

TREK 201

CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Lesson 3 – THEOLOGY PROPER (GOD’S NATURE & WORKS)

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

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Church

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THE PERSON, NATURE, & WORKS OF GOD THE FATHER

Introduction

If we pay attention to the world around us, as Believers in God and indwelt by His Spirit, we can learn countless number of truths concerning the nature and the acts of God. God has chosen to display much of His glory within the created universe; part of His magnificent glory is ready to be seen, heard, investigated, and pondered as we seek to know God more through the work of His hands (Ps. 8).

The following divine attributes reflect the ministry of God through His own nature and essence. The Bible teaches that God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). More so, the Bible demonstrates that God has shared part of His essence with His creation and within mankind as His image-bearers (Gen. 1:27) in order to demonstrate within the working out of this universe that His nature reigns supreme and is to be emulated among the living. Thus, since God is love and since we are made in God's image and contain certain communicable attributes of God, we are to display His character, nature, and divine action – in the showing of LOVE to others – for His infinite glory and humanity's benefit (blessing). As we love others, we are at our best as humans displaying the very nature of God to the world. We imitate God best and demonstrate our function of being God-reflectors when we allow God's moral attributes to shine through us to a needy and lost world.

A. The Communicable, Relative, Moral, and Transitive Attributes of God:

I. Goodness, Holiness, Righteousness, Justice and Truth

A. Goodness Ex. 33:19; Psa. 73:1; 119:68; 145

B. Holiness Is. 6:1-3; 57:15; Ex. 15:11; 1 Jn. 1:5

C. Righteousness Gen. 18:25; Ezra 9:15; Ps. 71:19; 145:17

Righteousness and salvation – Ps. 65:5; 71:15; 98:2; Is. 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; 56:1

D. Justice Deut. 32:4; Psa. 7:11; 9:7-8; 96:10-13;

E. Truth (Veracity) Jn. 17:3; 14:6; 1 Jn. 5:20

F. Ethically reliable (Trustworthy) Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18; Psa. 12:6; 119:160; Jn. 17:17

G. Personally faithful Ex. 34:6;

H. The Bible also displays the transitive attributes of God as also being: Wise, the essence of Integrity, genuine, authentic, long-suffering, patient, and free.

II. **Divine Affections** (the capacity to Love and Feel)

A. God has absolute capacity to feel, He has affections and God's emotivity is his supreme capacity to act responsively and sensationally; to feel pure and principled affections of love and hate, joy and grief, pleasure and anger, and peace; in accord with his supreme, spiritual, and simple Being and impeccable virtue. (Gregory G. Nichols, Doctrine of God Part 3: The Nature of God)

B. God's emotional capacities are invulnerable and perfect

C. God's emotional capacity does not threaten His immutability

"The schoolmen, and often the philosophical theologians, tell us that there is no feeling in God. This, they say, would imply passivity, or susceptibility of impression from without, which it is assumed is incompatible with the nature of God. Here again we have to choose between a mere philosophical speculation and the clear teaching of the Bible, and of our own moral and religious nature. Love of necessity involves feeling, and if there be no feeling in God, there can be no love." (Hodge, I., p. 428,9)

A God without an emotional life would be a God without all that lends its highest dignity to personal spirit, whose very being is movement; and that is as much as to say no God at all." (Warfield, Savior of the World, p.117).

