

“WHY DID GOD ...? HIS GLORY ALONE.”

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Scripture Texts: Romans 11:33-36; see also Psalm 96

Prayer: Holy Father, by your Holy Spirit shine your illuminating light on your word, and grant that we, your redeemed creatures, be enabled and equipped to better live our lives to glorify you, for the sake of Christ and His glory. Amen.

Introduction.

“Why Did God ...?”

Have you ever started a sentence with, “Why did God ...?” Have you ever been in a situation where your first thought is, “Why, God?” “Why did you do that or let that happen or allow that or make that?”

If you are human you have had that question more than once. Or its counterpart, “Why didn’t God do this or that?” It is a sign of our humanity to ask the question, animals never ask that.

That has been the question from the beginning of history. Why did God let Satan in the garden, why did God make man able to sin, why did God create everything good and then let everything go bad? Why does God do what God does? Why?

If we want to truly understand the why questions of life, if we want to know the answers to life’s deepest mysteries, if we want to get at the root of all that has gone on in history and in our world today, we have only one option and that is to turn to God.

God has revealed the answer to us. The answer to “why did God” is found in our text at the end of chapter 11 of Romans.

This is a crescendo-like response to all the great doctrines Paul has written down in the first eleven chapters. Doctrines that sum up the first four solas. For eleven chapters Paul has expound on no matter how sinful we have been we are justified by grace alone, without any merit of our own, but on the basis of Christ alone, without any other sacrifice or righteousness of our own, though faith alone, without any human works to boast in.

The only fitting response to this display of God’s sovereign mercy and grace in the face of our sin and just judgment is heart-felt adoration.

The first four solas must lead us to the glory of God alone, they all point to Him. In fact, the intention of the other four solas is to ensure that all the glory for our salvation goes to God and God alone. In holy reverence and awe Paul proclaims:

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

Let’s unpack this great doxology.

The glory of God and creation.

At our council meetings we are reading a little book, *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses*. Last Tuesday night I asked the council what is the most offensive verse in the Bible in our culture today, verses like Jesus being the only way of salvation and ones that talk about hell, sin, homosexuality, submission, and so on.

I said there is a verse that’s more offensive than all of those. If someone ever tries to embarrass you for believing what you believe about the Bible, you can help them out by saying something like, “You don’t know the half of it. I don’t just believe all those verses to be true I believe another one that trumps all of those.”

Here is the most offensive verse in the Bible:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” There is a God and He created everything that is, and everything is His. He is the one who designs everything and defines everything, and He is the one who gives everything it’s meaning and purpose. It is all about Him. In the words of Paul:

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

God is the creator and source of all things, all things come from Him.

This includes everything in the physical universe from galaxies to glaciers to grapes. This includes intangibles like truth, beauty and goodness and all the other virtues.

Everything that is, is from God and there is nothing that is, that is not from God.

What about sin, evil and wickedness? Let me deal with this as briefly as I can so we can move on. God created this world with the potential and possibility of falling into sin and everything that comes from sin. God created Satan. So there is a sense that it is from Him, but, and this is important, God Himself is not the source of sin, that is sin and evil do not come out of the character and nature of God. God can will sin without sinning. God can permit something indirectly without being the direct cause.

The analogy I have borrowed to show this is that the cold and darkness in our world are not from the sun. In other words, there is no coldness or darkness in the sun, cold and dark don't come from the character and nature of the sun. Cold and dark are the indirect result of the absence of the sun.

God willed or ordained that this world would be able to have sin and evil in it, but the source of that is not in His character and nature. In one sense, all things are from God and in another sense sin and evil are not from God.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world.

God is God and from Him are all things. He didn't need any help to create the universe, He didn't use any preexisting material. God by Himself made everything that is out of nothing. Everything that is owes its existence to God.

You can't tell God anything He doesn't already know.
You can't give God anything that isn't already His.

God is the continual sustainer of all things, He keeps all the things He creating in continual existence. So not only does everything owe its existence to God, it is utterly dependent on God to continue to exist. That is why Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread.

God is the goal of all things. The first two realities lead to the third reality. If God is the creator and the sustainer, if it is all His then it is all for Him. He keeps everything moving in the direction He intends, which is toward Him. All things exist for His sake, for His glory.

This is the “why” behind the universe. The reason God created the universe and our world and put mankind on it is for the display of His glory.

God is the alpha and the omega (and every letter in between), the first and the last, the beginning, middle and end, from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm 8:1 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Psalm 24:1 The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it.

Psalm 57:5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

Genesis 1:1 is the most radical verse in the Bible. It is the continental divide. If you believe that sentence then everything else flows toward God and God's glory. If you don't believe that verse then everything flows toward man and man's glory.

The fact that you are here this morning is some evidence you understand this to be true, that in here there is an answer to the chaos and confusion out there, that the spiritually correct worldview has the ring of truth over against the politically correct worldview.

And one of the ways this world glorifies God is its need for a God-glorifying Savior.

The glory of God and Gospel.

