

Living in Light of God's Glory Isaiah 43:7

What is your aim in life? What do you want more than anything else? Is your goal to be successful, or happy, or to be liked by people? Is it to be a good parent, an excellent businessman, or even the best Christian you can be? Is it to see your children do certain things or turn out a certain way? What is the goal or motive behind what you do?

What is the reason we exist? What is our purpose on this planet? Have you ever gazed at a starlit sky and asked the ultimate questions as to why we're here?

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks its first question this way "what is the chief end of man?"

Isaiah 43:7 is one of those passages that gives us the answer.

5 "Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, And gather you from the west.

6 "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar And My daughters from the ends of the earth,

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."

The answer to the question what is the chief of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. I want to focus on verse 7 today and especially that phrase that says God's people are created for God's glory. We were not just created to breathe some air, take up space, have a good time, and make friends and a family, buy a house or succeed in life -- we are created to glorify God! And this is so practical - when we don't glorify God we're defeating the whole purpose for our existence and what could be more futile than that!

In Isaiah 43:7, this creation is described with 3 words: "created ... formed ... made"

"The three synonyms bring out the might, the freeness, and the riches of grace, with which Jehovah called Israel into existence, to glorify Himself in it, and that He might be glorified by it. They form a climax, for **אֵלֶּיךָ** signifies to produce as a new thing; **עָשָׂךְ**, to shape what has been produced; and **וַיַּמְצֵא**, to make it perfect or complete" (Keil & Delitzsch, 7:425)

This passage was written originally to Israel, promising them a future, and restoration after their captivity, and reminding them that God called them and has a plan for them. But the phrase “I have created for My glory” extends beyond just the original readers and we see it is the purpose of all created humanity.

In Daniel 5:23 the Lord rebukes the even unbelieving King Belshazzar with the words:

“you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven ... But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified.”

The rebuke against all humanity in Romans 1 is that they did not glorify God and in Romans 3 it's that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

What does glory mean?

In verse 7 and many contexts it is somewhat synonymous with honoring God or pleasing God. It is difficult to define “glory” in a few words, many works do not include it as one of the attributes, some see it as the sum of all God's attributes. In the dictionary, the Hebrew word for glory (*kabod*) comes from a root meaning heaviness, or weightiness, thus gravity, importance, honor. This is a message in America that has been largely lost.

David Wells: “It is one of the defining marks of Our Time that God is now weightless ... he has become unimportant ... Those who assure the [analyzers of opinion polls] of their belief in God's existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgment no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertisers' sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness.??”

P. G. Ryken adds: It is the weightlessness of God, more than anything else, that explains the failings of the evangelical church. It is because God is so unimportant to us that our worship is so irreverent, our fellowship so loveless, our witness so timid, and our theology so shallow. We have become children of a lightweight God.

One of the best ways for our knowledge of God to regain some weight is by contemplating his attributes. The proper place to begin is with God's glory, for that is what “glory” means: the weightiness of God.

... The word was also used more figuratively to describe anything substantial or impressive ... Eventually, the Hebrew word for “heavy” was used to describe anyone who deserved honor or recognition. It was used for warriors, princes, merchants, and other men of position and influence. In modern English, we would call them “heavyweights.” The biggest heavyweight of all is Almighty God (not physically, of course, but spiritually). No one is more substantial than he is. No one has more influence. No one has a higher position or a weightier reputation. No one is more deserving of honor, recognition, and praise. However weightless he may seem in the postmodern church, God himself is heavy. In other words, he is glorious. [*Discovering God in Stories from the Bible*, p. 15]

Broader Context within overall flow of Isaiah

READ ISAIAH 40:1-10

- The comfort in v. 1 is found in having a high view of God
- Isaiah 40-48 doesn't directly deal with all the felt needs of the Israelites who were going to face terrible difficulties in captivity – instead their real need is addressed, to be God-centered, to remember who their glorious and magnificent God is, because that will be anchor that holds them fast during the waves and storms ahead
- Before the glory of the Lord is revealed in v. 5, the high things must first be brought low as verses 3-4, the way needs to be cleared by humility, repentance (this is a prophecy of how John the Baptist would pave the way for Christ)
- The glory in v. 5 is God's revealed or manifested glory, which is His shining forth of His attributes, often associated with light, splendour, dazzling beauty
- The comfort God gives is not boosting people's egos or esteem by telling them how special and wonderful they are, verses 6-7 remind them that we are just like grass. The REAL comfort is not found in man, it is found in God and His Word (v. 8).
- Verse 9-10 commands the herald of God to proclaim strongly and mightily and fearlessly “Behold your God” – to call His people to look to Him, His might, His power. That's what I want to do today.

I began by asking what is your aim in life, what do you want more than anything else, and what is the goal or motive behind what you do. I now want to ask, what is God's aim? What does God want more than anything else? What is the goal or motive behind what God does? What is the chief end of God?

Here's something to expand your thinking - what was it like before God created anything? Have you ever just thought about God and what it's like to have no beginning, to not come from something else? What was it like before Genesis 1:1 and why did God choose to make this world at a certain point in eternity? Did God *need* to create a universe, did He need creatures to praise Him, was He lonely, was He unfulfilled without our companionship or worship?

