

Soli Deo Gloria

The Chief End of All Things

Ex 20:3 You shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

⁵ You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me.

⁶ but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Ex 33:18-19 Moses said, "Please show me your glory."

And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Eph 1:17: That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1Pe 4:14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Rom 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?

³⁵ Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

THE CHIEF END OF GOD

THE MOST IMPORTANT TOPIC a person can inquire into is **God**. Why? Because eternal life and death hang in the balance here. That should be enough to get anyone's attention, though obviously and sadly for many people it isn't. Still, many do and when the topic is broached, it is quickly discovered that it is broad, and questions can go one of a thousand ways. Who is God? Which God are we talking about? Does God exist? What is God like? What is God's relationship to me? And so on.

In this series, we've seen how you can know some things about God that are true, but that unless he reveals himself to you in a special way, this is not enough to gain saving knowledge about him. Thus, we discussed the vital necessity of *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) to give that knowledge of God that can save you. We then saw that this knowledge

teaches you about three crucial things. First, God is gracious beyond comprehension—*sola gratia*, and it is this grace alone that overcomes your sins and is able to reconcile you to a holy God. Second, your sins have separated you from God, and because they taint your very nature, you are not able to work your way into his good graces (which would defeat the point of grace). Hence, *sola fide*, by faith alone you are saved as you trust the message of the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. Third, this gospel message has a content and that content is the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the eternal Son of God come into history at a certain point in time as a man to do all the things for you that needed to be done to bring about your reconciliation to God. Thus, *solus Christus*. Faith is placed in Christ alone. He is the only way to the Father in heaven.

But why would God *do all these glorious things*? Or, to change the emphasis, why would *God* do all these things? This is the question that will concern us now as we come to our climactic week of discussing the great *solas* of the Reformation.

Perhaps one question stands out above all the others in terms of orienting our thinking properly. The first question

asked in the Shorter Catechism is, “*What is the chief end of man?*” This gets at **our purpose for existence**, and as such is just about the most important question we can ask about *ourselves*. It answers, “*The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*” I’m not sure you could find one in a thousand people today that would answer that question this way. It shows just how far our culture and even our churches have fallen from the great heights of a truth once taken for granted. But even the importance of this question is not the heart of our matter.

John Piper notices in several of his books, that we can ask a similar question that he says no one ever asked him as a young man. “*What is the chief end of God?*” Does such a question seem funny? We ask this question about ourselves because we were created, and therefore created with a purpose. It makes sense to try and find out what our purpose might be. But God? He was not created. So, he was not created with a purpose.

Nevertheless, he still *has* a purpose. It is not a created purpose, but an eternal purpose, part and parcel to his very nature. We might say that this purpose is summed up in all his attributes. We can even say that it is summed up by any

single one of his attributes. That is, when understood properly, this purpose reveals what kind of a God he is. It teaches us about why he created us with our purpose. In short, the answer to this question helps us make sense of all reality.

The answer to the question that Piper gives is that **God's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy his glory forever.** Therefore, everything exists to give glory to God alone. This is what the Reformation meant when it said *solī Deo Gloria!* To God alone be the Glory. And of course, it is not merely an historical *sola*, as if we rest our theology on what a bunch of dead Christians alone think. It is wholly, wonderfully, and overwhelmingly biblical. The Apostle writes, **“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom 11:36).**

We will return to this passage as this highpoint of this series. But I want us to take our time in getting there. So, let's see the sights as we climb our way up to the heights, not in some kind of ladder climbing to an unapproachable God, but to **a lofty cleft**, a rock with a view that is nevertheless a safe place to think about God's glory as he has told us it in his word.

THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE FIRST TWO COMMANDMENTS

One of the passages that immediately came to my mind, but which I'm not sure would be a first place others might think to go regarding God's glory is the first two of the Ten Commandments. They state: "You shall have no other gods before me" and "You shall not make for yourself a carved image" (Ex 20:3-4; Deut 5:7-8). The word "glory" does not appear in either one. But the idea certainly stands behind them both. The first teaches us who we are to worship. The second teaches us how we are to worship him. Worship is intimately involved in God's glory, as we sing in the Doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Have you ever stopped to consider the sheer audacity of this First Commandment? Of all the gods, you will not worship *any* besides me. This was unheard of in the ancient world. The many gods were worshiped simultaneously by almost all peoples on earth. Sure, there were some that were higher than others, but no god dared to presume that he or she should be worshiped alone.

If you haven't, others have. The famous atheist **Richard Dawkins** is notorious for having called "The [fictional] God of the Old Testament ... jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."¹ (I find it fascinating that people who don't believe God exists hate him so much? Being that he thinks God is fiction, it is interesting that you won't ever find him or anyone else talking about Lex Luthor or Sauron or Voldemort or Dracula that way). Notice three of the more egoistic terms he cites: **megalomaniacal**, **control-freak**, and **jealous**.

Two of those are **how unbelievers often see God**. The last is how God portrays himself. The Second Commandment does not end with the short summary I gave. Instead, it is the second longest of all the Commandments, giving a stated reason why God must be worshiped this way. It tells us that no carved image of God can be made in the likeness of anything in heaven, earth, or

¹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2006), 51.

the sea. God's people must neither bow down nor serve images, "... for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Ex 20:5).

What does it mean to be jealous? We could say that it means to be envious of someone else, for something they have or have done or whatever. This is not what the word means here. We can say that it is a feeling of suspicion of someone's unfaithfulness in a relationship. While we know that the outcome of breaking this commandment is certainly unfaithfulness in a covenant relationship that is closer than a husband and wife, this is not what it is getting at either. For God is not a man that he should have jealousy like this. God's jealousy, even as understood through the Angel of the LORD, is not governed by passions like suspicion.

The third and right way we can speak of jealousy is as fiercely protective of one's rights or possessions. This is what the word means here. Israel belongs to the LORD. He redeemed her out of slavery. He took her to be his treasured possession. He entered into a covenant with her, and his love for her is so great that he is full of protective jealousy. This is something close to the forefront of Paul's mind when he

makes his great confession that from and through and to God are all things. We will see this a bit later.

But there is something even more basic to look at first. Someone like Dawkins thinks it is bad enough that God is jealous (though I'm pretty sure he has one of the earlier definitions of jealousy in mind), because think about it. Are *you* supposed to be jealous? That's almost always looked at as a bad thing. So why wouldn't it be for God? That's how most people view this, but that's not the worst of it.

The First Commandment demands that only God be worshiped. What kind of egomaniac would command such a thing? The idea of God being jealous (in a good way) and him demanding worship for himself and himself alone gets at the heart of *solī Deo Gloria*. Consider what worshiping another God is. It is giving your love, affections, and devotion to someone other than God. In the case of a marriage (which this is for later God “divorced” Israel), it is easy to see why this would be wrong. If you are married, to give your love and affections to someone other than your spouse is the definition of adultery and cheating.

But this command goes even beyond that, for **it applies not merely to Israel, but to all peoples on the earth.** Yes, its

specific context in the Torah is Israel. But the rest of the Bible is replete with information about how *the Gentiles* knew, disobeyed, and rejected God, turning away from him to the worship of the creation. This wouldn't have been a problem if it wasn't wrong and a fundamental disobedience to the First Commandment that *they too* were under as created beings going all the way back to the Garden of Eden.

Romans actually begins this way, and it is appropriate to bring this up because our great verse comes as the climax of eleven chapters discussing God and our relationship to him. Listen to what it says about the Gentiles. “[They] exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures” (Rom 1:23). Not *Soli Deo Gloria*. They exchanged *the glory*. That is, they did not *give glory to* God or want his glory, but exchanged his glory for the creation through its, rather than his, worship.

WHAT IS GLORY?

But what is this glory? Robert Reymond has a helpful section on this as he discusses *The Shorter Catechism*.

