



"Virtue and genuine graces in themselves speak what no words can utter."
—William Shakespeare

11-Feb-11

The Unique Greatness of Our God (Part Six)

In Part Five, we saw that the Bible takes a rather dim view of man, from [Jesus](#) calling us evil ([Matthew 7:11](#)) to [God](#) counting all of the nations as "the small dust on the scales" ([Isaiah 40:15](#)). Though God created us "very good" ([Genesis 1:31](#)), our sins and the resulting human nature soon spoil us to the point that we often behave like beasts and readily deserve the comparison to worms and maggots (see [Psalm 73:22](#); [22:6](#); [Job 25:5-6](#)).

Even so, God has tendered us the opportunity to transcend that baseness—to be transformed into the very [image of God](#) (see [Romans 8:29](#); [I Corinthians 15:49](#); [II Corinthians 3:18](#))! He offers us the chance to metamorphose like the proverbial caterpillar into a butterfly, but in this case, the potential is far higher: from human to divine! Notice [Hebrews 2:5-8](#):

For He has not put [the world](#) to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But [\[David\]](#) testified in a certain place, saying, "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You made him a little lower than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put *all* in subjection under him, He left *nothing* that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. (Emphasis ours throughout.)

As Paul writes in [I Corinthians 2:9](#), "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered

into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who [love](#) Him." At the resurrection, we will be given the very nature of God and crowned with glory and power. The apostle John confirms in [1 John 3:2](#) that "when He is revealed, we shall be like Him." Thus, when our glorification comes, we will have an incorruptible, heavenly body (see [1 Corinthians 15:50-54](#)). God will give us our inheritance, and it is no small thing—indeed the author of Hebrews says it will be *everything*! We will go from nothing—less than nothing—to having "all things put under [us]"! Without doubt, the incredible human potential in God's plan is the ultimate "rags to riches" story!

The huge gulf—that massive chasm between God's awesome greatness and our shameful insignificance—will be bridged. We will be full-fledged sons and daughters of God, presented "holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" ([Colossians 1:22](#)). We will be one with God, never to be sundered by [sin](#) and death from God the Father and His Son.

Understanding this fact of our astounding potential, combined with the humility to recognize our current inadequacy, should motivate us to do as [Hebrews 12:14-15](#) urges: "Pursue [peace](#) with all people, and [holiness](#), without which no one shall see the Lord; looking carefully, lest anyone should fall short of the [grace](#) of God. . . ." In addition, [Hebrews 2:1](#) advises us, "Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away." Clearly, we could fail to reach the goal that God has set before us, so we cannot simply rely on God's mercy and grace to allow us to slip across the finish line. Notice that the apostle uses such action words as "pursue," "look . . . carefully," and "give . . . earnest heed."

Jesus gives us a template of godly virtues in Matthew 5, which we know as "The [Beatitudes](#)." They are each made up of two clauses, the first being a blessing on one who exhibits a certain virtue, and the second, a reward that results from the virtue. Each of the virtues contains an element of humility, whereas each of the rewards is part of our glorification. Our Savior, in showing us the way, emphasizes first humility, then glorification. This principle is reflected elsewhere. [Proverbs 15:33](#) reads, "The fear of the LORD is the instruction of [wisdom](#), and *before honor is humility*." The apostle Peter writes, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" ([1 Peter 5:6](#)). Notice the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the [poor in spirit](#), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the [meek](#), for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

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Blessed are the [merciful](#), for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the [pure in heart](#), for they shall see God.

Blessed are the [peacemakers](#), for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are [persecuted](#) for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the [kingdom of heaven](#). ([Matthew 5:3-10](#))

He ends where He began, with the promise of inheriting God's Kingdom. If we want to live and rule with God for eternity, we need to develop these holy, righteous character traits, and we start with knowing where we stand in relation to Him: We are nothing, and He is everything (see [Colossians 3:11](#)). Once we have this firmly, unshakably anchored in our minds, then with God's help, we can begin building the character necessary to live as He does. In [Hebrews 6:1](#), the apostle calls this challenging and life-consuming work "go[ing] on to perfection" (see also [Romans 12:1-2](#)). This is the period of our sanctification—our being made holy.

The final five psalms praise God for all that He is and does, revealing just how wonderful He is. They remind us of His power and majesty, helping us to realize how small we are by comparison and putting us in the proper attitude of humility before Him. With its setting in God's Kingdom, Psalm 149 in particular focuses on the future relationship between God and His people:

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. . . . For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with [salvation](#). ([Psalm 149:1-2](#), 4)

Why is He so happy with His people? They are with Him in His Kingdom! They have transformed into godly children, and He has bestowed on them salvation and glory. He is looking forward to spending eternity with them. The psalm now turns to the saints:

Let the saints be joyful in glory. . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the written judgment—this honor have all His saints. Praise the LORD! ([Psalm 149:5-9](#))

As Jesus promised in the Beatitudes, God's children will reap the rewards of humility:

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glory, power, judgment, honor, and much more besides! All of this will happen because we have an awesome and magnificent God whose purpose is to give His Kingdom to His children!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Consider the Butterfly](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh insists that from observing the intricacies of creation, we can learn about the orderly, purposeful, and providential mind of God. The butterfly provides valuable analogies to illustrate our conversion and transformation from mortal to immortal. The anlagen cells (a dormant embryo within an embryo, containing the DNA of the emergent butterfly) parallel the infusion of God's Spirit into a worm-like creature. Compared to God, we are mere destructive maggots, destructive to creation and to ourselves. What is needed is a metamorphosis—a change of character and condition—from carnal human nature to godly nature. Human life cannot continue indefinitely as is but must be changed through repentance and reception of spiritual anlagen cells, beginning an incremental conversion, sanctification, and transformation. God's Spirit must increase within us, forming the mind of Christ, transforming us into a spiritual creature, a member of God's Family.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[God's Promises Are Sure!](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Using primarily the story of Joseph, John Ritenbaugh expounds the lessons we can learn and the encouragement we can glean from God's dealings with men during the time of the Feast of Trumpets.

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