D. God has and expresses perfect affections

1. He loves and delights in His Son Isa. 42:1; Matt. 3:17; Jn. 17:24

2. He delights in justice and mercy Psa. 33:5; Isa. 61:8; Jer. 9:24;

3. Rejoices in His people - Isa. 62:5; 65:19; Zeph. 3:17; Jer. 32:39-31

4. He is pleased/experiences pleasure – Psa. 115:3; Prov. 16:7; Phil. 4:18; 1 Thess. 4:1; Eph. 1:5, 9

5. Grieves – Gen. 6:5-6; Judges 10:16; Psa. 78:40; 95:10; Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30

6. Anger, wrath, detestation – Ex. 22:22-24; Psa. 5:5-6; 7:11; Prov. 6:16-19; Mal. 2:16 Special note on Psa. 38:1-3

7. Compassion, pity – Ex. 33:19; Psa. 103:13; Isa. 49:15-16

8. Love – 1 Jn. 4:8; Jn. 3:16; Jer. 31:3; Mic. 7:18-20

B. The Acts of God

If God never did anything outwardly or ever even created a universe or you or me, He would still be infinitely worthy of all of our adoration and praise in virtue of Who and what He is! Creating the universe, our world, mankind, and redeeming lost sinners, establishing His kingdom of righteousness and peace add absolutely nothing to God's infinite worth. But all of those acts simply underscore the grandeur of our God; He has in fact decided to show His glorious nature by creating, acting, and working daily in this universe. (J. Feinberg)

I. The Display of His Glory

Of God's first and foremost acts which He has displayed, He has revealed a magnificent demonstration of His own glorious worth and glory: Probably no text in the Bible reveals the passion of God for his own glory more clearly and bluntly as Isaiah 48:9-11 where God says,

"For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."

I have found that for many people these words come like six hammer blows to a man-centered way of looking at the world:

For *my name's sake!* For the sake of *my praise!* For *my own sake!* For *my own sake!* How should *my name* be profaned! *My glory* I will not give to another!

What this text hammers home to us is the centrality of God in his own affections. The most passionate heart for the glorification of God is God's heart. God's ultimate goal is to uphold and display the glory of his name.

God chose his people for his glory:

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace. (Ephesians 1:4-6, cf. vv. 12, 14, NASB)

God created us for his glory:

Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, every one who is called by my name, *whom I created for my glory.* (Isaiah 43:6-7)

God called Israel for his glory:

You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified (Isaiah 49:3).

I made the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah cling to me, declares the Lord, *that they might be for me a people, a name, a praise, and a glory.* (Jeremiah 13:11)

God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory:

Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works . . . but rebelled by the Sea, at the Red Sea. Yet he saved them *for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power.* (Psalm 106:7-8)

God raised Pharaoh up to show his power and glorify his name:

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." (Romans 9:17)

God defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea to show his glory:

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them and *I will get glory over Pharaoh* and all his host; and the Egyptians *shall know that I am the Lord . . . And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.* (Exodus 14:4, 18; cf. v. 17)

God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of his name:

I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. (Ezekiel 20:14)

God gave Israel victory in Canaan for the glory of his name:

Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, *making himself a name* and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods? (2 Samuel 7:23)

God did not cast away his people for the glory of his name:

Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord . . . For the Lord will not forsake his people, *for his great name's sake.* (1 Samuel 12:20, 22)

God saved Jerusalem from attack for the glory of his name:

For I will defend this city to save it, *for my own sake* and for the sake of my servant David. (2 Kings 19:34; cf. 20:6)

God restored Israel from exile for the glory of his name:

Thus says the Lord God, It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to

act, but *for the sake of my holy name*. . . *And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name*. . . . And the nations will know that I am the Lord. (Ezekiel 36:22-23; cf. v. 32)

Jesus sought the glory of his Father in all he did:

The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but *the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him* is true, and in him there is no falsehood. (John 7:18)

Jesus told us to do good works so that God gets glory:

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and *give glory to your Father who is in heaven*. (Matthew 5:16; cf. 1 Peter 2:12)

Jesus warned that not seeking God's glory makes faith impossible:

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not *seek the glory that comes from the only God*? (John 5:44)

Jesus said that he answers prayer that God would be glorified:

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son*. (John 14:13)

Jesus endured his final hours of suffering for God's glory:

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' *But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.*' Then a voice came from heaven, '*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again*' (John 12:27-28).

Father, the hour has come; *glorify your son that the Son may glorify you*. (John 17:1; cf. 13:31-32)

God gave his Son to vindicate the glory of his righteousness:

God put [Christ] forward as a propitiation by his blood . . . *to show God's righteousness* . . . It was to show his righteousness at the present time. (Romans 3:25-26)

God forgives our sins for his own sake:

I, I am he who blots out your transgressions *for my own sake*, and I will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43:25)

For *your own name's sake*, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great. (Psalm 25:11)

Jesus receives us into his fellowship for the glory of God:

Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, *for the glory of God*. (Romans 15:7)

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son of God:

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:14)

THEREFORE God instructs us to do everything for his glory:

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, *do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31; cf. 6:20).

