

The Sovereignty of God

God's Purposes

The Display of His Glory and Excellence – The Ultimate End

God has many purposes for which He made the creation. Indeed everything He has made has a specific purpose to fulfill in the grand scheme of His plan for the ages. Everything has a very wonderful and awesome reason for existing, and all things ultimately work out into conformity with the purposes of God as we have seen. In fact everything that God does has its own purpose.

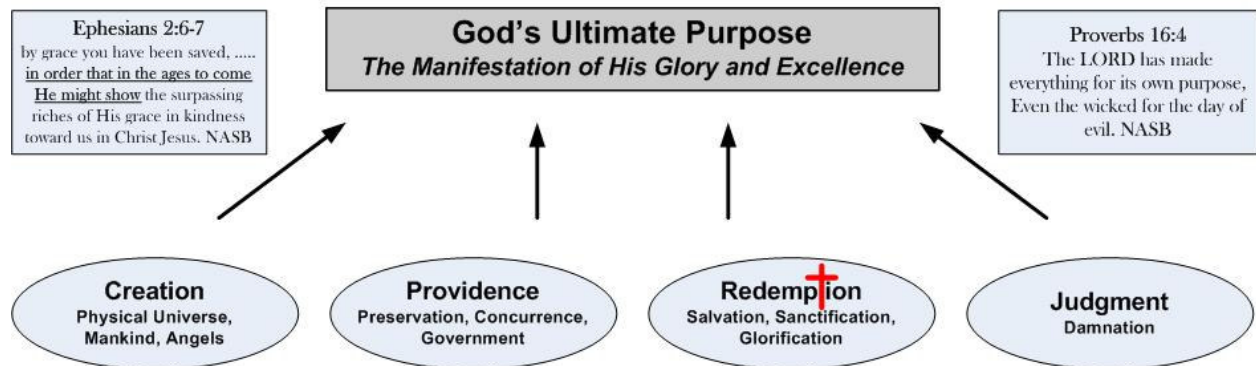
Proverbs 16:4 - 4 **The LORD has made everything for its own purpose**, Even the wicked for the day of evil. NASB

Consider these verses in Ephesians 1.....

Ephesians 1:11-12 - 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 **to the end** that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NASB

In these verses, the salvation of the saints is seen to be **“predestined according to God’s purpose,”** but notice that this is not God’s highest purpose. Oh no, here it says that the predestination of salvation is **“to the end that we.....should be to the praise of His glory!”** Learn then that the salvation of men is NOT God’s highest purpose, but it is works to the higher purpose of the **“praise of the glory of God!”** So when we ask the question, what is the **highest** purpose of God in creating all things, what do you suppose would be the answer? What purpose is it which makes all purposes subservient to it? What is the chief end for which God created all things? I think it can be most clearly summed up in the statement.....

“The chief end of God in the creation of all things is to manifest the Glory and Excellency of His own nature as God, and to express through creation, providence and redemption the manifold perfections of His divine character”



ALL PURPOSES OF GOD SERVE THE HIGHER PURPOSE OF THE DISPLAY OF HIS GLORY!

Dear reader, God is a being of such awesome wonder and infinitely profound beauty that the expression of His being is the highest and most glorious idea or concept that can be conceived. Further, the experience of **KNOWING GOD IN AN INTIMATE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP** is the most fulfilling and exhilarating reality that exists, and it is the highest purpose for which mankind was created. As the Westminster Catechism states, *“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”* The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 10:31 - 31 Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.** NASB

Here the Apostle sums up all our human purposes, he says **“whatever you do.....do it all to the glory of God!”** Dear Reader, here we have purpose, here we have meaning!

This is in fact also what the Lord Himself taught us when He gave us the great commandments. He said all the Law and Prophets depend on these two commandments. In other words, you can sum up the entire Old Testament in this.....

Matthew 22:36-40 - 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."** 38 **"This is the great and foremost commandment.** 39 "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."
NASB

Here Jesus tells us the chief purpose for our existence. It is to **“love God”**, to worship Him with everything that is within us. Consider the meaning of worship, *“to ascribe worth or value to something”* in relation to God’s highest purpose. God seeks to manifest or show forth the Excellency of His character, and we are commanded to **“love Him and praise Him and revere Him.”** This is why sin is such an abominable failure on the part of mankind, because he thereby fails to glorify God, the highest purpose for which he was made and also the highest purpose God has for making Him. This is also why one sin is considered a violation of the whole law...

