

The Unexpected God--Beyond our stereotypes of deity

Nap Clark Bible Conference -- August 1, 2015

This session will overview various aspects of God's character and values, highlighting the unimagined beauty and goodness of our God. Many of these themes in Scripture are not often the subject of our reflection, but they reveal a God beyond what we might expect Him to be. God is 'holy' and we know biblically that 'holiness' means 'difference'. Our goal will be to see more clearly some of these 'differences' of His heart, so that we might become more like His heart, and reflect His heart more in our lives, words, and relationships.

- God the Servant (1-2)
- God who grieves (3-5)
- The 'shameless' Peacemaker (6,7)
- God the singer (8)
- God the seeker - not waiting to be sought (9-12)
- The 'self-conflicted' God? (13-15)
- God the meek (16,17)
- God, companion of the lowly (18,19)
- Unbearable love (20)
- Supernatural and contrarian strategy:
 - Winning through death (21)
 - Rulers from peasants (22,23)
 - Power through weakness (24)
 - Effective wisdom through foolishness (25)
- The reverser of status, both real and imagined (26-30)
- Praise from God? (31,32)
- God the unfair giver? (33,34)
- God who experiences 'delight'? (35)

Applications:

- Giving God the 'benefit of the doubt' (1 Thess 5.18; Prov 20,24; Prov 3.5)
- Be imitators of God (Eph 5.1)
- Remember that He is the LIVING God -- life, activity, passion, wisdom flows within Him, and from Him to and into us... No cardboard cut-out, no stone idol, no 'bundle of theological attributes'...

1. God the Servant

Luke 12:37	Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready.
------------	---

"He will dress himself to serve (12:37). The image of a master putting on servants' clothes and serving is a shocking one ; it recalls Jesus' washing the disciples' feet in John 13. The scene here is probably meant to represent the messianic banquet, when "the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples" (Isa. 25:6; cf. 65:13–14), and when God's servants will receive their just reward.	ZIBBCNT
---	---------

2. God the Servant

Luke 22:27	Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among them. Jesus told them, "In this world the kings and great men lord it over their people, yet they are called 'friends of the people.' But among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant. Who is more important, the one who sits at the table or the one who serves? The one who sits at the table, of course. But not here! For I am among you as one who serves. "
------------	--

"Jewish people were well familiar with the Gentile model of authority: ancient Near Eastern kings had long claimed to be gods and had ruled tyrannically; Greek rulers had adopted the same posture through much of the eastern Mediterranean. Jewish people would view the Roman emperor and his provincial agents (who often showed little concern for Jewish sensitivities) in much the same light. Rulers and others who doled out favors from the vantage point of power were called "benefactors"; the practice of benefaction was widely praised in Greek circles. Jesus' reminding the disciples that seeking power is a Gentile (i.e., pagan) practice is tantamount to telling them they should not be doing it. In antiquity age often determined rank; the youngest had the least respect. A slave was always powerless and without social status compared to the master (regardless of the position slaves had relative to peasants and others who were socially inferior to their masters).	BBCNT
---	-------

3. God who grieves

Eph 4.30	And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
----------	---

"The Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead, indwells every believer (1 Cor 6:19–20). To grieve literally means to bring sorrow or pain . God the Holy Spirit experiences sorrow when Christians allow sin to dominate their lives.	JB in GNTC
--	------------

4. God who grieves

Deut 5.29	The LORD heard the request you made to me. And he said, ‘I have heard what the people said to you, and they are right. Oh, that they would always have hearts like this, that they might fear me and obey all my commands! If they did, they and their descendants would prosper forever. Go and tell them, “Return to your tents.” But you stand here with me so I can give you all my commands, decrees, and regulations. You must teach them to the people so they can obey them in the land I am giving them as their possession.’ ”
-----------	---

"With an outburst of emotion , the Lord added, “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” The best interests of his people are deep in the heart of God. This view of divine compassion shows how the Lord’s love focuses on what is best for his people. Here is no vindictive god in contrast to a loving NT Lord. No, this glimpse into the heart of God is in harmony with the most compassionate depictions of Christ in the NT.	EBC
---	-----

5. God who grieves

Ps 78.40	But all they gave him was lip service; they lied to him with their tongues. Their hearts were not loyal to him. They did not keep his covenant. Yet he was merciful and forgave their sins and did not destroy them all. Many times he held back his anger and did not unleash his fury! For he remembered that they were merely mortal, gone like a breath of wind that never returns. Oh, how often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved his heart in that dry wasteland . Again and again they tested God’s patience and provoked the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power and how he rescued them from their enemies.
----------	---

"The exclamation “how oft!” v. 40, calls attention to the praiseworthiness of this undeserved forbearance	KD
---	----

6. The Shameless Peacemaker

Lk 15.20	<p>So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son' 22 "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.</p>
----------	---

