

Past books we've covered: On the Incarnation (Athanasius), Life Together (Bonhoeffer), Institutes (Calvin), Lectures on Calvinism (Kuyper)

What is the value of theological reading?

Is God Like Jesus?

John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known."

John 14:8-9: "Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Thomas Torrance: "When daylight filtered through, I came across a young soldier, Private Philips, scarcely twenty years old, lying mortally wounded on the ground, who clearly had not long to live. As I knelt down and bent over him, he said, 'Padre, is God really like Jesus?' I assured him that he was the only God that there is, the God who had come to us in Jesus, has shown his face to us, and poured out his love to us as our Saviour. As I prayed and commended him to the Lord Jesus, he passed away."

"What the Father is and does, Jesus is and does. And what Jesus is and does, the Father is and does. There is in fact no God behind the back of Jesus, no act of God other than the act of Jesus, no God but the God we see and meet in him. Jesus Christ is the open heart of God, the very love and life of God poured out to redeem humankind, the mighty hand and power of God stretched out to heal and save sinners. All things are in God's hands, but the hands of God and the hands of Jesus, in life and in death, are the same. That is to say, the ultimate destiny of humanity is bound up with Jesus Christ, for it is he who has come to invade and destroy the barrier of death and all that separates men and women from God. And it will be his voice, the voice of one through whom all divine judgement is channelled, the voice of Jesus, that will reach into the grave, and summon the dead into resurrection and life. For Jesus is himself the resurrection and the life with ultimate control over the destiny and future of each of those who believe in him."

- Thomas F. Torrance, *A Passion for Christ*

Dane Ortlund bio: "Dane was called to be the Senior Pastor at Naperville Presbyterian Church in 2020 after being part of the church for thirteen years along with his family: his college sweetheart, Stacey, and their five kids, Zach, Nate, Jeremiah, Chloe, and Ben. Dane is a graduate of Wheaton College (BA), Covenant Theological Seminary (M.Div., Th.M.), and Wheaton College Graduate School (Ph.D. in New Testament). Prior to coming on staff he worked for ten years in Christian publishing at Crossway in Wheaton."

Thomas Goodwin: 1600-1680. English Puritan who was a part of the Westminster Assembly. Contemporary of John Owen. Left the church of England in 1634 to join the Puritan movement. "In the Puritan heyday of the 1650s, when Owen was Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, Goodwin was President of Magdalen College. For years they shared a Sunday afternoon pulpit, both were chaplains to Cromwell, together they would co-author the Savoy Declaration."

Gentle & Lowly - Introduction

“This is a book about the heart of Christ. Who is he? Who is he really? What is most natural to him? What ignites within him most immediately as he moves toward sinners and sufferers? What flows out most freely, most instinctively? Who is he?” - p13

“It is one thing to ask what Christ has done... We are not focusing centrally on what Christ has done. We are considering who he is... You might know that Christ died and rose again on your behalf to rinse you clean of all your sin; but do you know his deepest heart for you?”

How do we think of Jesus?

Goodwin, *The Heart of Christ*: “Men are apt to have contrary conceits of Christ, but he tells them his disposition there, by preventing such hard thoughts of him, to allure them unto him the more. We are apt to think that he, being so holy, is therefore of a severe and sour disposition against sinners and not able to bear them. ‘No,’ says he; ‘I am meek; gentleness is my nature and temper.’” -p23

Ortlund: “We project unto Jesus our skewed instincts about how the world works... And without realizing what we are doing, we quietly assume that one so high and exalted has corresponding difficulty drawing near to the despicable and unclean. Sure, Jesus comes close to us, we agree—but he holds his nose.” - p23

“We naturally think of Jesus touching us the way a little boy reaches out to touch a slug for the first time—face screwed up, cautiously extending an arm, giving a yelp of disgust upon contact, and instantly withdrawing. We picture the risen Christ approach us with ‘a severe and sour disposition,’ as Goodwin says.” -p24

Does this ring true? Do we naturally think that Jesus views us this way? If so, why is that?

“This is why we need a Bible. Our natural intuition can only give us a God like us. The God revealed in the Scripture deconstructs our intuitive predilections and startles us with one whose infinitude of perfections is matched by his infinitude of gentleness. Indeed, his perfections include his perfect gentleness.” -p24

What questions or thoughts do you have about chapters 1-5? What was helpful? What was challenging or confusing?