God tells us to serve in a way that will glorify him:

Whoever serves, [let him do it] as one who serves by the strength which God supplies – *in order that in everything God may be glorified* through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (I Peter 4:11)

Jesus will fill us with fruits of righteousness for God's glory:

It is my prayer that . . . [you be] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, *to the glory and praise of God*. (Philippians 1:9, 11)

All are under judgment for dishonoring God's glory:

They became fools, and *exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images*. (Romans 1:22, 23)

For all have sinned and *fall short of the glory of God*. (Romans 3:23)

Herod is struck dead because he did not give glory to God:

Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because *he did not give God the glory*. (Acts 12:23)

Jesus is coming again for the glory of God:

They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day *to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed*. (2 Thessalonians 1:9-10)

Jesus' ultimate aim for us is that we see and enjoy his glory:

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, *to see my glory* that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

Even in wrath God's aim is to make known the wealth of his glory:

Desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, [God] has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, *in order to make known the riches of his glory* for vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory. (Romans 9:22-23)

God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory:

For the earth will be filled with *the knowledge of the glory of the Lord* as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)

Everything that happens will redound to God's glory:

From him and through him and to him are all things. *To him be glory forever.* Amen. (Romans 11:36)

In the New Jerusalem the glory of God replaces the sun:

And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for *the glory of God gives its light*, and its lamp is the Lamb (Revelation 21:23).

II. Creation

What has God created? Everything that we see, comprehend, and are: To what end has God created? His own glorious majesty and pleasure: Is. 43:7

Within this marvelous creation, God purposed the universe to unfold exactly as it has; in other words, as messed up as one may find our world today (morally, physically, socially), God's plan and purposes are being executed just as He designed. With God as supreme Creator, Sovereign Lord, and Providential Caretaker of this universe (world), we can have confidence that the God of the Bible has and is advancing His eternal cause = (1. His Glory 2. Man's redemption & 3. Eternal joy in fellowship with God) upon the earth – throughout the ages: It is part of the divine acts and holy outworking of God to create and design, and to do so with divine purpose and intention:

A. God's Divine Order within the world of man:

1. Since we have seen already that the nature of God is perfect, whatever He does (acts) is also perfect. God's purpose and works are all perfect. When God created, it was "good" (Gen. 1.31). Whatever God creates is perfect and fulfills the purpose for which it was created in Him.

God created this world to display His universal Glory first and foremost (see above Scripture ref.). Though the world in which we live is temporal (i.e. it exists in

- time and space), God is a-temporal and eternal. However, God interacts within a temporal reality among us and He is not bound by time and space. So, God desired to create a “time holding” universe where man would live within a physical and temporal reality while still being able to experience (physically), know (spiritually) and love an eternal God. This earth and our experience on it are temporal. Conversely, Heaven is eternal. Since we were created to be eternal beings and enjoy fellowship with God forever, truly for believers in Christ, this earth, then, is not our home (1 Pet. 2:11; Jn. 14:2ff)!
2. God created man to partake and reciprocate the Glory of God and His infinite worth as established through genuine relationship and fellowship with mankind. God’s relational overture to man was unnecessary, yet it reflects the very Trinitarian nature of God who exists in relationality. God created man in His image and enabled man, like the angels, to respond in love and obedience to Him. God created man for intimate relationship and eternal dwelling in His inviting presence.
 3. God knowingly created a temporal reality (world) where the capacity of contrary choice was possible; God knew within this temporal creation that evil (the opposite reality of God’s perfect nature and actions) was both possible and would become actual. However, evil would only be possible and actual within a temporal state (within a temporal universe and upon this actual earth); Gloriously, God’s perfect design and glorious purpose concerning evil is that it is temporary, purposeful, and all *evil will come to an eventual end* (Rev. 21).
 4. Thus, in creating a universe where evil (sin) is both possible and actual, God created beings with a moral soul and mental, spiritual, and physical capacity for both free (genuine and unforced/non-coerced) worship, adoration to God while simultaneously containing the possibility of sin (or being able to reject God, His presence, and His best [truth]). The capacity within each of these created beings of “contrary choice” is called freedom of the will or simply, free will. Thus, God created Lucifer, Adam, and all created beings morally (with a soul) to live in a universe where “sin” was both possible and that each being (morally) had a capacity (capability) to do evil through actively rejecting God’s promise, provision, and presence. The soul is the immaterial capacity within man’s constitution whereby he can appropriate God’s Spirit or where man can reject God altogether.
 5. Therefore, as a part of creation, God both purposed and ordained that the fall of both angels and mankind into a sinful state of rebellion was possible, though God knew their decision to reject Him would be actual. God’s perfect foreknowledge of the future including the eventual fall of His creatures does not imply that God is the