James 2:10 - 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and **yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.** NASB

God’s highest purpose is NOT the salvation of Mankind

Many people have the mistaken idea that God’s highest purpose is the salvation of men. This is a false idea and foreign to the Bible’s teaching. They reason that since we are created in God’s image and are therefore the pinnacle of God’s creative works, that for mankind to fall into damnation is the worst conceivable idea. But consider that God has ordained the fall of mankind from eternity, for His own Immutable purpose and by His eternal Decree. It was always His purpose for mankind to fall, so that he could redeem some to eternal life and others would be damned. You say, how can you be so sure these are God’s purposes? Well that’s easy, this is “in fact what happens” or to put it another way, it is God’s Sovereign will. It is what unfolds in the course of history therefore it is the outworking of the Sovereign Decree of God. Not only is this reasonably inferred by common sense, but the **Bible plainly states** that God is responsible for the fall....and has planned redemption from before the world began...

Romans 11:32 - 32 For **God has shut up all in disobedience** that He might show mercy to all. NASB

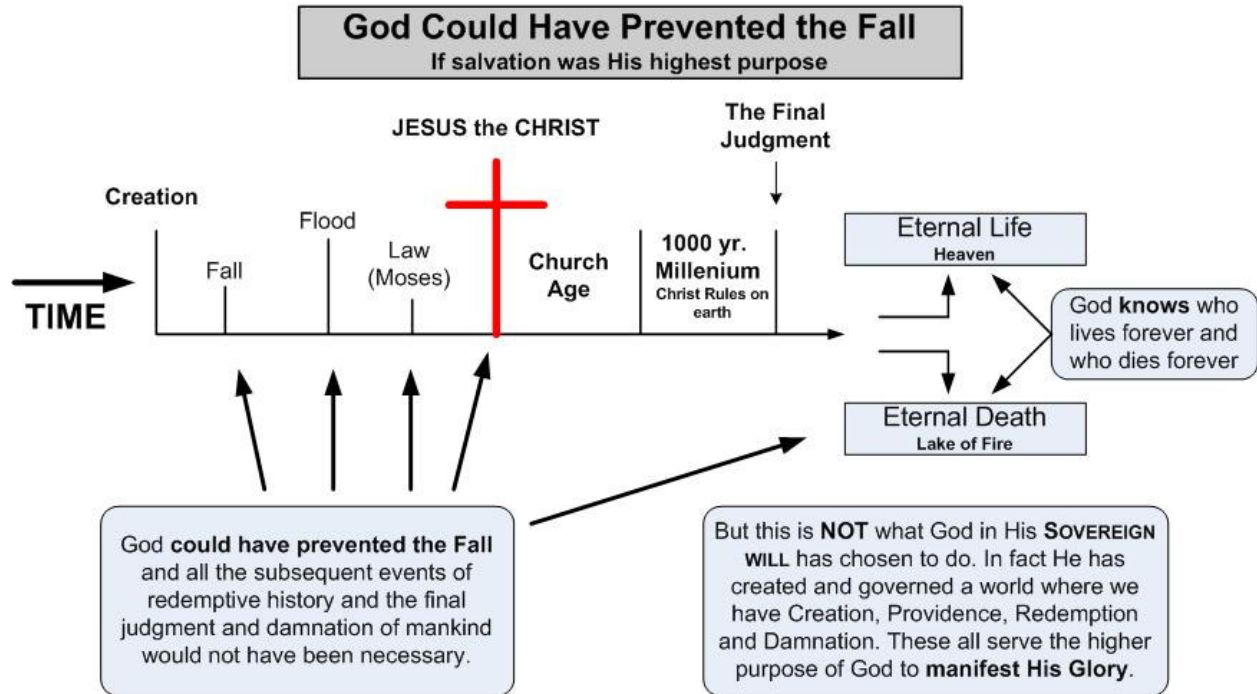
1 Peter 1:20-21 - 20 For He was **foreknown before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you NASB

Many also claim that it is God’s will that all men be saved. In this they quote.....

1 Timothy 2:3-6 -3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. NASB

Consider though that if it were God’s highest purpose to save all mankind, then that is exactly what God would do. Not only this, but God would not have shut all men up into disobedience if He desired to save them all but could have simply prevented the fall from happening. This He could have done in many ways, not the least of which would be that He could have just NOT created the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or given a law not to eat from it. 1 Timothy 2:4 then, is just an expression of the **MORAL WILL** of God. God does not delight in the death of anyone(Eze 18:32), even hardened sinners. However, He will see to it that hardened sinners are judged and damned because this purpose displays the Excellency of His goodness, justice and wrath. So even though in His **MORAL WILL** He does not delight in the death of the wicked, in His **SOVEREIGN WILL** He will make sure it happens. God allows what He hates to accomplish what he loves. Consider the following quote from John Piper.... *“The misery and the suffering that judgment brings upon the impenitent, in and of itself, does not delight the heart of God. He is not malicious or bloodthirsty. That’s what Eze 18:32 is warning us NOT to believe about God. Rather, when He brings judgment on the impenitent*