Shortly after asking us what our chief end is, the catechism asks (Q. 4), “*What is God?*” It answers, “*God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.*” **The Children’s Catechism** has as an answer only that “God is a spirit.” The Shorter adds three adjectives that describe this spirit: **infinite**, **eternal**, and **unchangeable**. It then adds seven nouns that all three adjectives describe. God is a personal being, a spirit who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his *being*; infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his *wisdom*; and so on.

Shorter Catechism’s Definition of God²			
	Transcendent Adjectives	Condescendent Nouns	Summary Referent
spirit	infinite eternal unchangeable	being wisdom power holiness justice goodness truth	GLORY

² Chart in Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998), 164.

How do these things relate to glory? Reymond explains,

When we speak of God’s “infinite, eternal, unchangeable” being, etc., we are speaking of those attributes that comprise what the Scriptures intend when they speak of God’s *glory*. That is to say, *God’s glory is the sum total of all of his attributes as well as any one of his attributes*. For the creature to deny to him any one of his attributes is to attack the very glory of God and to deny him that without which he would no longer be God. Or to ascribe to him any attribute which he himself does not expressly claim to have, which ascription can only cancel out some attribute which he does claim to have, is again to represent him as something less than he is and thus is to attack his glory.³

This is why, when we talk about any or all of God’s attributes, we are talking about his glory. This is thoroughly biblical. “To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1Ti 1:17). Immortality, invisibility, aloneness as God—these are his glory. “The Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret” (1Sa 15:29).

³ Ibid., 165.

Here, Glory is equal to God's truthfulness or faithfulness. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps 19:1). Here, Glory refers to God's power, his wisdom, his beauty, his orderliness, and so on. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). This time Glory refers especially to God's righteousness. "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4). Now glory refers to the power displayed because of the Father's great love for the Son. In all these cases, the glory is attached to one or more of God's attributes.

So, what is God's glory? His omniscience, he knows everything. That is God's glory. His omnipotence, he can do anything he wants. That is God's glory. His righteousness, he is perfectly good and holy. That is God's glory. And so on. Any one of them or all of them is the glory of God.

But to some people, these are just words. So, to help you get an emotional handle on just how magnificent this glory is, the OT almost always describes glory in terms of fantastic observable imagery. In Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1 and 10 the glory is palpable, beautiful, resplendent. There is lightning,

thunder, a cacophony of sounds: deafening waters, shouts of archangels, and wheels of great noise. Everything about the scene sparkles like facets, crystals, and gemstones. These scenes are extraordinary, otherworldly, and frightening. They reveal to you the Glory of God.

BACK TO THOSE COMMANDMENTS

Think now about this kind of Glory in relation to the Commandments. If God is infinite, having *all* power, *all* knowledge, *all* wisdom, *all* goodness, *all* truth, and so on, if there is no place you can go in the universe where he is not present; if God is eternal, has no beginning of years, no ending of days; if he can't add knowledge or subtract holiness because he is its infinite maximum—then this is the highest possible Being. As such, he alone is worthy of worship, for he alone is the Glory. **This Being must demand your worship.** For, to have you worship something else would be for him to accept your subtractions to his attributes or your addition of his attributes to something else, thus giving his glory to another. If he let you get away with that, it would mean that he was not in fact the highest

being, because he would actually want you to glorify something besides himself. That would mean this other thing(s) would be more worthy of glory and worship than he is. If God is these attributes and he lets you do this, then he would be guilty giving his glory to another.

THE SELFLESSNESS OF GOD'S GLORY

That leads to an even more serious problem. Not only does God require you to worship him alone, [God worships God alone](#). That's right, God worships. God keeps the First and Second Commandments. If he didn't, if God worshiped something other than himself, God would become a sinner and the universe would blow up. He must do this, because that's what the highest being must do.

But it raises an interesting question. Wouldn't this be totally selfish of God? wouldn't that make him an egomaniac, like Dawkins so blasphemously calls him? Aren't these the kinds of traits that we find so despicable among men? Yes, they are. But no, it doesn't make God like that. Here is where unbelievers fall into an abyss, because they do

not consider that God's worship of himself is Triune, and that this is the opposite of egomania.