- author of sin. Emphatically, God did not sin nor did He create sin, nor can He tolerate any portion of sin (Gen. 1:31; Deut. 32:4; Mt. 5:48; 6:13; Heb. 1:13; Jas. 1:13). God simply provided the means (real freedom of choice) by which truly free creatures (free will) would or would not respond to His invitation of eternal life. This lapse (fall) from His presence did not take God by surprise and through the fall, the consequences therein such as relational distance, despair, decay (corruption), and eventually death - all pervade on this temporal earth... but it will not always be so.
6. The evil that exists and temporarily “reigns” within this world is no surprise to God. Evil, suffering, and the wretched consequences of sin daily break the Lord’s heart. God’s purpose of evil is to expose it and destroy it (Jn. 10:10), while allowing “evil” to run its course and point men to God - as satan authors its ultimate demise in the end times. In speaking about evil, (and only from a limited human’s perspective) at times it is biblically appropriate to state that God caused “evil” acts or events, sometimes actively (Is. 45:7) and other times passively (Heb. 12:11; Jas. 1:2-4). However, it is better to refer to God’s activity within suffering, pain, loss, and harm to refer to Him as an Advocate who ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 7:25; Ro. 8:34) and the One who uses evil, pain, and suffering as a means to draw all mankind to Himself (Gen. 50:20; Jn. 12:32). Most importantly, because evil is a reality in this present temporal world, God will eradicate evil, sin, pain, and death within eternity – where He will recreate a New Heaven and New Earth where sin will not be possible and man incapable of rejecting God (Rev. 21).
 7. Therefore, in the process of God creating and working within this universe, we can say that God’s purpose of creation and eventually re-creation (new heaven and earth) is found in relationship, a relationship born in redemption and restoration. God perfectly and knowingly created a world where pain, suffering, and evil would be a reality in order to bring about the greatest rescue this earth has ever known by the incarnation of God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. God purposed a world that could be broken, would be fallen, so that He alone could heal it and show the world His glorious love. God created the world for relationship. Mankind chose to reject God and run from that relationship. Yet, in spite of us, God made it possible through the cross to rescue and redeem us back into right relationship with Him (Ro. 5:28). Thus, **God’s most creative purpose in creation is redemption**, whereby God receives the greatest possible glory in the redeemed masses’ genuinely free worship and honor and glory to God. “Let the Redeemed of the Lord say SO!!!” (Ps. 107:2)

III. The Decrees of God

As a part of demonstrating God's own glory and in concert with His own creative design in fashioning the universe, one can logically refer to God's purpose in creation and providence (His oversight of all creation) through the concept of Divine Decrees. A Decree, theologically speaking, consists of "God's eternal purpose according to the counsel of His own will, whereby, for His own glory God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (Westminster Confession, 1646)

In other words, the decrees of God reflect God's purpose and planning for all things within His created universe. The point of a decree is to demonstrate that God did not just haphazardly create this universe for no reason, or that it was set in motion only so that He would abandon it. Rather, when talking of the decrees of God, the biblical assumption is that God expresses His glory in an orderly and purposed way – all reflecting back to Himself the great glory that is due His name. In essence, the divine decree states that God purposed something, carried out that plan to fulfill His purpose, and whatever He planned (decreed) rendered those actions and events certain.

