The Battlefield of Beauty

I. DAVID'S DETERMINATION TO SEARCH OUT AND DELIGHT IN GOD'S BEAUTY

A. One of King David's lifelong goals was to intentionally *search out God's beauty (Ps. 27:4)*. He prioritized seeing God's beauty and delighting in his relationship with God. The biblical vision of the Christian life is a lifestyle of enjoying relationship with God by delighting in His beauty.

4 One thing I have desired…all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)

B. In Psalm 34, David said something else that was surprising and startling. In the overflow of discovering God's beauty, David discovered delight in his relationship with God.The biblical vision of the Christian life is a lifestyle of enjoying God by delighting in His beauty.

4 Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Ps. 37:4)

C. God's beauty (glory, majesty) speaks of all that is attractive about Him. It includes how He thinks and feels, what He does, how He looks, and the power and knowledge He possesses. His beauty is displayed in His creation, redemption, leadership, and even how He designed humans to interact.

D. We are to search diligently for the knowledge of God's beauty as for hidden silver. There are hints, whispers, and evidence of it in many places. All David's days, he was intentional to search for it in God's creation, redemption, leadership, and the way He inspired people to act.

4 If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. (Prov. 2:4-5)

E. Proverbs 2 calls us to search for it with the promise that we will discover it if we are diligent. If we are casual in our search and intentionality to see God's beauty, then we will only see a glimpse here and there. If we are diligent all our days, then we will see much more.

II. PRINCIPLES OF BEAUTY

A. "*Beauty is the battlefield where God and Satan contend…for the hearts of men.*" Dostoevsky

B. *Delighting in the beauty of Jesus is essential to walking in victory*. The need for victory is great in this hour when fear, lust, offense, rejection, and violence are increasing. David wrote Psalm 27 in a time of conflict (27:1-6). He was attacked by many enemies, and tempted with fear, bitterness, and despair.

2 <u>When the wicked came against me…</u>3 Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear…4 One thing I have desired…to behold the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:2-4)

C. *Beauty will be our stability*. Isaiah prophesied that the Spirit would emphasize Jesus' beauty (33:17) in the generation of His return. Isaiah highlighted that God's people will find stability and strength in a time of difficulty by delighting in the King's beauty and embracing His "beauty narrative" for their life (33:6).

6 …knowledge [God's beauty] will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation… 17Your eyes will see the King in His beauty… (Isa. 33:6, 17)

1. ***The beauty narrative:*** embracing the truth about a beautiful God who has a beautiful plan for our life, one in which He uses His power to impart incorruptible beauty into our life that continues forever (Rom. 8:28). David was intentional to focus on the "beauty narrative" of his life (27:4).

2. ***The dark narrative:*** The enemy wants to shift our life into a negative narrative of how bad we are treated, how hard things are, what we do not have, how much we fail, and how worthless our life is. We must refuse to let a dark narrative dominate our heart and internal conversation.

D. *God's beauty brings the lesser things into perspective.* If we can see what Paul saw about Jesus, then we can respond to Him like Paul did. Paul agreed with David, but Paul used words such as excellency and glory instead of beauty. We can use those words interchangeably in this context. Paul gave up everything when empowered by God's beauty.

8 I also count all things loss for the excellence [beauty] of the knowledge of Christ. (Phil. 3:8)

E. We are *transformed by beholding beauty.* Paul elaborated on the power of beholding the Lord's beauty, emphasizing its transforming power. Beholding or seeing God's beauty changes our emotions. It transforms us from the inside out.

18We all…beholding…the glory [beauty] of the Lord, are being transformed… (2 Cor. 3:18)

F. *Jesus imparts His beauty to His people.* The good news is that our relationship with God is more than dutiful service with sacrifice. It is interacting with the most beautiful Being imaginable who longs to reveal His beauty to His people. The beauty that Jesus possesses is the very beauty that He imparts to His people. It starts in this age and comes to the fullness in the age to come.