and unbelieving and wicked, the delight that He takes in that act is delight in the vindication of His justice and His truth and righteousness, and the value of His name which has been profaned by unbelievers. God's heart is capable of grieving over the misery and the sin, considered in and of itself, of any unbelieving lost person (Eze 18:32), while at the same time rejoicing and exulting exuberantly in the vindication of His righteousness and His name as He destroys them in hell (Deut 28:63). If that does not fit together in your own mind and heart, you are finite and God is infinite, **do not shape God into your limited image**, let the Holy Scriptures stand, and may God build His true character in your heart and in your eyes."....from "The Pleasure of God in all He does" sermon Feb 1, 1987



God's Glory displayed in all things

Consider then, how God displays His Glory in all things. In the bullets below are listed a few of the Divine Excellencies which are seen in the works of God.

- **In the creation of the universe** – Power, Wisdom, Beauty, Perfection
- **In providence** - Power, Wisdom, Grace, Mercy, Patience, Omnipresence
- **In the salvation of His people** – Love, Grace, Mercy, Goodness, Justice
- **In the damnation of the wicked** - Goodness, Justice, Wrath, Power

Dear reader, when you consider the Almighty power and Wisdom of God, the proper response is worship and awe! Surely we see then that the **Scripture plainly teaches** that **“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”** That God is indeed the beginning, the middle and the end of all that He has purposed to do.

Romans 11:33-36 - 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.** To Him be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

There are actually numerous biblical texts which explicitly state that God seeks His own glory. In fact, there are so many, it would be exhausting just to list them all much less examine them. But here are a few.....

Isaiah 48:9-11 - "**For the sake of My name** I delay My wrath, And **for My praise** I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off. 10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 "**For My own sake, for My own sake,** I will act; For how **can My name be profaned?** And **My glory I will not give to another.** NASB

Isaiah 43:7 - Everyone who is **called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory**, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made. " NASB

Jeremiah 13:11 - 11'For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD,' that **they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise, and for glory**; but they did not listen. NASB

Psalms 106:7-8 - Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Thy wonders; They did not remember Thine abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 8 Nevertheless **He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known**. NASB

Romans 9:17 - 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and **that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth**." NASB

John 7:18-19 - 18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but **He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him**, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. NASB

Matthew 5:16 - 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, **and glorify your Father who is in heaven**. NASB

John 12:27-29 - 27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But **for this purpose I came to this hour**. 28 "Father, glorify Thy name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "**I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again**." NASB

John 17:24 - 24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, **in order that they may behold My glory**, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. NASB

1 Peter 4:11 - 11 Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory** and dominion forever and ever. Amen. NASB

Learn then, the **Bible plainly declares** that chief among the purposes of God is the pursuit of His own glory and the fame of His great name!

The Plan of Redemption, the Gospel and Missions

Consider then how God, in His infinite Wisdom, has planned the outworking of History to achieve this great end of displaying the Glory of His Name! As we look at Scripture we see that even from the earliest sections of Scripture, God is speaking of His plan to "save and redeem".

Genesis 3:15 - 15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And **between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head**, And you shall bruise him on the heel. " NASB

We see over and over how God is working out His plan for the ages. Consider how the **Scripture plainly teaches** that it was always God's plan for mankind to Fall, for Jesus to die upon the Cross, and for God to redeem for Himself a company of people whom He has "*destined for Glory*." Many of the events were said to have been "*predestined according to God's purpose*" and done by the "*predetermined plan*" of God. The Bible is replete with such texts!

Ephesians 1:11-12 - 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, **having been predestined according to His purpose** who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. NASB

Acts 2:23 - 23 this Man, delivered up **by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God**, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. NASB

Acts 4:27-28 - 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur**. NASB

Ephesians 1:3-6 - 4 just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we should 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, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. NASB

Ephesians 3:11-13 - 11 This was in accordance with the **eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord**, 12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. NASB

Titus 1:1-2 - 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, **promised long ages ago**, NASB

