

Doctrine of God Part 22- God as Creator and Sustainer

GOD THE OWNER OF ALL

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth. Therefore, one of the “first truths” that must be comprehended if we are to have a right understanding of God and our place in His creation is that we are not our own. We were not made for ourselves. We belong to the One who made us, and we are responsible before Him to live according to His will and for His glory and good pleasure.

Note the name given to God in Genesis 14:19, 22...

Genesis 14:19,22...

¹⁹ He blessed him and said,

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

He gave him a tenth of all. ²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.” ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth

NOTES: The word “possessor” comes from the Hebrew word *qanah*, which means, “to get or acquire,” and is used of God to communicate that He is both the Creator and the Possessor of the universe.

The following passages from the Psalms contain two of the most important statements in all the Scriptures with regard to God’s ownership of His creation.

a. *Psalm 24:1-2 ...*

The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains,
The world, and those who dwell in it.

²For He has founded it upon the seas
And established it upon the rivers.

b. *Psalm 89:11...*

¹¹The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours;
The world and all it contains, You have founded them.

The following texts from Job and Psalms communicate to us a very important implication of God's ownership of creation.

a. *Job 41:11...*

¹¹ "Who has given to Me that I should repay *him*?
Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.

b. *Psalm 50:10-12...*

¹⁰ "For every beast of the forest is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹ "I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.

¹² "If I were hungry I would not tell you,
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

NOTES: The great truth communicated in both of these texts is that, because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all, God needs nothing from man and is debtor to no man. God does not call us to serve Him because of some need, but in order that we might know the privilege of His fellowship and witness the demonstration of His power.

In Deuteronomy 10:14-15, we discover both the greatness of God with regard to His creation and the grace of God to His people.

Deuteronomy 10:14-15...

¹⁴ Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.

The Purpose of Creation

God is the Creator, Sustainer, and rightful Owner of His creation. It now follows that we consider the purpose for which He created all things. If God was under no obligation to create the universe, and if He did not need the universe to fill some void in His existence, then what was and is the divine purpose behind the creation and continued existence of man? The Scriptures boldly and unapologetically declare creation's purpose to be ***the glory and good pleasure of God.***

THE GOD OF ALL FULLNESS

One of the most awe-inspiring and humbling truths about God is that He is absolutely free from any need or dependence. His existence, the fulfillment of His will, and His happiness or good pleasure do not depend upon anyone or anything outside of Himself. He is the only Being who is truly self-existent, self-sustaining, self-sufficient, independent, and free. All other beings derive their life and blessedness from God, but all that is necessary for God's existence and perfect happiness is found in Himself. Creation is not the result of some lack in God, but the result of His fullness or the overflow of His abundance.

Note what the Scriptures teach us about the self-existence and self-sufficiency of God. From where does God's life or existence come?

a. *Psalm 36:9...*

⁹ For with You is the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.

b. *John 5:26...*

²⁶ For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;

NOTES: God has life in Himself and is the fountain of life and light (*i.e.* wisdom) for all living creatures. He is not dependent upon another; all things are dependent upon Him.

The self-sufficiency of God is a declaration of His infinite greatness and His exalted place above His creation. All things depend upon Him for their very existence, but He depends upon no one. In Acts 17:22-31 is recorded the Apostle Paul's sermon to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill. In verses 24-25, he refutes their idolatrous views by making two very important declarations about the living God.

a. *God does not dwell in temples made with hands (v.24).*

b. *God is not served by human hands as though He had need (v.25).*

NOTES: The first declaration proves that God has no need that man should build Him a temple, since He Himself made the universe, and even it cannot contain Him. The second declaration proves that God's command for us to serve Him is not the result of need on His part; it is an act of grace. He grants us the privilege of knowing Him, serving Him, and being the special objects of His favor.

THE GLORY OF GOD

Why did God create all things? The Scriptures teach us that God created everything for His own good pleasure and glory (*i.e.* to manifest His greatness and to receive from His creation the honor and worship that is due Him).

Consider these two evidences. **First**, God is worthy to take the highest place above His creation; and He is worthy to be the object of all our thoughts, activities, and worship. **Second**, the greatest good God could ever do for us and the greatest kindness He could ever show us would be to direct all things so that His greatness might be fully displayed before us. If God is of infinite worth, beauty, and majesty, then the most valuable, beautiful, and majestic gift He could ever give us would be to show us His glory.

God is the Creator, Sustainer, and rightful Owner of the heavens and the earth and all that dwells within them. All things were **created by** Him, **belong to** Him, and **exist for** His glory. What does Romans 11:36 teach us about this truth?

Romans 11:36...

- **From Him are all things.** God is the **source** of creation and the fountain of all life (Psalm 36:9). Creation owes its very existence to God, and apart from Him there would be nothing. Man is the work of God that he should live for His glory.
- **Through Him are all things.** God is the **Agent** through which all things were created and are sustained. If God were to turn away from His creation for one moment, all would become **chaos**. But through His unhindered sovereignty, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite power, He sustains all things and directs them (molecules, men, and galaxies) to the great end for which they were created—the glory of God.