God gives glory to himself not selfishly, but selflessly. How does God do this? **The Father glorifies** the Son and Spirit and not himself. **The Son glorifies** the Father and Spirit, not himself. **The Spirit glorifies** the Father and Son, not himself. This is the very definition of love, the opposite of selfishness. Love considers others, not itself. “**Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son**” (**John 14:13**). “**Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you**” (**John 17:1**). We “**worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus**” (**Php 3:3**). And so on.

On one hand, to give his glory to another would be idolatry and false worship. Thus, in giving glory to the Persons—because the Father is God, the Son is God, and Holy Spirit is God—God is not in fact giving glory to anyone other than God. Rather, each is the Glory, because each is the One True God. You have **the Father of Glory**: “**That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him**” (**Eph 1:17**). You have **the Son of**

Glory. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, **glory as of the only Son** from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). You have the Spirit of Glory. “If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the **Spirit of glory** and of God rests upon you” (1Pe 4:14).

On the other hand, to worship yourself is the epitome of false worship. But God does not worship himself like any other creature would have to do. The Father is not the Son or Spirit, the Son is not the Father or Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father or Son. The Persons are giving Glory to each other, not themselves. Call this the **Doxological Proof for the existence of the Real God**. It is how God can glorify himself and remain absolutely pure and righteous and holy and good in doing it. And in it, you learn much about the nature of love and glory and ... everything.

THE INGLORIOUS SHORTFALL OF SIN

Sadly, this becomes the great point at which all sin falls short of the glory of God and where all falsehood in the universe begins. Unbelievers can't understand the triune

nature of God's selfless worship of God. They hear that Commandment that God demands their worship and it causes them to hate God all the more. They have failed at the most basic point to understand who this God is. And what a sad tragedy this is. To hate or refuse to worship God because you don't know and fear who he is. But believers keep sinning too. And this is due to a massive failure in us that is completely contradictory to what God has made us in Christ to be.

Why do we exchange the glory of God? Why is it that our deepest longing (this is everyone, believer or unbeliever), the very reason for which we were created is so often not satisfied in God, bored with him and his ways, complaining of his plans and purposes, angry at his watchful eyes and judgments, and ever seeking to find its satisfaction other places? You were not created to be like this. Why is it that when a man sees an unfathomable collection of stars through a telescope, a transcendent mountain or ocean scene, the gleam and glimmer of gold, a hauntingly beautiful woman, an otherworldly feat of athleticism, or anything glorious that God has created, why is it that men and women and children seek that created glory as an end to itself?

Why do we invent ridiculous stories about the origin of the stars, call the mountain a god, become full of the gold-lust, worship the human body, or create celebrity out of athletes? Why do we want satisfaction in the creation? Why are we not satisfied in God? **Man and the creation were created to reflect God's light and glory, not to be their own.** Christians, you are even now being renewed in that very glory (2Co 3:18) because you are in Christ. So why do you go off seeking other things and no longer reflect the glory as you should? Why is it that the only thing that can actually satisfy the soul becomes the one thing that we run away from?

All sin is a failure to understand the Glory of God. The only remedy to this is to look once more at this God of glory and to be captivated by who he is and what he has done. Now it is time to turn to our verse in Romans 11 and understand what it was that caused the Apostle to break out in doxology.

THE GOD OF GLORY

We quoted **Romans 11:36** earlier. Now it is time to look at the immediate context of this verse by hearing it and the three verses prior. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (**Rom 11:33-36**).

You can immediately sense that Paul has entered into a deep, profound, and personal worship. He has suddenly become enraptured with his God. This is captured by one little word which is one single letter in the Greek. **A curious word.** “Oh!” In a wonderful sermon on this passage, one of my heroes in the faith, **Sinclair Ferguson**,⁴ focuses in on this word. “Oh! Oh! Oh!” It is a word that expresses nothing but emotion. The word does not tell you of a thing. It does not tell you of an action. It is not describing anything. It simply expresses something deep within the soul, something that is seeking to find expression in the world of men. “Oh!”