2 Timothy 1:9-10 - 9 who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity** NASB

If these things be true, and they are, consider how God's plan must have a *means* by which it is carried out. Now this could not be more clear in Scripture. The **Bible plainly declares** that the Gospel message is the means by which God's purpose to redeem is carried out in this late age. This is why the church is charged with the great task of evangelizing the nations (missions), for the sake of God's great name, and for the Lamb to receive the reward of His suffering. Since God has created both mankind and angels as morally capable, He has also made them subject to His standards of morality. Therefore ***both mankind and angels will stand in judgment before God, and are accountable to God's Sovereign Authority.***

2 Peter 2:4 - 4 For if **God did not spare angels when they sinned**, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, **reserved for judgment**; NASB

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 - 13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 **For God will bring every act to judgment**, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. NASB

God expects His creatures which He has made for His own purposes, to live according to God's own moral character, perfect, pure and Holy. Because mankind has fallen short of the glory of God (His perfect moral character), this has brought about the great need of redemption, which God has planned for long ages past. This we call the "***Plan of Redemption.***" In this late age, the Plan of Redemption is now coming to pass by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (who is the perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind and God's required redemption price), as ***the purpose of God in redemption is accomplished*** by His calling out of His people from every tribe and nation.

Romans 3:23 - 23 for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**, NASB

Romans 16:25-27 - 25 Now to Him who is able to establish you **according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past**, 26 but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, **according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith**; 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen. NASB

Through this gospel (the message of the person and work of Christ), the judgment of God for the sins of mankind has been cancelled, for all who believe. By this faith they enter into a state of redemption having the debt of sins paid, as God's wrath and judgment were satisfied at the cross, Christ Jesus Himself having fulfilled the law of God (God's perfect moral character) and paid the just penalty for the wages of sin. This we call "***Justification by Faith.***"

Romans 3:21-27 - 21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even **the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 **being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; 26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, **that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**. NASB

Because of this great work, God has exalted Christ Jesus the incarnate Son of God and the man, to be the Sovereign King and Judge of the living and the dead. Therefore all people in every age and generation, all nations and peoples will be subject to the **Sovereign Authority of Christ** and will bow the knee before Him in judgment at the consummation of God's plan for the ages.

Ephesians 1:20-23 - 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 **far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. 22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things** to the church,

2 Timothy 4:1-2 - 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and **of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead**, and by His appearing and His kingdom: NASB

Philippians 2:9-11 - 9 Therefore also **God highly exalted Him**, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 **that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven,**

and on earth, and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. NASB

This message of the Gospel then is the *means* by which God is bringing to pass His eternal purpose in Christ to redeem. This is why missions is a key element of God's glory in the church. We must bring the Gospel to the far corners of the earth to fulfill the command of God in missions. Consider how the following Scriptures relate to this matter.

Mark 16:15 - 15 And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**" NASB

Ephesians 3:8-11 - 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God,** who created all things; 10 in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

11 This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord** NASB

Matthew 24:14 - 14 "And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.** NASB

Romans 10:14-15 - 14 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And **how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" NASB

So then God fully intends to save all those whom He has planned or purposed to save. This He will accomplish by His great missionary people, the Gentile Church. But **consider the certainty of the salvation of God's people.** If God has planned to save all of the people whom He will save, what do you suppose will be the result? Consider that He will save all of the people whom He has intended to save, and will not lose one, but every last one WILL be saved.

John 6:37-39 - 37 "**All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,** and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "And **this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing,** but raise it up on the last day. NASB

Revelation 5:9-10 - And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and **didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.** 10 "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." NASB

Christ did indeed SECURE the salvation of His church.

John 19:30 - 30 When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished !**" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. NASB

In all of this great plan to redeem, God's people magnify the *glory* of His grace in salvation. All of God's redemptive works throughout history are working to the **end OR the ultimate purpose** of the praise of the glory of God's Excellency and nature as God our Savior.

2 Corinthians 4:15 - 15 For all things are for your sakes, that **the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.** NASB

Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-14,18 - 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should 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,** which He *freely* bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 **to the end** that we who were the first to hope in Christ **should be to the praise of His glory.** 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory.** NASB

Even the very *state of being* to which God's people are destined is said to be "glory!"

Ephesians 1:18 - 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are **the riches of the glory of His inheritance** in the saints,

Romans 9:23-25 - 23 And He did so in order that He might **make known the riches of His glory** upon vessels of mercy, which **He prepared beforehand for glory,** 24 even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. NASB

The Sovereignty of God

God's Purposes – God's Decrees and Foreordination

The Certainty of God's Purposes Being Fulfilled

Now it is clearly evident that if God is indeed all-powerful and all-knowing, and that He is governing His creation by a mighty Providence, and that all of this is happening according to God's plans and purposes, that these purposes are **immutable(unchanging and certain)**. The Bible plainly declares that God purposes will be established in History, His plans and counsel are certain.