<p>"The scene is striking since even today, a distinguished Middle Eastern patriarch in robes does not run, but always walks in a slow and dignified manner. Running was viewed as humiliating and degrading. The man's unrestrained joy and affection—even to the point of humiliation before others—reveals God's overwhelming love and grace for the lost sinner and the joy experienced when a person repents."</p> <p>"There is here no qualified acceptance or cautious reception of the son but rather a wholehearted acceptance and an uninhibited expression of delight in the return of the son. Once he recognizes the figure in the distance as his son, the father cares not a whit about the fitting dignity of his years and station!"</p> <p>"The description of his return and welcome is as vivid as that of his departure, with several beautiful touches. Because his father saw him "while he was still a long way off" (v. 20) has led many to assume that the father was waiting for him, perhaps daily searching the distant road hoping for his appearance. This prompted the title of H. Thieliicke's book of Jesus' parables, <i>The Waiting Father</i> (New York: Harper, 1959). The father's "compassion" assumes some knowledge of the son's pitiable condition, perhaps from reports. Some have pointed out that a father in that culture would not normally run as he did, which, along with his warm embrace and kissing, adds to the impact of the story"</p>	<p>ZIBBCNT, NICNT, EBC</p>
--	----------------------------

7. The Shameless Peacemaker

Col 1.20; Eph 2.13ff	<p>For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.... Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.</p>
----------------------	---

... the shame of the cross...	Heb 12.2...
-------------------------------	-------------

8. God the Singer

Zeph 3.17	For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.
-----------	---

<p>"The next portion of this verse may be called a "poem of personal love." Three parallel lines each containing three phrases express the deepest inner joy and satisfaction of God himself in his love for his people. Delight, joy, rejoicing, and singing on God's part underscore the mutuality of emotional experience felt by God and the redeemed....</p> <p>That Almighty God should derive delight from his own creation is significant in itself. But that the Holy One should experience ecstasy over the sinner is incomprehensible:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'God breaking out in singing! God joyful with delight! All because of you.'...</p> <p>The mutuality of the loving response of Redeemer and redeemed is seen in the fact that some of the same terms used in the admonition to his people now describe the response of God himself to his people (cf. vv. 14 and 17). Zion is exhorted to sing (rānnî); he rejoices with singing (rinnāh). Jerusalem shall rejoice (śimṭî); he delights over Jerusalem with joy (śimṭāh). The whole scene depicts a grand oratorio as God and his people mutually rejoice in their love for one another.</p>	NICOT
---	-------

9. God the seeker -- not waiting to be sought

John 4.23	But the time is coming—indeed it's here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way
-----------	--

<p>"There is an important point in the concluding statement that the Father seeks such to be his worshipers. It is not simply that he accepts such worship when it is brought to him. He is a God of love, a God who seeks the best for people, and therefore a God who actively seeks them out...That God seeks people is a new and distinctively Christian idea. Cf. C. G. Montefiore's comment on the parable of the lost sheep: "The virtues of repentance are gloriously praised in the Rabbinical literature, but this direct search for, and appeal to, the sinner, are new and moving notes of high import and significance. The good shepherd who searches for the lost sheep, and reclaims it and rejoices over it, is a new figure" (The Synoptic Gospels, II [London, 1909], p. 985).</p>	Bruce/NICNT
--	-------------

10. God the seeker -- not waiting to be sought

Romans 10.20	And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, "I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me."
--------------	--

"Paul sees in the Isaiah passage an anticipation of what has come to pass in his day. The thought is somewhat similar to the implication in 9:30, that the pagan world, occupied with its own pursuits, was in the main, not seeking after God. If there was a religious interest, cults and superstitions abounded to which one could turn.	EBC
---	-----

11. God the seeker -- not waiting to be sought

2 Sam 14.14	She replied, "Why don't you do as much for the people of God as you have promised to do for me? You have convicted yourself in making this decision, because you have refused to bring home your own banished son. 14 All of us must die eventually. Our lives are like water spilled out on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. But God does not just sweep life away; instead, he devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from him.
-------------	---

"Speaking as a sage of Israel, the wise woman of Tekoa then juxtaposed two profound truths about life. First, she noted that death is a hallmark of the human condition. Her emphatic verbal statement that "we must surely die" (v. 15) is an apparent allusion to Gen 2:17; if that is the case, then she is restating the Torah teaching that God consigned all people to die. Second, she noted that although God requires every person's death, he does not try to "take away life; instead, he devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him" (v. 14). This irony—that God established a world system that requires death, but then works to contravene his own system by creating ways to spare life —provided David with a theological justification for becoming reconciled to Absalom. Since the Lord makes harsh judgments against sinners but then establishes mechanisms for reconciliation, the king—as the Lord's representative in matters of justice on earth—should do the same.	NewAmerComm.
---	--------------

12. God the seeker -- not waiting to be sought

Luke 19.10 (and parable of the Lost sheep)	For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.
--	--

One hundred was an average-sized flock in Palestine. Greek and Jewish literature affords other examples of pasturers who had to leave the flock or herd to look for a lost animal (cf. 1 Sam 9:3); a shepherd could leave his own flock with the other shepherds with whom he worked, who would be watching over their own flocks. Religious leaders who failed to care for the broken and powerless are rejected by God (Ezek 34:2–10), and God himself would then seek after the sheep (34:11–16). God's people were commonly described as sheep in the Old Testament (cf. comment on Jn 10:1–18).	BBCNT
---	-------

