

From Section 3: Delighting in God's People

*"As for the saints who are in the land,
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight." Psalm 16:3*

Delighting in God's People: Why?

August 14, 1984, is a day I will never forget. The pregnancy test came back positive. The due date of our first child, calculated. I was both excited and petrified. The weight of what we set into motion sunk in. I wasn't just going to have a child. I was about to give away my heart. "What have we done?" I thought. For the rest of my life, my happiness, at least in part, would be tied to the life of this new person. God was placing this child's care into our hands. God was putting some of His love for this little person in our hearts. The life this child lived and the decisions he/she made would impact me until the day I died. What a day of mixed emotions that was!

That night I had a dream. A little girl was standing near Mark and when I looked at her, my heart soared with love and joy. "Is this our little girl? Have we given her a name?" I asked Mark. "If she has no name yet, I'd like to call her "Joy" because she fills my heart with joy.

April 25, 1985, was what I nicknamed "Christmas in April. It was a day gifts were exchanged what would keep on giving all these years later—gifts of joy, love and delight. That was the day when my real little girl was born. We named her Anne, but in my heart, her name has always been Joy. (And if there is a boy equivalent for Joy, so could her brother, Nathan, who came along a few years later.) For while there have been many days when not everything has been happiness in their lives, and indeed, my heart has both soared and broken over them and with them, they indeed have filled my life with so much joy and taught me so much about love.

There's been the joy of watching them grow and become fine adults. There's been the love that deepens when we commit to caring for someone sacrificially for so many years, and the delight of our friendship. But also the joy and love of the Lord, which proves to be stable, rich and bountiful, even as happiness and human affection waxes and wanes. And helped us delight in our children even at times when they were not delightful.

September 25, 1994, could be nicknamed "Christmas in September." It was the day gifts were exchanged what would keep on giving all these years later—gifts of love, joy and delight. That was the Sunday when husband took his vows to become the pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church. It was the day we gave our hearts away, not just to two little newborns who would bear our name, but to a whole church of people who bore the name of Christ. And while there have been many days when not everything has been happiness, and indeed our hearts have both soared and broken over them and with them, they have indeed filled our lives with so much joy and taught us so much about love.

There's been the joy of watching them grow and mature in Christ. There's been the love that deepens when we commit to caring for someone sacrificially for so many years, and the delight of our fellowship. But also, the joy and love of the Lord, which proves to be stable, rich and bountiful, even as happiness and human affection waxes and wanes. And helped us delight in the church members even at times when they have not been delightful.

I start out with this story because in many ways it echoes both Mark's and my experience with God's people in our local church. And I think it's why David could say that the "saints in the land" (God's people)

were all his delight. NOT because they were always delightful to care for as their king. But because of who they were to God, who God chose them to be in this world, and who they would be one day in glory. As happiness is different from joy, so is delightful from delighting in. Delightful comes and goes. Delighting in is constant that comes from God.

In this section we will look at who are the saints, what it means to delight in them, the special ways God gives our husbands and us to love them, the blessing they are and how to keep on loving them even when they aren't being delightful and our hearts are breaking.

"As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. Psalm 16:3
Psalm 16:2-3 describe the two, great loves in a believer's life: the love of God, in verse 2; and the love of God's people, in verse 3. And these loves are not just to rule our heart but to be the superhighway of our lives. But who are these saints? And what makes them glorious? How do we delight in them? And what special callings does delighting in them bring to our husbands as pastors as their wives? That's what this section is all about.

Who Are the Saints?

Saints, in the biblical sense, in a word that describes all of God's people. In the Hebrew, this word is "qadoshim:" the holy ones. That is, people consecrated to God: set apart by God in a special relationship and for His service.

What Makes Them Glorious?

David called God's people the glorious ones in the land, and so they were! They alone worshipped God instead of idols. They alone knew and loved God and they reflected His glory by obeying His good laws. And, indeed, they WERE glorious in the land, even to the peoples who worshipped idols who were amazed at how the LORD set His love and protection on His people in a way unlike any god they had ever seen. This was reason enough for David to find all his delight in God's people.

But what David saw in God's people that made them glorious was only like a sparkler spitting out a little glitteriness compared to the full-sky, dazzling display of God's plans that God has revealed to us in His Word since Christ has come.

Now we know that God's people are glorious because:

- They were destined for glory, before the world even began.
- God is transforming them into the likeness of His Son, Jesus, throughout their lives.
- And, because one day, they will be glorified completely in heaven.

What an amazing God! What an amazing plan! To make people like you and me glorious!