Psalm 33:11 - 11 The **counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart** from generation to generation. NASB

Proverbs 19:21 - 1 Many are the plans in a man's heart, But **the counsel of the LORD, it will stand**. NASB

Hebrews 6:17 - 17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise **the unchangeableness of His purpose**, interposed with an oath, NASB

Now this matter is all related to the Sovereign Authority of God. If God is Omniscient and Omnipotent, He must have Sovereignly decreed everything that happens. He has **“declared”** OR **“proclaimed”** as a matter of His Counsel and Will everything that comes to pass. This we call the **“Decree” of God**. This is because God's plans cannot be thwarted or hindered, because by His *invisible hand* He carries them out in History by His Providence. The Bible plainly declares that God has declared the end from the beginning and that all His Holy counsel will be established in History. ***God will bring to pass what He wills, His Sovereign Decrees.***

Isaiah 46:9-11 - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, 10 **Declaring the end from the beginning** And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, **'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'**; 11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.** NASB

Consider the words of the **Westminster Shorter Catechism** on the Decrees of God.....

Question 7: What are the Decrees of God? - **Answer:** The Decrees of God are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Ephesians 1:9-11 - 9 He made known to us **the mystery of His will**, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined **according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will**, NASB

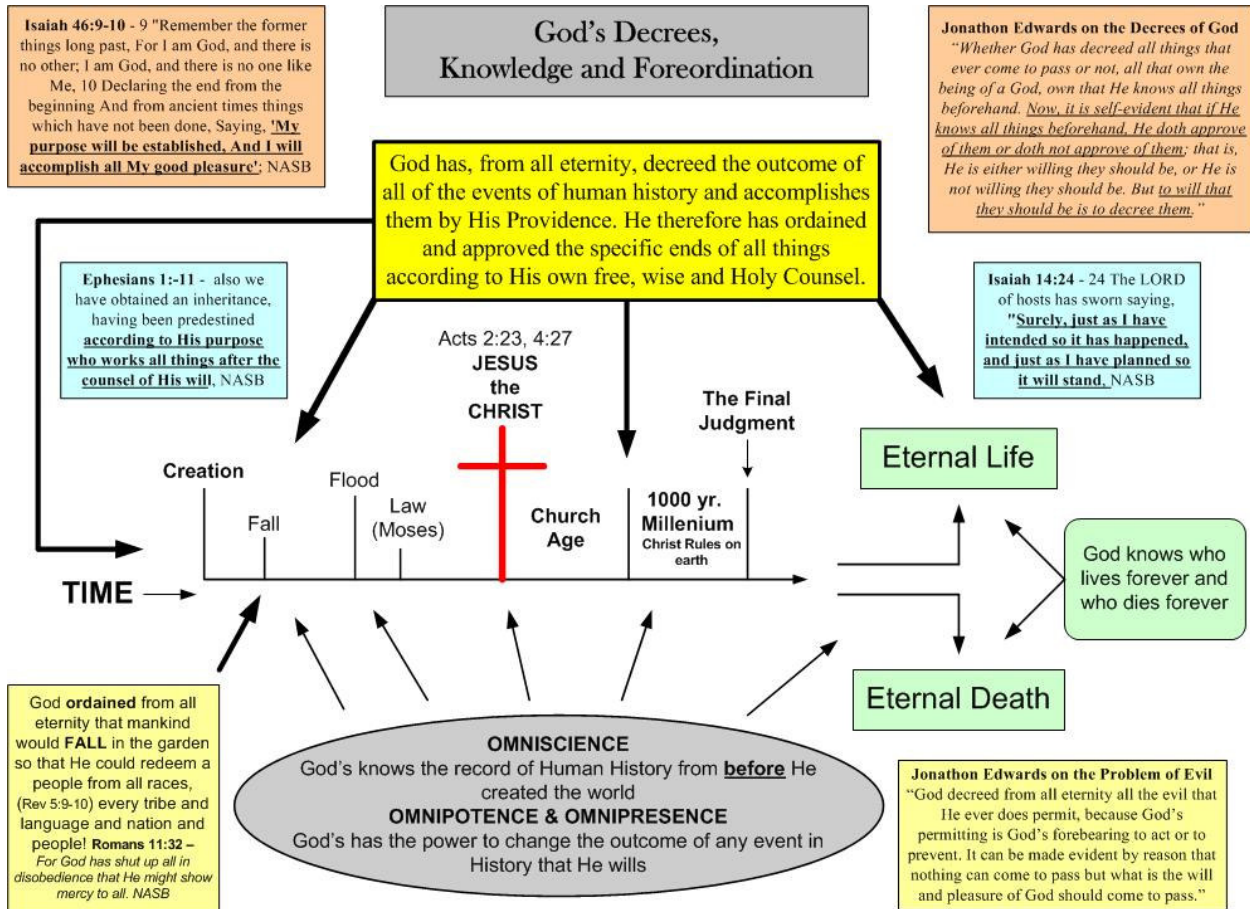
Whatever comes to pass has been **eternally Decreed by God**. This means that God has **“approved”** of all of the events of History, (in the ultimate sense of permitting or preventing them). This we call **“Foreordination.”** God has **“Fore”** (from before time began), **“ordained”** all that ever does come to pass in History. Consider how *Jonathan Edwards* has described this.... *“Whether God has decreed all things that ever come to pass or not, all that own the being of a God, own that He knows all things beforehand. Now, it is self-evident that if He knows all things beforehand, He doth approve of them or doth not approve of them; that is, He is either willing they should be, or He is not willing they should be. But to will that they should be is to decree them.”*