Gentle & Lowly - Chapter 1: His Very Heart

“In the four Gospel accounts given to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—eighty-nine chapters of biblical text—there’s only one place where Jesus tells us about his own heart... But in only one place—perhaps the most wonderful words ever uttered by human lips—do we hear Jesus himself open up to us about his very heart... In the one place in the Bible where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who he is...” -p18

Meaning of Gentle: “Meek. Humble. Gentle. Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated... The posture most natural to him is not a pointed finger but open arms.” -p19

Meaning of Lowly: “The point in saying that Jesus is lowly is that he is accessible. For all his resplendent glory and dazzling holiness, his supreme uniqueness and otherness, no one in human history has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ.” -p20

“All Christian toil flows from fellowship with a living Christ whose transcending, defining reality is: gentle and lowly. Only as we walk ever deeper into this tender kindness can we live the Christian life as the New Testament calls us to. Only as we drink down the kindness of the heart of Christ will we leave in our wake, everywhere we go, the aroma of heaven, and die one day having startled the world with glimpses of a divine kindness too great to be boxed in by what we deserve.” -p22

Gentle & Lowly - Chapter 2: His Heart in Action

“When we take the Gospels as a whole and consider the composite picture given to us of who Jesus is, what stands out most strongly?... The dominant note left ringing in our ears after reading the Gospels, the most vivid and arresting element of the portrait, is the way the Holy Son of God moves toward, touches, heals, embraces, and forgives those who least deserve it yet truly desire it.” -p27

Richard Sibbes: “When [Christ] saw the people in misery, his bowels yearned within him; the works of grace and mercy in Christ, they come from his bowels first... whatsoever Christ did... he did it out of love, grace, and mercy... he did it inwardly from his very bowels.”

Ortlund: “The culminate testimony of the four Gospels is that when Jesus Christ sees the fallenness of the world all about him, his deepest impulse, his most natural instinct, is to move toward that sin and suffering, not away from it.”

“Jesus walked the earth rehumanizing the dehumanized and cleansing the unclean. Why? Because his heart refused to let him sleep in. Sadness confronted him in every town. So wherever he went, whenever he was confronted with pain and longing, he spread the good contagion of his cleansing mercy. Thomas Goodwin said, ‘Christ is love covered over in flesh.’” -p32

“But that was when he lived on earth. What about today? Here we remember that the testimony of the New Testament is that ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb. 13:8). The same Christ who wept at the tomb of Lazarus weeps with us in our lonely despair... The Jesus who reached out and cleansed messy sinners reaches into our souls and answers our half-hearted plea for mercy with the mighty invincible cleansing of one who cannot bear to do otherwise. In other words, Christ’s heart is not far off despite his presence now in heaven, for he does all this by his own Spirit... Through his Spirit, Christ’s own heart envelops his people with an embrace nearer and tighter than any physical embrace could ever achieve. His actions on earth in a body reflected his heart; that same heart now acts in the same ways toward us, for we are now his body.” -p33

Gentle & Lowly - Chapter 3: The Happiness of Christ

Goodwin: “[Christ’s] own joy, comfort, happiness, and glory are increased and enlarged by his showing grace and mercy, in pardoning, relieving, and comforting his members here on earth.” - p36

Ortlund: “[Christ] does not get flustered and frustrated when we come to him for forgiveness, for renewed pardon, with distress and need and emptiness. That’s the whole point. It’s why he came to heal. He went down into the horror of death and plunged out the other side in order to provide a limitless supply of mercy and grace to his people.” -p36-37

Goodwin: “[The] Glory and happiness of Christ [are] enlarged and increased still, as his members come to have the purchase of his death more and more laid forth among them; so as when their sins are pardoned, their hearts more sanctified, and their spirits comforted, then comes he to see the fruit of his labor, and is comforted thereby, for he is the more glorified by it, yea, he is much more pleased and rejoiced in this than themselves can be. And this keeps up in his heart his care and love unto his children here below, to water and refresh them every moment.” -p38

Ortlund: “To put it the other way around: when we hold back, lurking in the shadows, fearful and failing, we miss out not only on our own increased comfort but on Christ’s increased comfort. He lives for this. This is what he loves to do. His joy and ours rise and fall together.”

Ortlund grounds this argument in Hebrews 12:2 - is this fair? Does Ortlund reckon deeply enough with Jesus’ words in John 14-17?

Ortlund: “It was the joyous anticipation of seeing his people made invincibly clean that sent him through his arrest, death, burial, and resurrection. When we today partake of that atoning work, coming to Christ for forgiveness, communing with him despite our sinfulness, we are laying hold of Christ’s own deepest longing and joy.” *Yes...but....*

Gentle & Lowly - Chapter 5: He Can Deal Gently

“When Hebrews 5:2 says that Jesus ‘can deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward,’ the point is that Jesus deals gently and only gently with all sinners who come to him, irrespective of their particular offense and just how heinous it is. What elicits tenderness from Jesus is not the severity of the sin but whether the sinner comes to him. Whatever our offense, he deals gently with us.” -p54

“Consider what all this means. When we sin, we are encouraged to bring our mess to Jesus because he will know just how to receive us. He doesn’t handle us roughly. He doesn’t scowl or scold. He doesn’t lash out, the way that many of our parents did. And all this restraint on his part is not because he has a diluted view of our sinfulness. He knows our sinfulness far more deeply than we do...His restraint simply flows from his tender heart for his people.” -p54

John Owen: “[Christ can] no more cast off poor sinners for their ignorance and wanderings than a nursing father should cast away a sucking child for its crying...Thus ought it to be with a high priest, and thus it is with Jesus Christ. He is able, with all meekness and gentleness, with patience and moderation, to bear with the infirmities, sin, and provocations of his people, even as a nurse or a nursing father bears with the weakness...of a poor infant.” -p55