isn't always enough to compel us to remain on the path of life.

C. My purpose in pointing out these three preceding statements is to show that David's statement about finding the fullest possible amount of joy in God's presence, was not a unique, one-time statement, but rather a reflection of his normal view of God and experience with God.

1. Yes, David sinned in spite of his views and experiences with God. But David also repented and returned to pursuing God, godliness, and fellowship with God.
2. And this is why David can tell us what we must do to enter into the presence of God in such a way as to experience this fullness of joy.
 - a. For example, we read in **Psalms 15:1-5**, "O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? [2] He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. [3] He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; [4] in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors

those who fear the LORD; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; [5] he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

- b. And in **Psalm 24:3-4**, David writes, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? [4] He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.”
 3. The reality is, putting sin out of your life and pursuing godliness is what opens the door to the presence of God. Jesus affirms this when He said it is the pure in heart who see God.
 - a. I know that I talk about sin – a lot. And I know that some have grown tired of hearing about sin.
 - b. But I also know that the only way to come into the presence of God and to personally experience the fullness of joy that David speaks of here in **Psalm 16:11**, is to put off your old nature, put away sin, resist temptation, and pursue godliness in thought, word, and deed.
 4. Now it is true that you can continue to knowingly sin and still have God with you.
 - a. And it is true that God speaks to you through the scriptures and you speak to Him through your prayers.
 - b. But there is a huge difference between God being with you and you being in the presence of God in the way that allows you to experience the fullness of joy.
- D. Now I want to be clear that the presence of God is not the only joy available in this life. There is joy to be found in people and things here and now.
 1. However, God is the source of joy, and His nature and character are such that just being in His presence fills you with the kind and amount of joy that exceeds earthly joys to such an extent that it makes earthly joys seem minor by comparison.
 2. In addition, if we are not content with God, himself, to the degree that we can contentedly live without legitimate, God approved, earthly joys, then we will go off the path of life to find and gain the earthly joys we treasure more than God.
 3. It is my desire that all of us would know the fullness of joy that comes from being in God’s presence.

IV. Third Statement: **In Your right hand there are pleasures forever**

- A. Notice the language here – God has pleasures for us that begin here and last throughout eternity. But because they are in His right hand, we must be in His presence to partake of them.
 - 1. But that is what the first two statements in **Psalm 16:11** are about – traveling the path of life so we can dwell in the presence of God.
 - 2. Therefore, your view of God, your trust in God, your trust of God, your honesty with yourself and with God about yourself, your commitment to living according to the Word of God, your hunger and thirst for righteousness, your decisive dealing with sin in your life, and your perseverance in pursuing godliness, are all factors in remaining on the path of life and dwelling in God's presence so that you can enjoy the pleasures God has for you.
- B. However, though I suspect it is obvious, it bears repeating that the pleasures God has for you are of a different nature than the pleasures the devil and the world entice us to partake of and which our flesh longs to indulge in.
 - 1. The one are the pleasures found along the path of life and the other are the pleasures found along the path of corruption, destruction, and death.
 - 2. The pleasures of God satisfy and feed contentment while the pleasures of the devil and the world addict so that what we have is **neither** enough **nor** lasts long enough to satisfy for very long or make us content beyond the moments of experiencing such pleasures.
 - 3. The pleasures of God reinforce God's goodness, faithfulness, and love while the pleasures of the devil and the world move us to see God as mixed in His motives, as failing in His goodness, and as partially faithful and partially undependable.
 - 4. The pleasures of God confirm His desire for us to enjoy the path of life while the pleasures of the devil and world confirm their desire to allure us onto the path of corruption, destruction, and death.

V. Conclusion

- A. Today, we are going to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by sharing in the elements of the Lord's Table. As we pass the bread and cup around, I urge you to consider what Christ has done in securing your entrance to the path of life, in opening the way for you to dwell in the presence of God, and for making it possible for you to experience the pleasures that God has for you.