1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me…3 to give them beauty for ashes. (Isa. 61:1-3)

III. GOD'S BEAUTY IS EXPRESSED IN HOW HE THINKS, FEELS, AND WHAT HE DOES

A. *God's beauty is expressed in how He thinks and feels*. He delights in His people and in showing them tender mercy, etc. Nobody thinks about us as tenderly as He does. He loves forgiving and giving mercy. He delights in relating to His people.

B. *God's beauty is expressed in what He does:* His creation, redemption, leadership, and how He inspires humans to act and interact.

C. *God's beauty is expressed in what He did and does in His redemption:* the salvation story.

D. *God's beauty is expressed in what He did and does in His leadership over human history.*

E. *God's beauty is expressed in what He did and does in creation*. God is beauty itself. All the beauty that we see in this world is a dim reflection of the source of ultimate beauty found in God.

1 The heavens declare the glory [beauty] of God. (Ps. 19:1)

F. *God's beauty is expressed in how He inspires humans to act and interact*. He inspires virtuous acts of courage and heroic love. He will fill the earth with love, kindness, and humility.

G. The beauty of God is seen in various abilities and activities:
In sights, sounds, fragrances: colors, brilliance, music, melodies, harmonies, fragrances
In knowledge: We are moved by advances in science, medicine, technology, architecture, etc.
In noble character: life stories of courage, generosity, compassion—bios, novels, movies, etc.
In human abilities: singers, musicians, athletes, writers, artists, composers, producers
In society: when justice prevails and reconciliation occurs between races, nations, etc.

IV. THE WAY TO DELIGHT IN GOD'S BEAUTY: 3 SIMPLE ACTIVITIES

A. How can we grow in beholding His beauty and engaging in the "beauty narrative"? Our delight of His beauty grows by meditating on, blessing (praising), and declaring (sharing) it (Ps. 145:5-12).

B. Psalm 145 is one of David's most instructive psalms on how to engage with God and to walk in victory over dark emotions of despair, lust, fear, and a feeling of worthlessness.

C. ***Activity #1 Meditating on God:*** Search out and think deeply on who He is and what He has done. Our delight in His beauty grows by meditating on it (Ps. 145:5).

5 I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works. (Psalm 145:5)

D. ***Activity #2 Blessing God:*** To bless God includes speaking what we see back to God with gratitude and affection. Our delight of His beauty grows by blessing or speaking it (Ps. 145:10). We are to speak to God the things we admire about Him. *Kingdom principle: when we say the truth about God, the Spirit moves.* The Spirit will mark our heart when we come into agreement with what the word says about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1 I will extol You, my God, O King; <u>And I will bless Your name forever and ever</u>. 2 Every day <u>I will bless You</u>, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. (Ps 145:1-2_

10 All Your works shall praise You, O Lord, and <u>Your saints shall bless You</u>. (Ps 145:10)

E. ***Activity #3 Declaring to others:*** As we declare or share what we admire about God to others, our delight in His beauty grows as does the delight of others (Ps. 145:6, 11). As we verbalize what we see of God's beauty, our insight and delight increase. Our heart is realigned to His beauty as we verbalize it in praise to God and share it with others.

11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power. (Ps 145:11)

F. We glorify or magnify God when we discern and delight in His beauty by treasuring, enjoying, celebrating, and making much of His name and beauty, by declaring it to others, and by reflecting it in our lives. "*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.*" John Piper

G. "*We delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. The delight is incomplete until it is expressed.*" C. S. Lewis

H. Much like the Lord did with Paul, the Spirit is raising up those who will proclaim the riches of Christ as 'theologians of His beauty" declaring the unsearchable riches of Christ.

8 To me…grace was given, that I preach…the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3:8)

I. Paul saw the value of praying for others to receive greater insight into the God's beauty.

17…that…the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Eph. 1:17-18)