Numbers 23:19 - 9 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; **Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?** NASB

Another quote from *Jonathon Edwards* explains God's Decrees in relation to the problem of evil, *“God decreed from all eternity all the evil that He ever does permit, because **God's permitting is God's forbearing to act or to prevent.** It can be made evident by reason that nothing can come to pass but what is the will and pleasure of God should come to pass.”* (**Job 12:13-22, Prov 8:14-16, Isaiah 40, Acts 2:23, 4:28**) Learn then that History is the product of God's eternally wise planning, creative purpose, providential preservation, and common grace. God fills space and time with his presence, sustains it, and

gives it purpose and value. The omnipresent and omnipotent One is Lord of time and history, not vice versa. God does not negate time but fulfills it. In it His purposes are accomplished.

Isaiah 14:24-27 - 24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, **"Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand,** 25 to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them, and his burden removed from their shoulder. 26 **"This is the plan devised against the whole earth;** and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. 27 **"For the LORD of hosts has planned , and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"** NASB



The Nature of God's Decrees and Foreordination

When we consider the Decrees of God, His eternal purposes and plans, let us not forget the very nature of God. It is evident that God's attributes help us to define and understand His purposes. In relation to His Decrees then we must remember that God's nature is.....

- **Holy** – God is perfect and absolutely pure
- **Omnipotent** – God is all-powerful and free to do all His Holy Will
- **Omniscient** – God is all-knowing having perfect knowledge of past, present and future events
- **Omnipresent** – Exists in all space in every moment of time
- **Eternal** – God has always been, IS now, and always will be
- **Self-Existent** – God is the source of all beings, things, knowledge and power
- **Sovereign** – God is the supreme authority and no one can overrule His Decrees
- **Wise** – God's plans all work together in harmony to accomplish His purposes
- **Just and Righteous** - God never does anything that is evil, unjust or unrighteous

Therefore in light of God's nature, let us consider the nature of His purposes or His Decrees.
God's Decrees are

- **Glorious** - The end or final cause contemplated in all God's Decrees is His own glory. Because God is infinite and perfect, it is plain that the revelation of His glory and excellency as God is the highest purpose that can exist, and that all other purposes of creation are properly subordinate to that end.

Romans 11:36 - 36 **For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.** Amen. NASB

- **Many and one** - They are all reducible to one eternal purpose. All of the manifold events of History form one great purpose or plan. Because God's knowledge is perfect of past, present and future in one simple thought, He therefore necessarily approves of the plan which he has made in its fullness, from beginning to end. Consider this quote from Hodge.... *"It is inconsistent with the idea of absolute perfection, that the purposes of God are successive, or that He ever purposes what He did not originally intend: or that one part of His plan is independent with other parts. It is one scheme and therefore one purpose."*

- **Free** - They are free and sovereign, determined by the counsel of His own will. Another quote from Hodge.... *"God adopted the plan of the universe on the ground of His own good pleasure, for His own glory, and every subordinate part of it in reference to the whole. His decrees are free, therefore, in a far higher sense than that in which the ordinary purposes of men are free."*

Psalms 135:5-6 - 5 For I know that **the LORD is great, And that our Lord is above all gods. 6 Whatever the LORD pleases, He does.** In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. NASB

Isaiah 46:10 - 10 **Declaring the end from the beginning** And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, **'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';** NASB

Isaiah 40:13-14 - 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him? 14 **With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, And informed Him of the way of understanding?** NASB

- **Relate to all things** - They comprehend all events. Whatever God does, He certainly planned to do and whatever God permits He certainly planned to permit. This is necessary from Divine Foreknowledge. Nothing can happen that God did not know from eternity, and therefore nothing can happen that God did not intend. It is plain that if God is providentially controlling Nature and History, that His purposes and plans are equally comprehensive.