*God has demonstrated His decrees within three key areas of the universe:

1. Material and physical realm
2. Moral and spiritual realm
3. Social and political realm

READ Prov. 16:4 *"The Lord works out everything to its proper end—it own purpose—even the wicked for a day of disaster."*

Consider: Job 38:2; Ps. 33:11, 106:13; 107:11; Is. 5:19; 14:26; 19:17 and Acts 2:23; 4:28; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17.

So if God is sovereign and reigns supreme over all things, executing His perfect plan and purpose for all creation, what does that mean to us?

- A. God sovereignly created and providentially oversees the entire universe. Nothing escapes God's notice or rule.**
- B. Man is a part of God's divine creation and has been purposed for an eternal relationship (fellowship) with His Creator.**
- C. Mankind's fall into rebellion was man's choice, though God purposed His glory and man's benefit through the incarnation and subsequent salvation of mankind.**
- D. Redemption is God's eternal purpose in the saving and restoring of mankind to right relationship with God**

- E. God will redeem and restore all things to Himself in the eschaton (end days) (Ro. 8:22).

AXIOMS of the DIVINE DECREES:

1. **God's divine decrees exist perfectly for God's sole glory (Is. 48:11; Ez. 20:9; Ro. 11:36) and divine pleasure (Is. 22:11; 49:8; 53:10; Ps. 51:19)**
2. **God's divine decrees were ordered and ordained in eternity past; they are eternal and completely immutable (unchangeable) as they reflect the purpose for which they were designed (Is. 22:11; 37:26; Ps. 115:3; 135)**
3. **God's decrees are self-evidently born in forethought, purpose, intellect, planning, reason, and deliberation (within the heart of God's wisdom) – God's knowledge and foreknowledge are perfect, exhaustive, and tied to all certain events in the future (Jer. 23:18-22; Ps. 104:24; Pr. 3:19; Eph. 1:11)**
4. **God's decrees are efficacious and always perfectly accomplished their purpose for which they were created (Is. 55:11). Therefore, what God knows about the future (foreknowledge), what He foreordains, what He predetermines, and what He decree from eternity past will certainly come to pass (Ps 103:19)**
5. **Creation and providence demonstrate that God was completely free, as the only autonomous being in existence, in creating the universe as He chose: God is utterly free in His intention, decision, and action to create or NOT to create and His foreordination is bound only to Himself (Mt. 11:26; Lk. 2:14; Eph. 1:5, 9)**
6. **God's creation and providence entail everything that exists or has been wrought from the purposes of God. No aspect of creation within this universe is hidden from God, nor actively ruled by Him (Pr. 16:33; job 14:5; Ps.139:16; 35:15; Jas. 4:14-15)**

- 7. Whatever God ordains, man cannot thwart, nor change His will or plan (Job 42:2; Is. 14:27). This means that in terms of redemption, God is completely sovereign over the process, act, and determination (predetermination/predestination) of who will be saved by faith through His grace and who will eventually reject Christ as Savior (Ro. 9:22-23; Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)**

SYNOPSIS OF GOD'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES AND HIS WORK

A. GOD'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES

The attributes in Lesson 2 are applied exclusively to God. We are not and cannot be, for example, omnipotent. God is a moral being with moral attributes. These moral or communicable attributes are to be imitated by us. The apostle Paul commands "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children." Ephesians 5:1 (ESV) When we act in accordance with God's moral attributes our likeness of God is reflected in behavior that is holy and righteous before Him but, in contrast, our unlikeness to God is reflected whenever we sin. Let's highlight 4 moral attributes. See the lesson for others.

1. Holiness.

- i. God's holiness means that He is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor. God is untouched and unstained by the evil in the world. God cannot be tempted by it nor does He tempt us to do it. (James 1:13)
- ii. God commands us to imitate His holiness. (1 Pet 1:16). We strive for holiness by separating ourselves from evil and sin (2 Cor 6:14-18) and devoting ourselves in serving and obeying Him (Rom 12:1).

2. Goodness.

- i. God is good (Ps 34:8). Goodness means "worthy of approval". God's goodness means that all that God is and does is worthy of approval. Good is what God approves.
- ii. We imitate God when we do what God approves (Gal 6:10). When we realize that God is the source of all good, we realize that God himself is the ultimate good that we seek.
- iii. We imitate God's goodness as we extend mercy (goodness to those in distress), patience (goodness to those who continue to sin over a period of time) and grace (goodness toward those who deserve only punishment).