⁴ **Sinclair B. Ferguson**, “Soli Deo Gloria,” Romans 11:33-36 (3-28-2010), *Sermon Audio*; <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=391285130>

A fascinating letter: Ω (Omega). The last letter of the Greek alphabet. One of two letters God uses to describe the Son (the Alpha and Omega).

“Oh” what? He begins to talk about the wisdom and knowledge, the judgments, and the ways of God. We could have a lot of fun with looking at what those words can mean. But this has a context. We have seen how Romans begins with men exchanging God’s glory and breaking the First and Second Commandments (1:23). We have seen how that is summarized by all men falling short of the glory of God (3:23). And this is still on the Apostle’s mind, for he returns to the very place he started. “For God has consigned all to disobedience ...” (11:32).

One of the great objections men have against God is the problem of evil. This verse talks about human evil, and it does so in a way that puts God directly on the hook for its existence. Not that it makes him evil; not that it makes him culpable; but that it exists because he wants it to.

Men like to pretend that if they were God, they would never allow evil (they pretend as the very thought of pretending to be God is the first order kind of evil and from

it flows all other evils they commit). God is supposedly not worthy of being worshiped if he has done this and either won't stop it or can't stop it. Romans 1 explains, however, that God has done this *because men wanted him to*. It is exact opposite of what people will admit.

Men knew God (**Rom 1:19**), but they did not honor him as God or give thanks (glory) to him (**21**). In their evil deeds, they claimed to be wise, but became fools (**22**) as they exchanged his glory for images, for the creation (**23**).

“Therefore God gave them up...” (**24**). Up to what? To what they wanted to do! He let them do what they wanted to do. He let them sin, to break the First and Second Commandments especially, which is what they wanted to do. He let them give his glory to anything and everything else, because that's what they wanted to do. He gave them up to *their lusts* (**24**), *their dishonorable passions* (**26**) and to *their debased minds* (**28**). When a nation or a people or a group goes this way, it is because God's restraining hand of mercy has been lifted, and he is now giving them what they want, even though it will hurt them terribly in the end. Paul calls sinful actions living proof of the wrath of God (**18**) and through it, he lets people destroy themselves.

When the Apostle says God gave all men over to disobedience, he literally means it, and is probably thinking about **the Tower of Babel** incident when God literally gave men to the fallen angels and the mutual perversions and wickedness that resulted from it. Whatever golden age men may have had was gone. And now all men were consigned to groping around in the darkness, given over to superstition, to wicked spirits, to enslaving lusts and passions. *Because that's what they wanted.*

You see, this is part of the wisdom and knowledge and judgments and ways of God. It is utterly mysterious to us. “We would never have done that,” we boast. But God did. Why?

Scripture does not stop here. Rather, the Apostle's thought concludes, “**God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all**” (**Rom 11:32**). God did not have judgment the sole end purpose for doing this, though if he had it would have been perfectly just and righteous to do that. Instead, God was seeking to glorify himself in all of his attributes, not just judgment and wrath (**1:18**), but also his mercy and kindness and grace, especially as they are found in Christ. For as we said, the Father's single greatest joy is to

display his love for his Son to all the universe by exalting him above all thing in heaven and earth. The Sons greatest joy is to obey his Father in all things, even to a cross and death, so that God might be proved wise above all. The Spirit's great joy is to empower the son at the request of the Father, that God might be glorified in all things.

This goodness of the Father, Son, and Spirit for our salvation has been what most of the letter has discussed. “**But now a righteousness from God apart from law has been made known**” (**Rom 3:21**). This righteousness comes through **the glory of his grace** to those vessels of mercy prepared before hand for glory (**9:23**). It comes by **faith which gives glory to God** (**4:20**). By faith we have been justified, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God (**5:1**). And it comes because of the resurrection of Christ who was **raised by the glory** of the Father, that we might walk in newness of life (**Rom 6:4**). When Paul finally gives his doxology, it is as he is contemplating God's saving purposes among the Gentiles in grafting them into the vine. God is jealously protective of his bride, and so much so that he wants her to grow and flourish around the world.