We need to think about the other realm where God has set His glory on display, in the Gospel of our redemption through Jesus Christ. The same God who is mighty to create is mighty to save.

In a sense creation is the stage on which God displays more of His glory.

Our text sits in the context of Romans and comes at the conclusion of the first eleven chapters of Romans which are all about the salvation that God planned from before the foundations of the earth to display the glory of His grace and mercy and compassion.

Just as creation is *from God*, salvation is from God. No one helped Him, He didn't need priests or sacrifices or good works. Only God could have come up with and planned the kind of salvation that would perfectly satisfy His wrath toward sin and His righteous requirements for justice, and at the same time deliver us from our sin and unrighteousness.

Furthermore, salvation is *through God*, that is, through Jesus Christ. There is no one else, no other name, no other help. Salvation is not through me or anything I can do. I am the problem not the solution.

This is what the Reformers understood when they put the word sola or only in front of all the doctrines of our salvation. God's Word is our only final authority, Jesus Christ is the only source of our salvation, we have no claim on this except by God's grace alone and it is made ours through no other means than faith alone.

Jesus came to restore and reconcile what was done to reject God and His glory. This plan of salvation is the only one that brings all glory to God alone.

If all creation is from God, through God and for God and if all salvation is from God and through God and *for God*, then we exist for the glory of God.

This is why God created the universe. This is why God ordained all that happens in history. This is why you and I exist. This is why all that happens in our lives happens. This is why God sent His Son.

It is all for the glory of God alone.

To sink your faith into this truth will give you assurance and security in the most “why” producing times. All things must be for God’s glory and for believers in Christ, all things must also be for our good.

The unanswerable question will not be the why question, it will be the how question. How does this particular thing glorify God? And that question will only be answered in hindsight, sometimes in days or years or only in eternity.

However much we may not understand God’s ways now, for His ways are incomprehensible, we can absolutely trust Him because He does all things for His glory which is perfect and good.

There is no answer that is deeper or more profound or better than this. To God be the glory, now and forever and ever. Amen.

I said something else at council that was probably more radical than that Genesis 1:1 is the most offensive verse in the Bible to a non-believing secular world.

I asked the question is this the best of all best possible worlds? Of course, our first response is no because of all that is wrong in our world, all the sin and evil. But let’s think more deeply.

If this is the world that God has created, that God continues to sustain, that He is directing toward a God glorifying end, a world that God completely rules over and is sovereign over, a world in which everything most fit with His redemptive purposes, a world God conceived from before the foundations of the earth, if all that is true, then this world must be the best of all possible worlds. This is world is not plan B, or an accident, or out of control, or under the control of Satan or other forces. This is our Father’s world and it is His best plan for glorifying Himself and who He is and what He can do.

This world is the world that makes the most sense to God and will result in the most glory for God.

Implications and applications.

Does that sound like good news to you? Do you embrace the truth that your life is meant to glorify God, to reflect His glory, to show how glorious God is? Do you love the truth that you aren’t here for yourself but for God?

Do you see that your sinful and selfish living is a rejection of God’s glory and His glorious purposes, and that Jesus came to redeem that and forgive that and change that, to make our lives into what they were created to be?

This is the reformation, the reformation of our own lives and souls, of our homes and families, of our church and community, of our nation and the world, to live radically God-centered, to set His glory as both our goal and our joy.

When we can say that with all our heart and mean it and want it and love it, then we are on our way to a true reformation, the kind we all desperately need.

What would have to change in our lives for them to be more oriented toward God and His glory? What changes in attitude, goals, priorities, desires, finances, lifestyle choices, living situations, marriages? What do we need to repent of? What do we need to pray for? What would be different on Monday morning or Saturday morning or Sunday morning?

We cannot glorify God if we are living for ourselves and in our own ability. The world says we find happiness and joy and meaning within ourselves, but it is a lie. It is found outside of ourselves and in the one who made us for Himself.

Dependence on God glorifies Him. Trusting in Christ alone by faith alone in grace alone glorifies God. Trusting in His Word alone glorifies Him.

This is what I want to be true about me and all of us, that we delight in glorifying God, in giving Him all the honor and praise due His name, that He is our treasure and satisfaction. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

This is the truth recaptured at the Reformation. This truth made Paul sing. This truth has made the church sing for two thousand years. *And Can it Be, How Great Thou Art, How Firm a Foundation, To God be the Glory.*

Prayer: Infinite God and Holy Father, you conceal within yourself the final explanation of all of life's mysteries. For this we trust you. You execute your will in our lives without our help. For this we rest in you. You sanctify all events in history and in our lives with divine meaning and purpose, so that we are always safe, no matter what evil befalls us. For this we rejoice in you. With you being there, O God, being who you are, everything ultimately will be all right, because all things are moving toward your glory. So, Holy Father, be glorified here in our small lives and in our small church and in our nation, for your glory is our eternal security and everlasting hope and joy. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, Amen. (from Raymond C. Ortlund Jr.).