Psalms 139:16 - 16 Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And **in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.** NASB

Matthew 10:29-30 - 29 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet **not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.** 30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Isaiah 22:10-11 - 10 Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem, And you tore down houses to fortify the wall. 11 And you made a reservoir between the two walls For the waters of the old pool. But you did not depend on Him who made it, **Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.** NASB

- **Immutable** – His plans are perfect and therefore cannot change. This is to say that whatever God has determined will come to pass, because He has also determined the means by which they come to pass.

Jeremiah 4:28 - 28 "For this the earth shall mourn, And the heavens above be dark, Because I have spoken, **I have purposed, And I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it.**" NASB

Psalms 33:11 - 11 The **counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart** from generation to generation. NASB

- **Inclusive of the ends and the means** – God ordains all of the means by which His purposes are established. Since God's purpose is being carried out in an infinitely complex world of causes and effects, the ends of His purposes include all of the manifold happenings of causes and effects to accomplish them. Therefore it is plain

that His eternal plan included all of the means by which His ends are attained. Consider the *Westminster Confession on Providence*, articles 1, 2 and 3.....

Westminster Confession on Providence

1. God, the great Creator of all things, doth 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.
2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.

Consider how even the free choices of people ultimately accomplish the eternal purposes of God. These choices of people are the means to fulfilling God's Decree. This can be seen in many places and events in Scripture.

Acts 4:27-28 - 27 "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 **to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.** NASB
Ephesians 3:11- 11 This was in accordance with **the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,** NASB

- **Efficacious** – God's Decrees will surely come to pass. Consider how predictive prophecy has proven this time and again.

Daniel 11:36 - 36 "Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god, and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, **for that which is decreed will be done.** NASB

Lamentations 3:37-38 - 37 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, **Unless the Lord has commanded it? 38 Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and ill go forth?** NASB

Isaiah 25:1 - O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; **For Thou hast worked wonders, Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.** NASB

Consider how **the Decrees of God speak to the certainty of all of His promises and threatenings** in the Bible. When God threatens the wicked with destruction, He is not playing games. He will bring to pass what He threatens, should they not heed His warnings.

Psalm 145:20 - 20 The LORD keeps all who love Him; But **all the wicked, He will destroy.** NASB

Genesis 6:13 - 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and **behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.** NASB

Matthew 10:28 - 28 "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** NASB

And when God promises to bless His own people, He will surely do it. The promises of God are as sure as the sun is bright! God will bless His people, and they will glorify Him for it. This is all according to God's eternal purposes which He has purposed in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:28 - 28 And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God,** to those who are called according to His purpose. NASB

2 Corinthians 1:20 - 20 For **as many as may be the promises of God, in Him they are yes;** wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. NASB

1 Peter 1:3-6 - 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 **to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,** 5 **who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation** ready to be revealed in the last time. NASB

Consider if God has purposed to save you dear Christian, what will be the outcome?

Divine Sovereignty and Prayer

One common objection to the idea of the foreordination of all things is the argument that if all things are decreed or ordained from before time, that there is therefore *no reason to pray* because we cannot change the outcome of events. It is evident from the things that we have been learning that this cannot be true, for God has decreed and foreordained all things, and yet has told us to pray and made prayer a means of communication with Him and a means by which His Sovereign will is to come to pass. A few things to consider in this matter are....

- Prayer is fundamentally an acknowledgment of God's Sovereignty
- Prayer is a humble expression of our dependence
- Prayer changes things as we see them in time and space

Prayer is fundamentally an acknowledgment of God's Sovereignty – Prayer is first for the honor and glory of God. Consider when you pray the fundamental thing that you recognize is God's Sovereignty, His power and will. You are firstly **(1)** recognizing His being and seeking to align your own thinking and willing to His divine purposes, and secondly **(2)** making an appeal to His power and ability to meet your needs and wants.