In this way, all of the *solas* reflect the glory of God as the chief end for which he does all things. This purpose in our lives should be “to ensure that *all the glory for salvation and true interpretation alike be given to God alone.*”⁵ And so the Apostle is now caught up in this and rightly says, “Oh!”

God’s *wisdom* and *knowledge* and *judgments* and *ways* in his grace are even more mysterious, unknowable, unfathomable, unreachable than are his wrath. For wrath is what all deserve. Grace is what no one deserves. Yet, God was pleased to do this, and it is his glory that you might share in it.

Our Romans passage continues by thinking about *the mind of the Lord*. We complain about God’s purposes, especially when he brings into our lives things that we don’t like. But in this we do not see God’s glory. Ferguson says that God has perfect confidence in his own plans, because his mind knows all things. God’s plans are perfect. Everything that he does is right and good.

You have worries, discontentment, and frustrations in your life and they rob you of your joy. You have sins that

⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), 182.

you practice that steal your happiness and comfort. What are these but a questioning of God's mind, his knowledge, his plans, his ways? Yet, **who has ever known the mind of the Lord?** His wisdom and knowledge it is deep as the ocean, rich as entire empires, and better than the greatest good knowable to you. His judgments are not searchable by you, you couldn't possibly know what God is up to. His ways are inscrutable, because you simply don't know the knowledge to figure out what he is doing.

Who has ever been God's counselor? No one. Because who could possibly counsel God? Because God knows all things and you do not. Who has ever given to God's gift that he might repay them? No one. For God owns all things, even the cattle on a thousand hills, and you do not. This is the glory of God, and because of it, you can put all of your trust and rest in him, even in the worst of times.

Then he says, **from him and through him and to him are all things.** God made all things. Think of the wisdom that must presuppose. Think of the power that must necessitate. The simplest Christian is wiser than the smartest atheist with regard to the origins of the universe. **From him** are all things.

The Father plans, the Word speaks, the Spirit breathes and all things are. God sets his love upon. God predestines. God calls. God justifies. God glorifies. This is his grace for those who trust in Christ. Therefore, all things are done **through him**.

Because he is its Creator, all things are his. He owns them all. He has rightful rule over all. He is sovereign over all. Thus **to him** are all things.

Are these words not a comfort to your soul? Do you see how, going back to the commandments, this God is not a tyrant, a despot, a megalomaniac. Do you see how in knowing him and worshiping him your very soul is filled up?

If these things are true about God, then it teaches you that God did not need the creation in order to be full. He had fullness already. Creation is not done due to a lack, but is the overflow of fullness. He has to share his Glory, and the natural outcome of this is that others might be brought to know it and share in it. But if it is not a lack, if God in the splendor of his perfection is completely satisfied in himself, then beloved, how much more true is it when you **find your satisfaction in him**?

SEEING THE GLORY OF GOD

How do you find that satisfaction? Many so-called Christians songs today sing about seeing the Glory of God as fire, gazing directly into the furnace of blazing glory, “God in the nude” as Luther put it. These are frightening thoughts and I refuse to sing them.

Consider Moses. Recall that Moses wanted to know God’s glory, even though he knew it would kill him. “**Show me your Glory,**” he told God (**Ex 33:18**). “**No man may see my Glory and live!**” Nevertheless, God took Moses, hid him in the cleft of the rock and showed him his backside. This is described as “**making all my goodness pass before you and proclaiming before you my Name ‘Yahweh’**” (**19**). This seemed to satisfy him. Why?

