Twitter Thread by Benjamin is reading the Harry Potter books

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I hear a critic in my head.

He says: If I have so many negative things to say about BCS, why did I go there in the first place? If I don't like John Piper's theology, why did I sit under it for four years?

The short answer is that going into seminary I was incredibly naive. ■

As a teenager, I found myself wanting more out of God, frankly. The G/god that I'd encountered in my church was authoritarian and tribal. And that left a vacuum in my soul. Then I discovered Piper's sermons, etc., and I was immediately drawn to the "bigness" of Piper's vision.

After college, I knew I wanted to go to seminary. I was leaning toward Calvinist theology, and I held vaguely complementarian views from my growing up years. I had gleaned from Piper here and there, and my wife was from MN, and things came together so that I could attend BCS.

But almost from day one, seminary there didn't feel right. And that feeling grew and gnawed at me over the years. I never felt like I was safe at BCS. I was always an outsider. Partly because I could never make the leap to Calvinism.

Entering seminary, I had appreciated Piper's "Christian Hedonist" mantra: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." But that appreciation began to wane over the years at BCS.

In Church History class, I learned that Martin Luther made a distinction between a "theology of glory" and a "theology of the cross." The former theology majored in the transcendence of God, and loved to stand in awe of the Deity.

The problem with theologies of glory is that at some point, God becomes too distant and mysterious for us to know and feel and love.

So Luther consciously moved away from these theologies of glory, and developed a theology of the cross.

Here, the focus is on the transcendent God who incarnated himself to live with humanity. Here, what moves us to awe is how Jesus came to humanity via the cross.

I remember the point in seminary when I realized that Piper's brand of Christian Hedonism was simply another theology of glory. The emphasis was on "seeing God" in his transcendent glory, and authoritarian sovereignty, and bowing lower into the dust, and being happy about it.

Problem was, I already felt like I was in the dust in seminary, for many reasons. And going deeper into the dust felt an awful lot like like digging my own grave. Besides, the pressure to have only one overriding emotion towards God—that of happiness, was paralyzing at points.

I didn't need an authoritarian G/god that demanded me to gaze at him while I sunk further from him. I didn't need a tribal context where Calvinism and complementarianism are the only acceptable practices. Ironically, at seminary I found the same old theological vacuum in my soul.

But obviously, Piper wasn't the one to fill it anymore. No.

But somehow in seminary, the Bible opened up to me, and exploded with beauty. And Jesus came out of the pages. And stood there with me in my dust. And told me he'd walk with me out of there. And he still hasn't left.

I found Piper's motto to be inverted. The truth is that "God is most *satisfied* in us when we are most *glorified* in him." One historical way of putting this is that "The glory of God is humanity fully alive."

More ancient still, Paul says God's good pleasure—God's joy—is to sum up all things in Christ (Eph 1:10). God wants to take old dust and make it all new and alive in Jesus the King. Peter would remix this by saying God wants to make us "partakes of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

King Jesus gave us a taste of what that new life would look like on earth when he healed the sick, welcomed the poor, and raised the dead. But it'll take eternity for Jesus to show us the life-giving impact of his death and resurrection for the whole earth.

That is the cosmic-sized theology that I'd been looking for all along. Yes, we are sinners. Yes, we are finite, and God is infinite. But the focus of Scripture is on how God leverages his own infinity to meet us in our humanity through Jesus!

I'm not interested in trading that theology of the cross for anything. I came into seminary with naivety; I left with clarity. I'm done with Piper's paradigm and these tiny theologies of glory. I've got Someone better, and something bigger now.