Matthew 6:8-13 - 8 "Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. 9 "Pray, then, in this way: **(1) 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.** 10"Thy kingdom come. **Thy will be done,** On earth as it is in heaven. **(2) 11'Give us this day our daily bread. 12'And forgive us our debts,** as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. NASB

Therefore in prayer we are not seeking to be the divine authority and tell God how to run His world, but in humble acknowledgment of His Sovereignty, appeal for His willingness to care for us and meet our needs and desires. Consider *when you pray for your needs to be met*, you are not seeking to inform God of your needs, for Scripture says He already knows them, but you acknowledge God's ability to meet those needs. Further *when you pray for someone to be saved*, you acknowledge God's Sovereign authority to save and grant repentance and regeneration (spiritual life) to a sinner who is dead in transgressions and sins. If you do not believe this, but rather believe that God has already done everything needed for someone to be saved, and He is waiting for them to respond, then why do you pray and appeal to God for someone's salvation?

Prayer is a humble expression of our dependence on God – Consider here the posture of prayer. *When we pray we humble ourselves before God* and seek His approval, and His acknowledgment of our dependence. We do not seek to dictate to God what His Divine will ought to be, but rather seek to know His all-wise and powerful, loving and good will so that we can align our thinking with it. Shall we dictate to God what He is lacking in His wise plan? Shall a worm of the earth tell the Almighty God how to better govern His world? Silliness! Consider that prayer is rather a confession of our weakness, at times even our helplessness to help ourselves, so we appeal to the Almighty for His gracious hand! Consider further that there is nothing in us to merit God's favor, but rather a long list of sin and rebellion against Him by which His holiness could be provoked and our destruction secured! Therefore the *posture of prayer is obvious, it is one of submission to His Holy will and humble dependence on His gracious hand of provision* for our needs. As the Scripture plainly declares, He supplies our need.

Acts 17:24-25 - 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, **since He Himself gives to all life and breath and all things;** NASB

Consider the tax gatherer and the Pharisee of Luke 18, which prayer was heard?

Luke 18:9-14 - 9 And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12'I fast twice a

week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' 13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." NASB

James 4:10 - 10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord**, and He will exalt you. NASB

Learn then that prayer bows itself before the Sovereign Authority of God seeking to submit itself to God's loving grace and provision!

Prayer changes things as we see them in time and space – The **Scripture plainly declares** that God responds to prayer and acts either in favor or denial of our requests.

James 4:2b - You do not have **because you do not ask**. NASB

Consider that often times in Scripture God makes conditional promises based on the prayers and obedience of His people to His commands and or warnings.

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 - 13 If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, 14 and My people who are called by My name **humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. NASB

This kind of interaction between God and mankind is evident in many places in Scripture. But does the fact that God responds to prayer and free choices of mankind negate the fact that all things are foreordained? It is plain that these are both expressly taught in Scripture. The fact is that prayer and free moral choices are the means by which God brings to pass His Sovereign will when prayer and free moral choices are involved. God has ordained or approved of the reality that in time and space as we pray and make choices that these bring to pass His plan for the ages. Divine Sovereignty and free moral agency exist side by side on the pages of Scripture. One common example is the story of Jonah. Consider how that God is providentially ruling over the sea and the weather, because of Jonah's disobedience. When the men in the ship realize this, they pray to God for deliverance, and they are saved by throwing Jonah into the sea. Then, Jonah is swallowed by a fish and prays to God for deliverance. Then God hears Jonah's prayer and the fish spits him up onto dry land.

Jonah 1:4, 14-16, 2:1, 10 - 4 And **the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea** and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up..... 14 Then they called on the LORD and said, "**We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish** on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; **for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased.**" 15 So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, **and the sea stopped its raging**. 16 Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows. 17 And **the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah**, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights. 2:1 Then **Jonah prayed to the LORD** his God from the stomach of the fish, 2 and he said,.....10 Then **the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up** onto the dry land. NASB

What Scripture reveals to us, and what Jonah himself realized, was that God was bringing about his plan through the willing choices of real human beings who were morally accountable for their actions. In a way not understood by us and not revealed to us, God *caused* them to make a *willing choice* to do what they did. See also **2 Chronicles 33:10-13, Acts 2:23, 4:27-28**

Learn then that the **Scripture plainly declares** that God's Sovereign Authority in the outworking of events is accomplished as He interacts with the prayers and free choices of moral agents.

Divine Sovereignty and free moral agency exist side by side on the pages of Scripture. Oh the wonderful mystery of God's eternal purposes and His Providence working in the choices of millions of people everyday! It is plain then that we should live our lives in such a way that we humbly acknowledge the Sovereignty of God and His Lordship and entreat Him often for an understanding of His will and requests for our needs and desires. This we should do in a humble dependence on His gracious love and a knowledge of His desire to be our God and meet our needs so that we will glorify Him and thank Him for His goodness and Mercy!

Deuteronomy 4:39 - 39 Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, **that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other**. NASB