Consider those OT stories of God’s glory. Those scenes depicting God’s glory leave you breathless, full of awe and astonishment, gasping for air. **Phil Johnson** recently said these scenes are not really conducive to words, and that is probably right. They are mysterious, unimaginable,

indescribable, impossible to envision the spectacle of it all.⁶ The grandeur, the radiance, and the brilliance left these men (and us, take the mistaken idea that Ezekiel is describing a UFO rather than the glory of God as an example) bewildered and often confused as they tried to grasp it. They were astonished, bewildered, confused, dumbfounded. We find them shaking, terrified, uneasy, vexed, and worried at what will happen to them for seeing such a sight. They the holiest men who have ever lived on their knees crying out for mercy! “Oh God! I am undone!”

But know, friends, that in all of these things, these OT saints were seeing God’s glory **through the person of God’s only-begotten Son via the Holy Spirit**. Proclaiming the Name *is* the Son. John says Isaiah saw Jesus’ *glory* (**John 12:41**). Ezekiel says he saw, “**the likeness of the glory of the LORD ... with a human appearance**” (**1:28, 26**). They saw the glory unclothed in human flesh.

But we have seen God’s glory as the Word became flesh, “**glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth**” (**John 1:14**). “**God, who said, ‘Let light shine out**

⁶ Phil Johnson, “Soli Deo Gloria,” Reformation Conference 9-13-2017, *Sermon Audio*; <https://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=91617164217>.

of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Co 4:6). Truly seeing Christ veiled like this by faith is to satisfy your craving for glory, because he is the Glory of God to you. All those things we have discussed about what the Glory is, he is the exact image, the perfect representation of the invisible God. Philip said, “Show us the Father!” (John 14:8). Jesus sighed and said, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (9).

This glory is spreading each time a person comes to Christ. Moses’ face shone like the sun when he talked to God Face to Face. When the people saw him, they were afraid. But do you not know that it says, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2Co 3:18). Therefore, you are “the glory of Christ” (2Co 8:23), as an astonishing claim in the Bible as there could be, but one that we only dimly comprehend.

Reflecting God’s glory back to him is what you were created to do. It is your chief end. You do this when You

worship. **Together, as a church**, the body of Christ exalts its Head and Maker and Groom and gives him the glory for salvation. **Kevin Vanhoozer** writes an impassioned plea that, “To glorify God is to publish his greatness, which entails making it public [hence we meet together]; it is for the glory of God alone that the communion of the saints must somehow become visible.” This gives meaning and ultimate purpose to why we meet together. And furthermore, “*We glorify God when we show the world the goodness of his attributes and the goodness of his gospel, including our unity in Christ.*”⁷ Our unity, be it within a local church or to the greater denominations beyond is a chief way we glorify God, for in figuring out how to be one though we are many, we reflect the very nature of God to the world. God, help your church to do this better.

As individuals, you give God glory when you acknowledge his Glory and attributes in your lives. **Your work** in filling and subduing the earth, glorifies God. The phrase *solī Deo Gloria* didn’t come into popularity through the Reformers, but through **Bach** who was no pastor but simply a man dedicated to making the greatest music of his

⁷ Vanhoozer, 180.

time. Not “Christian” music, but music that reflected the order, majesty, and beauty of his Creator. And on every piece of music he wrote he signed *solī Deo Gloria*. **Your families**, rightly ordered, obedient, and joyful in Christ give glory to God. With **your feet and hands** you glorify him when you love our neighbor as yourself. With **your tongue** you glorify him when you speak words of encouragement and kindness put on display to show the world the kind of God he is.

Grasp the Glory of God and be swept away by him. There is no greater reality in the universe than God’s glory. There is nothing more worthy of your affections, your emotions, your time, your energy, your lives than this God. He must captivate your attention. You must learn to relish his glory. It is why you were made. He will fulfill your appetites. He will satisfy your deepest longing.

What is there left to say then but what Paul said as he finished his majestic doxology. **“To him be the glory forever. Amen.”** Far from anticlimactic, there is nothing greater that could be said and upon which your mind can dwell. To God be the glory forever. For all glory is his. All

glory is due to him. He is the Glory, and the Glory is now filling over into his people.

Amen. So be it. Make it so. Anything you can say to affirm yes, this is true. May God cause his church to bask in the radiant glow of his glory through the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And she recapture the *solas* for a new generation.