

The Purpose of God in Creating Man

By Rev. Phillip D. Mosher © 2012

As a small boy in Omaha my parents took me to a Presbyterian Church. It was there that I first heard that *God created man for His Glory*. Though this teaching comes from Reformed Theology, even in Baptist circles many believe that *God's purpose in creating mankind was so that people would bring glory to their Creator*.

Mark Whorton and Hill Roberts have expressed the above well when they wrote: "His eternal purpose has always been to glorify Himself . . ." ¹

From where does this teaching come? Do we find this in the Bible?

Definition

Glory or glorify means to exalt, to praise, to honor, to esteem. It has the idea of lifting someone up to a high place, praising him for what he has accomplished, and highly honoring him. The Apostle Paul has stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The true follower of the Lord Jesus should have as his life's focus those things that will honor and exalt God. This is the sense communicated through the answer to the first question in the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* where it states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."

When a runner wins the gold medal in an Olympic competition, he receives much praise; he is highly honored; he will go home to his family and community where there will be a large gathering with celebrations and much happiness; and he will be offered a very good job. Through all of these activities he will have been raised up to a high position and glorified.

The word takes on a different meaning when we say, "He has passed on to glory." Here we are specifying a place where there is exaltation, celebration, and happiness. He will have passed on to his eternal state where he will live with Jesus as a co-heir. This is expressed by the writer of Hebrews, "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10) The Son of God suffered on the cross of Calvary so that He could exalt those who believe and follow Him.

When the *Catechism* states that the chief end of man is to glorify God, it is not stating that that was the Creator's objective in creating humankind, though that could be the implied sense. This often stated purpose comes from another source.

The Source

There are *no* clear statements in Scripture that proclaim that the purpose of God through all of His creative acts was to bring glory to Himself. There are *no* passages of Scripture that

¹ Mark Whorton & Hill Roberts, *Holman QuickSource Guide to Understanding Creation*, © 2008, Pub. B&H Publishing Group, page 199e

state that the purpose of God in the creation of man was so that man would glorify his Creator.

The following are quotes from the *Westminster Confession of Faith* that reveal that Reformed Theology teaches that everything God does has one purpose—His glorification. In other words, God created the universe, the Milky Way Galaxy, our solar system, Planet Earth, all life on earth, man, and both the good and the bad, so that all would bring glory to Him.

Chapter 1, Par. VI, “The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory . . . is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.” [No Scriptural proof provided]
This statement is saying that all of God’s acts have one purpose—His glorification.

Chapter III, Par III, “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.” [The proof texts provided do not support this interpretation.]
Notice this declares that God decreed that “for the manifestation of His glory” angels and humans were all created. Whether men or angels, no matter their destination, heaven or hell, the divinely appointed purpose for each has been that they bring glory to God.

Chapter V, Par 1, “God the great Creator of all things does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.” [No Scriptural proof provided for purpose statement.]
In this statement we are told that everything God does is done to exalt and bring “praise” for the Creator’s various attributes.

Chapter VI, Par 1, “Our first parents, being seduced by the subtilty (sic.) and temptations of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.”
[No scriptural proof provided in support of this purpose statement.]
This declares that even in permitting man’s disobedience and sin, God did so for His own glorification.

The purpose of God is our focus, and there is one theme that these quotes spell out strongly: The Reformed position on God is that He has an underlying purpose behind every decree and act—to bring glory to Himself. When I hear Christians say that “God created man to bring glory to Himself”, and when reading this in books (as by Whorton and Roberts quoted above) and in various statements of faith, I am caused to think that God is very self-centered. According to the Reformed position, as stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, in all that God does, His objective is that He be exalted, praised, honored, and highly esteemed. Is that the kind of God the Bible and Nature are presenting to us?

The Nature of God

God is unselfish, humble, all-loving, and other-centered. One would think that this point would be obvious to the average student of Scripture.

The nature of God is such that it is impossible for Him to violate His own laws (Numbers 23:19). The Apostle Paul wrote:

“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” (Galatians 5:14)

Love is unselfish. True love brings humility and will cause us to place others before ourselves. “Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.”

(1 Corinthians 10:24) We are to behave in that manner! Why? Because God does. He is not self-centered but other-centered, and so should we be.

John 3:16 says it all:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

God did not put Himself first when forming redemption’s plan. He has completely given of Himself to save lost men and women—the dirty, the corrupt, and the vilest. God is not self-centered but other-centered. He gave His only Son to die for sinful men in order to redeem them so they could share in His glory (an exalted place).

In the light of the following Scriptures, how does one reconcile a statement which says that God decreed angels and men to “everlasting death”, meaning the fires of hell, with this being done to bring glory to the Creator?