Sin Makes Shepherding Hard

But in case you haven't noticed yet, delighting in God's people is anything but straightforward. If our husbands were always perfectly godly leaders, eager to preach and able to give perfect counsel. If church members were always eager to learn and eager to live out. It sounds like a foretaste of heaven, doesn't it? How wonderful it would be to live among such people of God and to fellowship with them. What a powerful witness to those around them they surely must be, as holy and glorious ones! If only... if only... Then it would be just as David says it in Psalm 16:2: "As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

But sadly, the sin we all need to grow out of to grow up into maturity in Christ has a way of tangling and

messing up everything. We dishonor God's name with our lack of faith. We hurt the ones we promise to love. They hurt us.

Maybe we don't struggle with our versions of David's favorite saints. You know, faithful friend Jonathan; the honest, loving spiritual leader, Nathan; the peace-making Abigail; the needy but grateful Mephibosheth; or the faithful, die-hard mighty men; but what the other saints with the more sinful tendencies in David's line-up? The politically driven Joab? The self-ambitious Saul? The keeping-up-appearances Michal? The undependable, easy-manipulated common people of Israel? And even, the godly, yet sinful David?

I don't know about you, but I have to admit that every church I've been a part of has included these less-than-easily-lovable line-up of saints. And to make matters worse, many times my first response to the saints has not been to take God's perspective on them, like David does in Psalm 16. Instead, when people are difficult or awkward, when they make stupid remarks or even outright sin, my natural tendency is to react to their sin rather than remember the perspective of the God who loves them and who saved them through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Frankly, often I'd rather just withdraw from the saints, or avoid the saints or grumble about the saints. I'd rather act like I don't know the saints... or even encourage the saints to switch churches where someone else can delight in them. When I look around at them, with my own set of eyes, I often don't see that much to delight in at least some of them.

And before you think I'm pointing the finger only outwardly, I have to confess that I've seen vestiges of them all in my heart, too. I have been passive when I should be active. I have desired God and His good ways, yet been prone to being tempted and blinded, and all too easily dragged down by my own sinful folly! Every good intention I have, every good work I do, is laced within with the poison of my own sin. How very true is Isaiah 64:6: "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

"What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:24-25

Why Delight Despite Sin?

With saints like this in our churches, it can seem a very tall order to delight in them; yet, that is exactly what God is calling us to do. Delight in them, love them... all. And do this now, not when they have more of their act together. Why is this so important? Once more, we need to look to God for answers:

We should delight in the saints because God has woven us into His plans for making them glorious, and them into His plans to make us glorious.

We may all be in the "now and not yet" time in terms of being glorified, but this is the "ready set and go" time for helping each other grow in being glorious. God has given us all good works to do that he prepared in advance. Most of these have to do with helping each other become more glorious, more like Christ. Many times, this is a lovely task, such as when someone receives sweet comfort from God's word and we watch them blossom in their new understanding of His love.

Other times, this is hard, even painful work, such as when we humbly show someone their sin as a kindness and they respond by lashing out at us. But even in those hardest of times, God intends for good to come from it. When we respond in love, 1 Corinthians 13 love, we are asking God to help us delight in the unlovely for their good and for his glory. There is no harm. There is no pain. There is no difficulty that is outside of God's plans to make his people glorious. So, while we might not always enjoy the saints, we

always can delight in them, knowing what God is using us to do in each other.

We should delight in the saints because there is no one else on earth like them.

The saints may not be perfect. They may even be downright frustrating or worse at times... just like we are to them, no doubt. But they are the only ones on earth who share God's Holy Spirit with us. They are the only ones who know God along with us. They are the ones who long for His Kingdom, along with us. And they are our only foretaste of heaven right here on earth. They are Christ's mouth, arms, legs and every other body part to us. God intended us to be His body of love to each other in a way that no one else can here on earth.

We should delight in the saints because God says a lack of delighting in them now shows a lack of delighting in Him now.

The book of 1 John is all about this!

"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." – 1 John 4:20-21

One of the greatest indications that we love God, is that we delight in the saints.

We should delight in the saints because they are dearly loved by God.

David knew that the people of Israel of his day had been chosen by God to be God's treasured possession. He knew of God's promises to Abraham to bless all nations through one of his offspring. He knew the stories of God's loving kindness shown to the stiff-necked Israelites over and over, even though they deserved His punishment.

David had ample reason to know God's great love for His people; yet God has allowed us to know so much more! We know that from before the beginning of time, God had set His love on His people. He chose to save them through Christ and make them beautiful through His blood. He has chosen to transform them to be like Jesus in this life. And in heaven, they will be the radiant Bride of Christ. They are worth delighting in because God's love for His people makes them worthy.