13. The 'Self-conflicted" God?

Hos 11.1-11	<p>But since my people refuse to return to me, they will return to Egypt and will be forced to serve Assyria. War will swirl through their cities; their enemies will crash through their gates. They will destroy them, trapping them in their own evil plans. For my people are determined to desert me. They call me the Most High, but they don't truly honor me. "Oh, how can I give you up, Israel? How can I let you go? How can I destroy you like Admah or demolish you like Zeboiim? My heart is torn within me, and my compassion overflows. No, I will not unleash my fierce anger. I will not completely destroy Israel, for I am God and not a mere mortal. I am the Holy One living among you, and I will not come to destroy. For someday the people will follow me.</p>
-------------	---

<p>"The menacing tone of the oracle switches in v. 8, presenting a rare glimpse of God on the verge of destroying the son Ammi, yet balking at the prospect. According to deuteronomic law, both parents could condemn a stubborn, rebellious son before the elders of the city, whereupon he would be stoned to death (Deut 21:18–21). This legal background illuminates the theological intent of v. 8, where God is about to hand over the son to be stoned. God cannot deal with the son in the same way God treated Admah and Zeboiim, two cities destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut 29:23). Yahweh's abhorrence of the son's death penalty gives way to a growing compassion. Ultimately, the mother/father God makes a decision: "I will not execute my fierce anger;/ I will not again destroy Ephraim" (11:9a). Although the parent has the legal right to have the son killed, compassion for and bonding with the child prevent God from doing so. God transcends human legal institutions, which enforce the death sentence for disobedient sons, proclaiming "for I am God and no mortal,/ the Holy One in your midst,/ and I will not come in wrath" (11:9b)</p>	NIB
--	-----

14. The "Self-conflicted" God?

Jer 48.29-33	<p>We have all heard of the pride of Moab, for his pride is very great. We know of his lofty pride, his arrogance, and his haughty heart. I know about his insolence," says the LORD, "but his boasts are empty— as empty as his deeds. So now I wail for Moab; yes, I will mourn for Moab. My heart is broken for the men of Kir-hareseth. "You people of Sibmah, rich in vineyards, I will weep for you even more than I did for Jazer. Your spreading vines once reached as far as the Dead Sea, but the destroyer has stripped you bare! He has harvested your grapes and summer fruits. Joy and gladness are gone from fruitful Moab. The presses yield no wine. No one treads the grapes with shouts of joy. There is shouting, yes, but not of joy.</p>
--------------	---

<p>"God expressed His concern for Moab as He mourned for Kir Hareseth (cf. Isa. 16:7, 11), another of her chief cities. Borrowing from Isaiah 16:9, Jeremiah indicated that God would weep along with the city of Jazer for the vines of Sibmah which had been destroyed."</p> <p>"Because of the impending judgment, the Lord through his prophet expresses his compassion and sorrow for his creatures, the Moabites"</p>	BKC, EBC
--	-------------

15. The "Self-conflicted" God? (intra-Triune intercession)

<p>Rom 8.26,27,34 and Hebr 7.25; for Peter in Luke 22.31</p>	<p>And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers* in harmony with God's own will...Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. ...</p> <p>Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf...</p> <p>Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift each of you like wheat. 32 But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers."</p>
--	--

<p>"Barth observes that God "makes himself our advocate with himself, that he utters for us that ineffable groaning, so that he will surely hear what we ourselves could not have told him, so that he will accept what he himself has to offer"</p>	<p>EBC</p>
---	------------

16. God the meek

<p>Matt 11.29</p>	<p>Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."</p>
-------------------	---

<p>"Greek literature praised meekness in the sense of gentleness and leniency but not in the sense of self-abasement; aristocrats disdained humility as a virtue, except for the lowly. Jesus, however, identifies with those of low social status, a value more prominent in Jewish piety."</p> <p>"Human convention finds it hard to envisage as "meek and lowly" one who can claim that everything has been entrusted to him by God and who has just been declaring in forthright terms God's judgment on those who have rejected his message. But in the kingdom of heaven meekness is not incompatible with authority... With those who are unresponsive and hostile to his message Jesus can be fierce, but to the "little children" to whom God has revealed the truth he is gentle and considerate, "lowly" not in the sense of being unaware of his exalted status but of not using it to browbeat those under his authority."</p> <p>"The marvelous feature of this invitation is that out of his overwhelming authority (v. 27) Jesus encourages the burdened to come to him because he is "gentle and humble in heart." Matthew stresses Jesus' gentleness (18:1–10, 19:13–15). Apparently the theme is connected with the messianic servant language (Isa 42:2–3; 53:1–2; cf. Zech 9:9, cited in Matt 21:5) that recurs in 12:15–21. Authoritative revealer that he is, Jesus approaches us with a true servant's gentleness. For the present his messianic reign must not be understood as exclusively royal."</p>	<p>BBCNT, NICNT, EBC</p>
--	--------------------------

