

The Purpose of God's Decrees

by Thomas Boston

And this is no other than *his own glory*. Every rational agent acts for an end; and God being the most perfect agent, and his glory the highest end, there can be no doubt but all his decrees are directed to that end. Rom 11:36, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever." "that we....should be to the praise of His glory," Eph 1:12 In all, he aims at his glory; and seeing he aims at it, he gets it even from the most sinful actions he has decreed to permit. Either the glory of his mercy or of his justice is drawn from them. Infinite wisdom directs all to the end intended. More particularly,

God Glorified in the Creation of the World

1. This was God's purpose in the creation of the world. The divine perfections are admirably glorified here, not only in regard of the greatness of the effect, which comprehends the heavens and the earth, and all things in them; but in regard of the marvellous way of its production. For he made the vast universe without the concurrence of any material cause; he brought it forth from the womb of nothing by an act of his efficacious will. And as he began the creation by proceeding from nothing to real existence, so in forming the other parts he drew them from infirm and inert matter, as from a second nothing, that all his creatures might bear the signatures of infinite power. Thus he commanded light to arise out of darkness, and sensible creatures from an insensible element. The lustre of the divine glory appears eminently here. Hence David says, Psalm 19:1. "The heavens declare the glory of God." They declare and manifest to the world the attributes and perfections of their great Creator, even in his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. All the creatures have some prints of God stamped upon them, whereby they loudly proclaim and show to the world his wisdom and goodness in framing them. Hence says Paul, Rom. 1:20, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead."

God Glorified in the Creation of Men and Angels

2. The glory of God was his chief purpose and design in making men and angels. The rest of the creatures glorified God in a passive way, as they are evidences and manifestations of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power. But this higher rank of beings are endowed with rational faculties, and so are capable to glorify God actively. Hence it is said, Prov 16:4, "The LORD has made all for Himself" If all things were made for him, then man and angels especially, who are the masterpieces of the whole creation. We have our source and being from the pure fountain of God's infinite power and goodness; and

therefore we ought to run towards that again, till we empty all our faculties and excellencies into that same ocean of divine goodness.

God Glorified in Election and Predestination

3. This is likewise the end of election and predestination. For "having predestined us....to the praise of the glory of His grace," Eph 1:5,6. That some are ordained to eternal life, and others passed by, and suffered to perish eternally in their sin, is for the manifestation of the infinite perfections and excellencies of God. The glory and beauty of the divine attributes is displayed here with a shining lustre; as his sovereign authority and dominion over all his creatures to dispose of them to what ends and purposes he pleases; his knowledge and omniscience, in beholding all things past, present, and to come; his vindictive justice, in ordaining punishments to men, as a just retribution for sin; and his omnipotence, in making good his word, and putting all his threatenings in execution. The glory of his goodness shines likewise here, in making choice of any, when all most justly deserved to be rejected. And his mercy shines here with an beautiful lustre, in receiving and admitting all who believe in Jesus into his favour.

God Glorified in the Work of Redemption

4. This was the purpose that God proposed in that great and astonishing work of redemption. In our redemption by Christ, we have the fullest, clearest, and most delightful manifestation of the glory of God that ever was or shall be in this life. All the declarations and manifestations that we have of his glory in the works of creation and common providence, are but dim and obscure in comparison with what is here. Indeed the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness, is clearly manifested in the works of creation. But the glory of his mercy and love had lain under an eternal eclipse without a Redeemer. God had in several ages of the world pitched upon particular seasons to manifest and reveal one or other particular property of his nature. Thus his justice was declared in his drowning the old world with a deluge of water, and burning Sodom with fire from heaven. His truth and power were clearly manifested in freeing the Israelites from the Egyptian chains, and bringing them out from that miserable bondage. His truth was there illustriously displayed in performing a promise which had lain dormant for the space of 430 years, and his power in quelling his implacable enemies by the meanest of his creatures. Again, the glory of one attribute is more seen in one work than in another: in some things there is more of his goodness, in other things more of his wisdom is seen, and in others more of his power. But in the work of redemption all his perfections and excellencies shine forth in their greatest glory.

This is the goal that God proposed in their conversion and regeneration. Hence it is said, Isa 43:21, "This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise." Sinners are adopted into God's family, and made a royal priesthood according to this very design, 1 Pet 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light."