- *To Him are all things.* In this simple phrase is found the meaning of existence. God created all things and works in all things for His good pleasure and glory—to manifest His greatness and receive from us the honor and worship that are due Him.
- *To Him be the **Glory** forever. **Amen.*** The only proper response to the greatness of God is to esteem Him above all things and to give to Him the highest honor, adoration, and praise.

In Colossians 1:16 is found a passage of Scripture that is very similar to Romans 11:36, but it speaks specifically about the Son of God.

- *All things have been created **By** Him and **Through** Him.* The Father is the source of all things (Romans 11:36), but He has created all things **through** the Son (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2), who is the Mediator between the Father and creation. Through the Son, the Father **created** all things, **reveals** Himself to His creation (John 1:18), **reconciled** the creation to Himself (II Corinthians 5:19), **rules** creation (Philippians 2:9-11), and will one day **judge** creation (John 5:22).
- *All things have been created **For** Him.* It is no contradiction to say that all things have been created for the glory and good pleasure of both the Father and the Son. According to the Scriptures, the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35). And it is the Father's will that all honor the Son as they honor Him (John 5:23). Therefore, everything said in Romans 11:36 about the purpose of creation may also be applied to the Son. All creation, in all realms, has one great and final purpose—the glory of God.

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD AS CREATOR

REVERENCE AND HUMILITY

Our first response to God as Creator should be one of reverence and humility. We reverence God to the degree that we acknowledge His highest place before us as Creator and Lord of all and regard Him with the utmost respect and awe. We humble ourselves to the degree that we acknowledge our place before Him as creatures—His possession, created for His glory and good pleasure.

In light of the awesome power and grandeur of God, mankind's first response should be that of reverence and awe. See Psalm 33:6-9. According to verse 8, note how should the inhabitants of earth respond to the infinite power and wisdom of God revealed through creation.

Psalm 33:6-9...

⁶ By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

⁸ Let all the earth fear the Lord;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

⁹ For He spoke, and it was done;
He commanded, and it stood fast.

NOTES: The word "fear" is translated from the Hebrew word **yare**. With respect to God, it denotes having the greatest reverence for who He is, what He has done, and what He can do. The word "awe" is translated from the Hebrew word **gur**, which also denotes fear or dread. It is the unchanging uprightness of God—His righteousness, holiness, majesty, and power—that calls for our reverence.

Awe and reverence are inseparable from humility. If we have truly comprehended something of the infinite perfections and power of God, we will humble ourselves before Him.

WORSHIP AND ADORATION

How can the creature not worship its Creator and Sustainer? The debt that is owed Him cannot be measured. Would anything exist if He had not spoken? Would not all things immediately turn to chaos and destruction if He did not sustain them? How then can we not worship? It would not be wrong to say that the primary purpose of creation, especially of man, is to worship the God who created us and by whose power and faithfulness we are sustained. The worship of God is our highest privilege and greatest responsibility. When we do worship Him, we are at last fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Revelation 4:11...

¹¹ "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

NOTES: The adjective "worthy" comes from the Greek word *áxios*, which denotes something or someone of weight or great worth. God is deserving of all praise, thanksgiving, and service.

In Psalm 148:1-13 is found a call for all creatures of every realm to render worship, honor, and glory to the God who made them.

NOTES: According to verse 6, God has established the natural order of His creation, and this order is fixed under His sovereign decree. Nothing will happen except that which is part of His government or rule. No catastrophe will come upon the world except that which has been decreed by God.

NOTES: God's creation is a thing of indescribable glory, yet it does not begin to compare with the infinite glory of God's person. He is to be praised not only (or even primarily) for what He has done, but also for who He is.

We will conclude our study of God as Creator and Sustainer with two commands that reach to every realm and every inhabitant of creation. How shall we live in light of these commands?

a. *Psalm 103:22...*

²² Bless the Lord, all you works of His,
In all places of His dominion;
Bless the Lord, O my soul!

NOTES: The word "bless" comes from the Hebrew word **barak**, which is often used in the Scriptures to denote a joyous and exuberant exclamation of praise and thanksgiving to God.

b. *Psalm 150:6...*

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord!

NOTES: The word "praise" is translated from the Hebrew word **halal**, which means, "praise." The title "Lord" is translated from the Hebrew word **yhwh** or **yah**, which is transliterated as "Yahweh." It is from these two words that we derive the term "hallelujah." In Hebrew, repetition (as throughout this psalm) is extremely important; it is intended to communicate emphasis or intensity.

John Calvin...We are not our own

"Now the great thing is this: we are consecrated and dedicated to God in order that we may thereafter think, speak, meditate, and do, nothing except to His glory. For a sacred thing may not be applied to profane uses without marked injury to Him.

If we, then, are not our own but the Lord's, it is clear what error we must flee, and whither we must direct all the acts of our life. We are not our own: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds.

We are not our own: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own: in so far as we can, let us forget ourselves and all that is ours.

Conversely, we are God's: let us therefore live for Him and die for Him. We are God's: let His wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's: let all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward Him as our only lawful goal."

–John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John T. McNeill, ed, Ford Lewis Battles, trans, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960 [1559]), 3.7.1.