17. God the Meek

2 Cor 10.1	Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ	
<p>"The members of the word cluster used here—"meekness ... gentleness ... humble" (RSV)—are echoed in many places in the exhortations to Christian living set forth in the letters of Paul and other writers (Phil 2:8; 4:8, 12; Col 3:12; Tit 3:2; Jas 3:13, 17; 1 Pet 2:18; 3:4, 15; 5:5–6). In all probability these streams of thought emanate from Christ himself, who, by his own words, revealed himself to be "gentle and humble of heart" (Matt 11:29) and who pronounced the blessing of God on "the meek" (Matt 5:5) and the promise of exaltation to the humble (Luke 18:14; cf. Matt 18:4).¹⁸ Jesus' words were abundantly embodied in his meek servanthood as recorded in various incidents in the Gospels (Mark 9:33 pars.; John 13:14–17), in particular the accounts of his demeanor in the face of hostility and death, so extensively recorded in the passion narratives. These, too, have left their mark in hortatory passages in the early letters (cf. 1 Pet 2:23; Heb 2:9–11; 5:7–10). Christ's character, apparently, was the subject of instruction by Paul in the churches when he had been present with them so that—as on this occasion—he merely has to point to it without any elaboration. This important phrase—"through the meekness and gentleness of Christ"—must also be considered next to other statements by Paul about Christ—notably his incarnation and death—as used elsewhere in 2 Corinthians. Although Paul proclaimed Jesus to be "Lord" (4:5), from whose "face" the "glory of God" is reflected into the heart (4:6), this glory crowned One who had, for the sake of others, forsaken "riches" and embraced "poverty" in humble birth (8:9) and sacrificial death (5:21).</p>		NICNT

18. God, companion of the lowly

Is 57.15	The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: "I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.	
<p>"For the heaven of heavens is not too great for Him, and a human heart is not too small for Him to dwell in. And He who dwells upon cherubim, and among the praises of seraphim, does not scorn to dwell among the sighs of a poor human soul."</p> <p>"The invitation is for suitable worshipers to join Yahweh here. Note the contrast of high and holy with contrite and lowly. This is God's paradox. The place of glory and power belongs not to the proud, ambitious, and strong of humankind, but to the contrite, meek, and lowly of spirit."</p>		KD, WBC

19. God, companion of the lowly

Lk 7.45	One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"
------------	--

<p>"The dramatic impact of the woman's actions appears most strikingly if "sinner" is understood as a euphemism for "prostitute" ... Scholars have regularly noted that the woman's approach to Jesus seems to presuppose a prior experience of forgiveness. ... the Lukan text vv 29–30 may encourage us to view the woman as coming to Jesus to express gratitude to him for the forgiveness already proleptically bestowed on her by John (cf. at 3:3)....Behind Simon's thought lies the unexpressed assumption that a prophet would maintain the same respectable distance as Simon himself would from a notorious sinner. The underlying scandal of Jesus' behavior is here once again that he is friend to tax collectors and sinners (v 34)."</p> <p>"Adult women who were religious were expected to be married and thus would have their heads covered; any woman with her hair exposed to public view would be considered promiscuous. That this woman wipes Jesus' feet with her hair would thus indicate not only her humility but also her marginal religious status, even had Jesus not been a prophet and had she not been known in the community's gossip."</p>	NICNT, BBCNT
---	-----------------

20. Unbearable love

Eph 3.16-19	For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
----------------	--

<p>Paul's previous request for them to be strengthened in the inner person (3:16), with the result that Christ would be at home in their hearts (3:17), was for the purpose that they, who had been rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend Christ's love (3:18–19). This applies to all of God's people. ... The four dimensions delineate not so much the thoroughness of the comprehension as the vastness of the thing to be comprehended. Paul prayed that the believers might be able to comprehend the vast dimensions of Christ's love, with the result that they might know experientially that love that surpasses knowledge. To fully comprehend the sacrificial love of Christ is beyond the capability of any human being. His continued love for believers is equally incomprehensible. ... However, mere knowledge of his love is not the end; rather, it issues into a final purpose, namely that we might be filled up toward all the fullness of God.</p>	Cornerstone
--	-------------

21. Supernatural and 'contrarian' strategy: Winning through death

Col 2.14	He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.
----------	--

<p>"Christ by his cross releases his people not only from the guilt of sin but from its hold over them. "He breaks the power of cancelled sin." Not only has he blotted out the record of their indebtedness but he has subjugated those powers whose possession of that damning indictment was a means of controlling them. The very instrument of disgrace and death by which the hostile forces thought they had him in their grasp and had conquered him forever was turned by him into the instrument of their defeat and disablement. As he was suspended there, bound hand and foot to the wood in apparent weakness, they imagined they had him at their mercy, and flung themselves on him with hostile intent. But, far from suffering their attack without resistance, he grappled with them and mastered them, stripping them of the armor in which they trusted, and held them aloft in his outstretched hands, displaying to the universe their helplessness and his own unvanquished strength. Such seems to be the picture painted in these words. Had they but realized the truth, those "rulers of this age"—had they (as Paul puts it in another letter) known the hidden wisdom of God which decreed the glory of Christ and his people—"they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). But now they are dethroned and incapacitated, and the shameful tree has become the victor's triumphal chariot, before which his captives are driven in humiliating procession, the involuntary and impotent confessors of his superior might</p>	NICNT
--	-------