We should delight in the saints because of what He has given to them.

David knew that God had spoken His Word through the prophets of Israel that all might know Him, His great ways and His good laws. He knew that God gave His people great promises to care for them and bless them, as they trusted in Him and obeyed Him, even the pleasure of eternal life in His presence. He knew that God gave His people strength by His Holy Spirit to serve Him in this life and to persevere through life until that day when they would life with Him in heaven.

David had ample reason to know of God's good gifts to His people; yet God has allowed us to know so much more! We know that God even gave up His precious Son Jesus to save His people. And through Jesus, God has blessed His people with every spiritual blessing, including "all wisdom and understanding," including making known to us His glorious plans to bring all things "in heaven and on earth together" through Jesus. (Ephesians 1:3,8,9)

We should delight in the saints because of who He has planned for them to be in the world. David knew that God's people were the glorious ones in the land, that is, the ones who reflected God's and His good ways to the world and beckoned others to come and know Him, too. They did this when they lived by His

just and compassionate laws, which treated people radically differently from the nations around them. They reflected God and His good ways when they trusted Him, and He delivered them from powerful enemies. Even David's great grandmother, Ruth the Moabitess, had seen God and His good ways reflected in His people and turned away from the gods of the Moabites to trust in the LORD instead.

David had ample reason to know how God used His people to display His glory to the nations and encourage them to come to worship Him, yet God has allowed us to know so much more! We know that God has planned for His people to go to every nation, every people of every language to tell them the good news of Jesus and to show them what God is like, through His Word and through their lives. People from every nation will turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. On the Last Day, all of God's people will together make up the beautiful bride of Christ who radiates her bridegroom's glory perfectly.

We should delight in the saint because of what He has planned for them to be a display of to those who dwell in the great, unseen spiritual realms both now and in the world to come.

David knew only the faintest glimmer of truth. His psalms speak of the glory of the LORD enduring forever. He knew of the angels in heaven that worshipped Him. He looked forward to living forever in God's glorious presence.

Yet, to us, He has revealed so much more! Paul tells us in Ephesians 2 that God "raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order"—are you ready for this!—"that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in his kindness to us (who by our sinful nature deserve only His wrath, not His mercy!) in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians 3, Paul tells us that already He has not done this only to show to US, God's people, the riches of his grace. But even more astounding, that even now, through God's people, the Church, He is making known to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, His manifold wisdom in saving us and adopting us as His people through Christ.

Wow! Think! God is using the saints in the land—you and me—to display His glory in the great spiritual realms even now!

Understanding Is Not Enough to Foster Love

I don't know about you but even understanding WHY the saints are glorious and WHY we should delight in them is still not enough to delight in them always, the way God calls us to. I know the weakness and sinfulness of my heart. I've seen the weakness and sinfulness of my husband's heart and of other members of our church. We simply do not have what we need in ourselves to delight as we should. This is a task far above our ability. God is the only one who can do this. And so He does!

Gifts God Gives Us to Keep on Loving His People

1. God has gifted us with His Spirit, helping us from the inside to do all He wants us to do.

"For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.
Philippians 2:13

What we can never do in our own power, God's Holy Spirit works in our hearts. The fruit of the Spirit changes us and helps us persevere with each other.

2. God has gifted us with an intercessor, in His Son.

"Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus is constantly praying for us to be transformed into His likeness and to will and to act according to His good pleasure.

3. God has gifted us with His sure promises of all the help we will need.

"His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." 2 Peter 1:3

We are weak, but He is strong! All the strength we need to fulfill His plans He has promised us through knowing Him. He called us. He saved us. He will always provide for us. It is for our good, but also for His glory. He will not fail!

Hail to the Chief!

This is great news for all of God's people, and maybe especially good news for our husbands, called to equip the saints. What a heavy responsibility that can seem at times! It is comforting to remember that God only makes our husbands under shepherds of his flocks. And we, their wives, are like their handmaidens, standing beside them to help. Our husbands are way down the command chain. Our husbands will preach and love and care for the flock as God gives them strength and grace to do so.

But God will always be the chief Shepherd. He will always be the provider and equipper of His people. Our husbands will only ever serve under him. And he promised to never give us more than we can bear and sufficient grace for it all. He is the one who is overall, providing for us all. God makes the plans and God gives the means to fulfill them all! To Him belongs all of the glory and all of our praise!

"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." – Philippians 1:6