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2nd Peter 3:9)

“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(1st Timothy 2:3–4)

There are no verses in the Bible that teach the heresies previously quoted from the *Westminster Confession*. To declare that God decreed men and angels to hell is false doctrine. To teach that God decreed these things so that He would be glorified is false doctrine. This is heresy because the statements paint a non-biblical picture of God; and these declarations add to His Word, teaching those non-scriptural doctrines as truth, a violation of Proverbs 30:5-6 and Revelation 22:18-19.

Paul, in Philippians 2:5–11, summarizes it well when he writes:

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage presents the Son of God as not seeking self-glory but being humble to the point of death to save sinners. That act caused God the Father to exalt His Son, because He was obedient unto the Cross. The reason the Lord humbled Himself to the point of dying to save sinners from eternal hell had the objective of “bringing many sons into glory”

(Hebrews 2:10). Because of what God has done for the redeemed, they will sing praises throughout eternity and will glorify God for His redemptive plan and actions. Being glorified was not God's purpose in creation, though because of what God has done, the redeemed will praise and honor the Savior throughout eternity.

Far from being self-centered, our God is other-centered. He created man to have fellowship with him. Though the saints will praise and glorify God the Father and the Savior, that is the result of what He did, not His motive.

The Purpose of God

The Bible tells us that God created man in His images (Genesis 1:26); but It does not make a direct statement regarding the Lord's purpose in creating man and the other created things. However, there are passages that give us insight into the Lord's objectives.

Genesis 3:8–10:

“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.’”

Commenting on this passage Matthews writes, “The anthropomorphic description of God ‘walking’ (*mithallēk*) in the garden suggests the enjoyment of fellowship between him and our first parents.”² The pre-incarnate Lord had been visiting with Adam and Eve and together they had enjoyed precious fellowship.

Genesis 5:24:

“Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

In *A Handbook on Genesis* is this observation:

“The only other place where this same expression occurs is Gen 6.9 in regard to Noah, who was said to be ‘a righteous man, blameless in his generation’ (RSV). The expression occurs in Gen 17.1 but with a different preposition. The most accepted sense is ‘to live in close relationship with,’ and this thought is well expressed by TEV, ‘Enoch lived in fellowship with God.’ FRCL has ‘Enoch lived ... in communion with God,’ and GECL ‘Enoch lived in close union with God.’”³

Enoch enjoyed sweet fellowship and communion with the Lord, and God lifted him up to glory (an exalted place). Enoch never experienced death.

In the first six chapters of the Bible we learn that Adam and Eve, Enoch, and Noah “walked with God.” This expression speaks to a sweet communion and fellowship between God and people. Though not stated, this was what God desired back then and continues to desire of mankind today. This was and is His purpose in the creation of man. Man, through his disobedience, broke that fellowship. God through His Son has stretched out His hand to restore that fellowship. What are we doing? Are you enjoying fellowship with God?

² K. A. Matthews, vol. 1A, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, 239 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996).

³ William David Reyburn and Euan McG. Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series, 136-37 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1998).

Hebrews 2:10: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.”

This passage tells us the Lord’s purpose in sending His Son to pay the sin-debt of man. It was to bring “many sons” into an exalted position. They are made “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). According to the kind intention of His will, those who appropriate the salvation-offer will be glorified. That is His purpose: “He predestined us [those who have appropriated the salvation offer] to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5). That is, the saved will be raised from a sin-sick state to being heirs with their Savior. This is God’s purpose in salvation. This gift from God brings us back into full communion and fellowship with our Creator. As 1st John 1:3 states, “indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” God desires that fellowship with us now, and it will be fully restored when He calls us to heaven.

Conclusion

God walked and fellowshiped with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He walked and fellowshiped with men like Enoch and Noah, men the Bible tells us were righteous before God even though they carried a sin nature. They were exceptional among human kind. They fulfilled God’s will by being upright and by enjoying fellowship and communion with the Creator.

The disciples were deeply impressed with Jesus’ prayer life (Luke 11:1). They watched the “Son of man” spend all night in fellowship and communion with His heavenly Father (and theirs). Throughout the day, as they walked with Him they observed a man of prayer. Jesus is another example of what God desires from us—fellowship and communion. When the Lord returns, he will exalt the saints to a position of being present with Him throughout eternity. That sweet fellowship with God will be the pleasure of the redeemed forever.

The Apostle Paul admonished the believers to “pray without ceasing” (1st Thessalonians 5:17). Are you spending time with God? The enemy does not want you to fellowship with the Savior. He will help you find excuses and will fill your life with activities that pull you away from the Lord who wants to commune with you.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. (John 15:7-8)

Abiding is the Savior is to be at home with Him. God’s purpose in creating man was to have fellowship with him. This is His will for those who have yielded their lives to the Lord. God desires fellowship and communion with you. Take time out of your busy schedule to enjoy Him.