22. Supernatural and 'contrarian' strategy: rulers from peasants

Lk 22.30	And just as my Father has granted me a Kingdom, I now grant you the right to eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom. And you will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
----------	---

The image of God's people reigning and judging appears in Daniel 7:9, 14, 27; Matthew 19:28; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. On the foundational role of the apostles see Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14.	ZIBBNT
--	--------

23. Supernatural and 'contrarian' strategy: rulers from peasants

1 Cor 6.3	Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world , can't you decide even these little things among yourselves? Don't you realize that we will judge angels ?
-----------	--

"Paul's idea stems from his assumption that the resurrection of believers with Christ identifies them with him in such a way that they share corporately with his lordship over all—i.e., over all people who reject or embrace him, all angels, those who serve his kingdom well, and those who have worked against it.	Cornerstone
--	-------------

24. Supernatural and 'contrarian' strategy: Power through weakness

2 Cor 12.9	Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. " So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. That's why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
------------	---

<p>"This single, most important verse in 2 Corinthians crystallizes the argument of chapters 10–13 in a paradox of profound magnitude. In the crucible of affliction Paul has learned that the presence of the crucified Christ is mediated more perfectly through suffering and weakness than through glory and strength. This principle he has made emblematic of his ministry. Living his life in the shadow of the cross, Paul's ministry assumes a cruciform character, which rejects the path of status, position, power, and prestige and embraces the folly and humiliation of the cross as God's deepest wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–2:5). "</p> <p>"Christ's reply to Paul's prayer must be seen as the climax not only of this passage (12:1–10) and of the "Fool's Speech" (11:1–12:13), but in some ways of the entire Second Letter to the Corinthians. ...Earlier Paul related that in Asia he had been "beyond power ... crushed" (1:8), how, more generally, as a mere "jar of clay," he was dependent on "the all-surpassing power of God" (4:7). Now he declares that "[Christ's] power is made perfect in weakness." Power in weakness, therefore, runs as a thread throughout the letter, reaching its most powerful expression here. ...It is likely that Paul knew of and reflected upon the events of the last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life, both his threefold prayer to his Father in Gethsemane and his (apparent) powerlessness to save himself as he was dying on the cross. The words spoken at the cross, literally "he saved others; himself he is not powerful to save" (Mark 15:31), resonate in Paul's words that "Christ crucified" is "the power of God ... the weakness of God" (1 Cor 1:21, 23–25). The powerful salvation of God had been wrought in the powerless crucified One. Christ's death and life are reproduced in the lives of his people. God's power through Christ's weakness in death by crucifixion issues in the "crucifixion" of Paul's inflated pride, by means of the thorn/stake. God's power, which caused Christ to be alive in resurrection and believers with him, issues in the power of Christ experienced in the patience, endurance, meekness, and gentleness of Christ. Thus the Lord's reply to Paul's prayer for the removal of the thorn/stake is given in terms of the very gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ that the apostles proclaimed (as, e.g., in 1 Cor 15:1–4)."</p>	ZIBBCNT, NICNT
---	-------------------

25. Supernatural and 'contrarian' strategy: Effective wisdom through foolishness

1 Cor 1.18-31	<p>The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent." So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength. Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. "</p>
---------------	---

<p>"The elite of Corinthian society may well have despised the lower members who perhaps did not hold Roman citizenship. Certainly the orators or sophists of the day would have ridiculed the foolish, the weak, the lowly, the despised, and the nobodies. Yet it was this latter group who had been chosen by God. ... No one may boast before him (1:29). "To boast" regularly features in the Corinthian letters. The sophists regularly boasted of their status. If educated members of the social elite were taking positions of leadership in the Corinthian church, they may have been using oratorical skills to "boast" of their own social position, emphasizing that they were "wise," "influential," or of "noble birth." Paul makes it clear that such boasting has no place in the church.</p>	ZIBBNT
--	--------

26. The reverser of status, both real and imagined

Paul's contra rabbi/contra Greek quote in Gal 3.28	There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.
--	---

<p>"Just why these three couplets, and not others, were incorporated into the confession of early Christians is impossible to say. Perhaps their inclusion was a conscious attempt to counter the three bĕrākôt ("benedictions") that appear at the beginning of the Jewish cycle of morning prayers: "Blessed be He [God] that He did not make me a Gentile; blessed be He that He did not make me a boor [i.e. an ignorant peasant or a slave]; blessed be He that He did not make me a woman" (...). Analogous expressions of "gratitude" appear in Greek writings as well; for example, "that I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian" (attributed to Thales, Socrates, Plato). So it may be surmised that in conscious contrast to such Jewish and Greek chauvinistic statements, early Christians saw it as particularly appropriate to give praise in their baptismal confession that through Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed.</p>	WBC
--	-----