3. Righteousness/Justice

- i. God commands what is right (Ps 19:7-9). His acts conform to His law and God requires that of us. For example, God must punish sin because it is wrong. He sent Christ to bear the punishment of our sin. He does not show favoritism or partiality. What we have done or not done is the only consideration for consequence or reward.
- ii. We imitate God's righteousness as we adopt His laws and precepts as our standard. We are to treat others fairly and justly (Amos 5:15; James 2:9).

4. Love

- i. God is love (1 John 4:8) which means that He eternally gives of Himself to others. He is a self-sacrificing God (John 3:16). Paul speaks of God the Son who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal 2:20).
- ii. We imitate God's love by loving God and loving others (Matt 22:37-38). If we love God, we will obey Him (1 John 5:3) and do what is pleasing to Him. We will love God, not the world (1 John 2:15) and do this because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Our love for each other within the fellowship of faith is a way the world knows we belong to Christ (John 13:35).

B. THE ACTS OF GOD

1. The Display of His Glory

The Westminster Confession (1646) asks, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: **Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.** This is so clear as you read the material on p 3-7. What a great reminder: it is not about me or you, but *all* about God.

- i. God chose Israel, rescued them from Egypt, guided them through the wilderness, gave victory in possessing the Promised Land, and restored them from exile all for His glory.
- ii. Jesus' life, ministry, and death were for the glory of God.
- iii. Our lives are to reflect God's glory in everything we do. We are to live such lives that we turn heads toward God and they too will give God glory.

2. Creation

- i. God did not have to create but did so to bring glory to Himself. He created the world out of nothing (ex nihilo). Everything that God created was good therefore nothing He made is intrinsically evil.
- ii. Man was created in God's image by His conscious and purposeful act. We are not the result of chance or process of evolution. We are capable of having a personal relationship with God, loving Him, obeying Him, and responding to His love.
- iii. Man was created in the state of innocence but free to choose righteousness or sinfulness. In Adam, the entire human race sinned and fell from the state of innocence. Both natural (Rom 8:20-22) and moral (Rom 1:18-32) evil resulted. God did not create sin or evil. He merely provided the options necessary for free will, options that could result in sin. Humans sinned not God. God uses evil to fulfill his purpose. Consider the evil of Joseph's brothers against him (Gen 37) and Joseph's declaration (Gen 45:5 and 50:20) that God sent him to Egypt and saved many lives. God uses evil but never does evil and is not to be blamed for it. The blame for evil is always on the responsible person who does it and the person who does evil is always worthy of punishment.
- iv. God was grieved by the sinfulness of humanity (Gen 6:6) indicating that our sin is painful to Him. God the Son came to earth, was subjected to numerous evils and died so that He could cancel out sin and its evil effects. God is a fellow sufferer with us of the evil in this world and did something about it by delivering us from it through Christ.
- v. This life is full of many instances of injustice and innocent suffering. The Christian faith proclaims a time of judgment when every sin will be recognized and justly judged. Faith is our assurance that we will enter the final dimension of eternal life in heaven.

3. The Decrees of God

- i. Decrees are God's eternal plans where He determined, before the creation of the world, to bring about everything that happens. The death of Christ (Acts 2:23), our salvation (Eph 1:4) and our good works (Eph 2:10) were all determined before creation.

- ii. This involves God's providence – his continuing action by which He preserves the creation He brought into being and guides it to His intended purposes. God preserves his creation (Acts 17:28). This does not mean, for example, a believer is spared danger or trial but is preserved within it such as protecting Daniel in the lion's den. God also maintains the properties with which He created them. For example God preserves water in such a way that it continues to act like water.
- iii. God cooperates with created things in every action directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do (concurrence). While this is difficult for our finite and depraved mind to comprehend, concurrence might be stated like this: "God causes all things that happen but that He does so in such a way that He somehow upholds our ability to make willing, responsible choices, choices that have real and eternal results and for which we are held accountable. Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain to us." Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem.
- iv. Review the Axioms on p 11-12 for a broader perspective.