27. The reverser of status, both real and imagined

Ps 113.5-8	Who can be compared with the LORD our God, who is enthroned on high? He stoops to look down on heaven and on earth. He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump. He sets them among princes, even the princes of his own people!
------------	--

<p>"God exalts—thus sharing His nature with man—the miserable and the poor to places of prominence and prosperity. The poor hover near the refuse heap outside the city for warmth from the perpetual burning and for food from the garbage. But God exalts them, the lowest of society, to an equal portion with the highest (with princes). God does not do this with every poor person, but when He does it for some His gracious dealings are evident. In the New Testament the truth takes on a spiritual significance, for those who trust in the Lord are given an inheritance in the heavenlies, through the grace of God."</p> <p>"One expected dimension of the Lord's incomparability is his transcendent exaltation. That the Lord is "high above the nations" (113:4) is an affirmation of his transcendent reign as king, as is clear from 99:1–2, "The LORD is king ... exalted above all the nations." Thus, in Psalm 113 it is as the exalted king that the transcendent Lord "is enthroned on high" (113:5). So exalted is he, in fact, that "his glory is higher than the heavens" (113:4). That which transcends us—the heavens—is itself transcended by the glorious Lord. ...A second and unexpected dimension of the Lord's incomparability is his immanent compassion. The one "who is enthroned on high" is no aloof deity; he is at the same time the one who "stoops to look" (113:6). He is filled with compassion for those who live on the earth. He is filled with compassion for those who have been humbled by life's circumstances. Two classes of humbled people are mentioned: the poor and the barren. Both have been brought low in a world that values wealth and children (see Ps 112:2–3). Both are the objects of the exalted Lord's caring gaze. Both experience the reversal that results from an outpouring of the Lord's compassion. Because the Lord is enthroned (yashab) on high, he is able to lift the poor from their desperate straits and to seat (yashab; 113:8) them with wealthy princes. Because the Lord is seated (yashab) on high, he is able to, literally, "seat [yashab] the barren woman in a home" (113:9), making her a happy mother of children. Hannah experienced this reversal (1 Sam 1–2), as did, in another sense, Mary (Luke 1:46–55)."</p>	BKC, Cornerstone
---	---------------------

28. The reverser of status, both real and imagined

Mt 18.4; 19.13, etc.	<p>So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me.</p> <p>One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." And he placed his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.</p>
----------------------	--

<p>"The child is held up as an ideal, not of innocence, purity, or faith, but of humility and unconcern for social status. Jesus advocates humility of mind (18:4), not childishness of thought (cf. 10:16). With such humility comes childlike trust... It is to "little children" that the Lord of heaven and earth reveals his truth (11:25)"</p> <p>"By drawing attention to children, speaking of them, healing them, commending them as examples and objects of care, Jesus handed to his followers a responsibility to give children a central place in their life together" (Strange, <i>Children in the Early Church</i>);</p> <p>"<i>When Children Became People</i>" (O.M. Bakke, Fortress, pp284-285): whole persons from birth under protection of 'thou shall not kill' (e.g. abortion, exposure as infants); reduction of pederasty; emphasis on moral/religious upbringing; more child-parent interactions.</p>	EBC
---	-----

29. The reverser of status, both real and imagined

1 Cor 1.28	God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important
------------	--

<p>"In a Roman colony organized in terms of citizenship, birth, and wealth, membership of the church was purely on the basis of calling (a theme first developed at 1:24). Paul identifies three groups here: the "wise" (sophoi), the "influential" or those who held power (dynatoi) in the colony, and those of "noble birth" (lit., "well born"). These three terms describe the social elite of the Roman colony and may have been used as marks of pride"</p> <p>"After openly recognizing the social disparity present among the Corinthian believers, Paul, in a finely crafted rhetorical structure, affirms the contrarian scheme of God's grace, introduced with a strong adversative: "nevertheless [alla] ... God chose [ho theos exelexato] ... God chose ... God chose" (1:27–28). Similarly, the subjects of God's election are given the same emphasis by repetition of the threefold structure: God chose "the foolish things of the world ... the weak things of the world ... the lowborn of the world" (1:27–28) in order to "shame ... shame ... reduce to nothing" (vv. 27–28) their counterparts. God's purposes run counter to the structures and values of the culture; God's actions in Christ have already overturned the worldly status quo."</p>	ZIBBCNT, NIB
---	--------------

30. The reverser of status, both real and imagined

Jas 2.5	Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him?
---------	---

<p>"The world tends to "choose" those who are rich in (say) money; God, those who are (not "those who are to be") rich in faith, i.e., "abounding in" (Mayor), "in virtue of" (Hort), or "in the realm of" faith (Ropes)—the last, with its contrast between judgment by God's standards and the world's, is to be preferred. James does not spiritualize or idealize poverty. Poverty does not guarantee either faith or final salvation; but whereas the rich often have, and feel they have, a "heaven upon earth," the poor, in general, are much more likely and eager to believe in a celestial heaven to come, to compensate for the present purgatory, as it often has been, on earth... The "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3), who are to have a place in the kingdom of heaven, do not include those of the poor who are without faith, and do include those of the rich who have not succumbed to their wealth."</p> <p>"Verses 5–11 advance two arguments against the practice of favoritism. The first may be called the social argument (vv. 5–7). The importance the author attaches to these arguments is seen in the imperative "Listen, my dear brothers." The early church was not drawn from the wealthy or ruling classes. It was largely made up of poorer people, those who are "poor in the eyes of the world." This is apparent in the gospels (e.g., Matt 11:5); Paul implies it (1 Cor 1:26–29); and James declares it (2:5). By saying that the believers' poverty is poverty "in the eyes of the world," James is suggesting that they are not really poor. They are "rich in faith" and heirs of the kingdom. The aspect of the kingdom James has in mind is yet future. It is the eternal kingdom that Christ equated with eternal life (Matt 25:34, 46). So James has shown us that the social snobbery of the world is short-sighted and superficial. And the favoritism James's readers practiced was based on this same shallow kind of evaluation. James's concept of the blessed poor may be misunderstood. He does not say that all poor people are "rich in faith," nor does he exclude the rich from the ranks of the saved. Furthermore, God's choice of the poor must not be taken as based on any merit inherent in poverty"</p>	NICNT, EBC
--	------------

31. Praise from God?!

Rom 2.29	For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
----------	---

<p>"Contrary to a self-righteous attitude, a spiritual Jew seeks to please and receive praise from God, even if it displeases men (cf. John 5:41, 44; 12:43; Matt. 6:2; 23:5–7; Luke 16:15; 1 Thess 2:6)."</p> <p>"The paragraph carries a typically Pauline sting in the tail. This new covenant people, the ones who fulfill Torah whether or not they are circumcised, the ones who carry the covenant marks on their hearts rather than in their flesh—this people show that they have the right to the name "Jew" because "their praise is not from humans, but from God." Paul is alluding to, rather than making, a pun that would be obvious to an educated Jew; in Hebrew the word "Judah" means "praise." They receive the name "Jew," in other words, from God, as a gift of grace</p>	GNTC, NIB
---	-----------

32. Praise from God?!

1 Cor 4.5	Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of people’s hearts. At that time each will receive their praise from God.
-----------	--

<p>"Indeed, what is remarkable about Paul’s use of this language is its positive application, that it will result in his—and others’—receiving “praise from God.” At the same time, since he expands the application to “each person” (cf. 3:10–15), it also serves as an invitation to the Corinthians to “come clean.” They, too, are candidates to “receive praise from God” when the Lord comes"</p> <p>"Highly unusual is Paul’s assumption of a positive evaluation encased in the word “praise.” This perhaps reveals that he was thinking about the judgment of Christian believers rather than the general judgment of all humanity, including those outside of Christ. His startling use of the word “praise” also intentionally contrasts with his castigation of the Corinthians (or others) who were completely out of place and inadequate in prematurely pronouncing “judgments” on God’s servants (like himself) or anyone else."</p> <p>"Thus, at the second coming of Christ those who have been faithful in their work for the Lord will receive praise from him. Paul has already spoken about the servant receiving “wages” from the Lord (3:8). Compare the parables of the talents and the pounds, in which there is praise and pay for faithful work (Matt 25:14–23; Luke 19:12–19). As the final judging must be done by God, so the final praise will come from him.</p>	NICNT, Cornerstone, EBC
---	-------------------------------

33. God the Unfair Giver?

Joel 2.25--undoing the damage of discipline	The LORD says, “I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts.* It was I who sent this great destroying army against you.
---	--

<p>"Crenshaw (1995:157) points out that the verb translated “give back” is derived “from a legal context and designates payment for losses incurred.” The retention, albeit not in the same order, of the names for locusts (cf. 1:4) assures the people of equal compensation. The great disaster will be reversed; loss will be swallowed up in superabundant blessings."</p> <p>"Multiple punishment is one of the curse types (no. 27; cf. Lev 26:18, 21, 24, 28). A “double” restoration is likewise one means of portraying the complete compensation that Yahweh will give to his people."</p> <p>"All the hardships that Judah has experienced in the past will be reversed by God’s “great” acts (v. 21). The promises of vv. 21–27 exactly match the situation of suffering previously described. The ground will be restored (1:10; 2:21); the wild animals will be fed (1:20; 2:22); joy will return to Judah’s worship (1:16; 2:23); drought will be a thing of the past (1:10, 12, 18–20; 2:23); fruit trees will bear (1:12, 19; 2:22); threshing floors and wine vats will be full (1:5, 17; 2:24).</p>	Corner, WBC, NIB
--	------------------------

34. God the Unfair Giver?

Mt 20.13 (Parable of Vineyard Workers)	He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair! Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take your money and go. I wanted to pay this last worker the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be jealous because I am kind to others?'
---	---

<p>"The wealthy throughout the Mediterranean world often bestowed significant gifts on the poor that were widely praised as beneficent, increasing the public status of the donors. Because status defined roles in ancient society, those who complained about receiving a day's wage for a day's work would be viewed as rude and ungrateful."</p> <p>"The parable deals with resentment toward others who have actually received the grace one affirms in theory. A comparison of v. 10 and v. 12 is instructive. Those who had worked all day begin not by objecting to the grace others had received, but by expecting that they themselves will receive more (v. 10). When they receive the just fulfillment of their contract, they object not to what they have in fact received, but that others have been made "equal" to them. They have what they have by justice; others have been made equal by grace. It is this last resentment that they find unbearable."</p> <p>"The answer consists of two arguments: (1) because the master kept to the terms of the initial agreement (cf. v. 2), no real injustice had been done to the worker (therefore, he should take his pay and be satisfied), and (2) it was the specific wish of the lord of the vineyard to treat "this last one," i.e., an individual representing the group who began work at the eleventh hour, as he treated the representative of the group who began work in the early morning. There is a distinct note of grace ("I wish ... to give") in this second statement. The "last ones" in fact did not deserve what they were given. Their pay, equal to that of others, depended purely on the will of the lord of the vineyard. Contrast a rabbinic version of the parable (y. Ber. 2.5c, 15), which could have been inspired by Matthew (...), in which those who worked a shorter period of time accomplished as much as those who worked longer and thus in fact earned their pay! This is not to deny that the rabbis could also speak of grace (...). The two questions asked here presuppose the premise of grace to the unworthy. In the first instance, it is the prerogative of the owner of the vineyard and the employer of the workers, including those of the eleventh hour, to do as he pleases with what is his (the "I want," here corresponds with the same verb in the preceding verse). If he wills to give to the unworthy what they do not deserve, that is his perfect right (the initial ouk expects a positive answer). The second question is based on the master's having been good to the unworthy ("I am good," an emphatic statement). The parable is thus about the goodness (cf. 19:17), sc. the mercy, of God. Consequently, Fortna suggests titling it "The Good (or Generous) Employer". "the evil eye," refers here, as elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 6:23; Mark 7:22; Sir 14:8–10), to an envious eye (...). The spirit of envy, like the insistence on "justice" reflected in the complaint of the workers who were hired first, stands in sharp contradiction to the reality of grace.</p>	BBCNT, NIB, WBC
---	--------------------

36. The God who experiences Delight

- For the LORD will again take **delight** in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers,(Dt 30:9).
- And Samuel said, “Has the LORD as great **delight** in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? (1 Sa 15:22)
- He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he **delighted** in me. (2 Sa 22:20).
- Great is the LORD, who **delights** in the welfare of his servant!” (Ps 35:27).
- For not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you **delighted** in them. (Ps 44:3)
- Behold, you **delight** in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. (Ps 51:6)
- His **delight** is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (Ps 147:10–11)
- then I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his **delight**, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and **delighting** in the children of man.(Pr 8:30–31)
- Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I **delight** (Is 42:1)--Luke 3.22, 2 Peter 1.17
- Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I **delight**, declares the LORD.” (Je 9:23–24).
- He does not retain his anger forever, because he **delights** in steadfast love. (Mic 7:18).

<p>"God delights in the obedience of his children more than in sacrifices (1 Sam. 15:22). Obedience to his commands so pleases God that he will prosper his people as they walk in his way (Num. 14:8; Deut. 30:9). God delights in his people (Ps. 16:3). God is also delighted with honesty in business (Prov. 20:23), a blameless life (11:20), truthfulness (12:22), and the prayers of the upright (15:8). God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness to those who please him (Eccles. 2:26), and he promises to deliver those in whom he delights (Ps. 18:19). God delights in showing mercy (Mic. 7:18), and kindness, justice, and righteousness bring him pleasure and cause him delight (Jer. 9:23). God placed Solomon on the throne of Israel because he delighted in him (1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 9:8). God had special delight in his Servant-Messiah, upon whom he put his Spirit (Isa. 42:1).</p>	<p>Evan.Dict.Bib.Theo, Elwell.</p>
--	------------------------------------

Applications:

One: Giving God the 'benefit of the doubt'

- 1 Thess 5.18: *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*
- Prov 20.24: *The LORD directs our steps, so why try to understand everything along the way?*
- Prov 3.5: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

Two: Be imitators of God

- Eph 5.1; *Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us* and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

Three: Remember that He is the LIVING God -- life, activity, passion, wisdom flows within Him, and from Him to and into us... No cardboard cut-out, no stone idol, no 'bundle of theological attributes'...

.....
Abbreviations:

BBCNT	IVP Bible Background Commentary, NT
BKC	Bible Knowledge Commentary
Cornerstone	Cornerstone commentaries
EBC	Expositors Bible Commentary
Evan.Dict.Bib.Theo, Elwell.	Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology (Elwell)
GNTC	Grace New Testament Commentary
KD	Keil & Delitzsch
NewAmerComm.	New American Commentary series
NIB	New Interpreters Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the NT
NICOT	New International Commentary on the OT
WBC	Word Bible Commentary series
ZIBBCNT	Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary--NT