To answer yes is close to blasphemy - God doesn't need us at all, the Bible tells us we are the ones who need God and can never add to Him in His essence. God doesn't have to depend on His creatures for anything – but we have to depend on him for EVERYTHING. God has no needs or incompleteness and is unchanging in all His attributes. Isn't it amazing to think that for all of eternity past, God was all by Himself, self-existent, self-satisfied, self-sufficient, and self-Supreme, never unhappy, deficient or lacking in anything?!! And we're not talking about just for a little while (a day, a month, or a few years) – God has been that way from everlasting to everlasting. If he really needed any of us or anything at all He would have created it billions of ages ago. It was only for a tiny portion of all of eternity that He has created this time & space world. it's only the past few thousand years that mankind has even been here - we're just an it'sy bitsy chapter in eternity, and God has always been everything He is now for aeons before anything was created.

A. W. Pink in his classic book on God's Attributes thought this topic was important enough that He put it on the very first page of his book and devoted his whole first chapter to this reflection.

What is the most important and ultimate goal of God in everything He does? If we can speak in these terms, what is God passionate about? Think about that for a moment. To put it another way, who or what does God care about the *most* of all?

I'll give you a hint: it's not us. I'm not saying that God does not care about us at all or that we are not any part of His plan - but I am saying that there is something so much greater, there is something or someone else that is God's ultimate goal and primary purpose, there is something or someone God loves MORE and is more passionate about than us.

Jonathan Edwards wrote a whole book on this subject and it was an extremely influential time in his life, and this text we're going to read is central to His conclusion. His book is called *The End for Which God Created the World*, and reading it has had a huge impact on my life too (it's not easy reading, but it is refreshingly God-centered and has revolutionized my thinking).

Read scripture again “whom I created for my glory”

There are not many passages that speak of God’s goal in creation, but this is one that gives His central and ultimate purpose statement. God's design or motive in creating humanity, according to verse 7, is His own Glory.

God’s glory is not just the reason He created humanity, but also all His creatures

Look at v. 20 of Isaiah 43 – **“The beasts of the field will glorify Me; the jackals and the ostriches; Because I have given waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”**

The animals were created to glorify God. And they do! All of the creatures God created for one primary purpose – to glorify Him. Not only do his living creatures glorify him, but all of the created universe glorifies God.

Ps 19:1 **“The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the works of His hands ...”**

Jesus said when people were praising him on earth that if they kept their voices silent all of creation would rise and shout, and even the very rocks would cry out and glorify Him. You see everything God created is to glorify Him, everything is for God.

Look at **Isaiah 43:21** “The people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise”

Col. 1:16 says “all things were created by him and for Him” - - not for us

Heb. 2:10 says all things are for him, also talking about Jesus

Prov. 16:4 says “The Lord hath made all things for Himself” (KJV) [or “for its end”]

Rev. 4:11 says “Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure [or will] they are and were created” (KJV)

We are created for God. All things are for His pleasure, for His will, for His glory. As Romans 11:36 says "From Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to God be the glory."

And He will get His glory whether you give it to Him or not. You have a choice to either be on board with God's plan and be a part of His glory, or you can miss out on the entire purpose for your existence. Now I don't know about you, but whatever God is passionate about, I want to be passionate about, and I want what's most important to God to be most important to me.

A few weeks ago, I showed you several scriptures that say the ultimate reason Jesus came to earth is not for us, primarily it was for the glory of God. The Scriptures also say that the reason Jesus will come again is also to be glorified.

God Himself is absolutely committed to God's glory. The chief end of God is to glorify God.

In an ultimate sense, the primary motive or purpose for everything God does is for His own sake, for His own name, for His own Glory

In v. 25 of Isaiah 43 we read on: **"I even I am he who blots out your transgression for my own sake"**

Isaiah 42:21: "The LORD was pleased for His righteousness' sake to make the law great and glorious"

For the sake of God, or for the sake of His name, is essentially synonymous. Isaiah 42:8 "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give my glory to another."

Isaiah (48:9,11) put it like this, "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you ... For my own sake, for my own sake I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."

Why will God fulfill His promises to Israel in the last days?

Isaiah 60:21 "Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified."

This is not the emphasis I see in American Christianity today, but God being glory-driven and God-centered was the emphasis of the Reformers and sound theology through the ages.

Reformed theologian Charles Hodge summarizes it this way:

The older theologians almost unanimously make the glory of God the ultimate, and the good of the creature the subordinate end of all things ... There is a great difference whether the earth or the sun be assumed as the centre of our solar system. If we make the earth the centre, our astronomy will be in confusion. And if we make the creature, and not God, the end of all things, our theology and religion will in like manner be perverted. (*Systematic Theology*, 1:436)

Why does God lead His people?

Psalms 23:3 "He led me in paths of righteousness **for His name's sake**"

Psalms 31:3 "For thy name's sake you will lead me and guide me"

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Why does God save people?

Psalms 106:8 Nevertheless **He saved them for the sake of His name**, That He might make His power known.

Eph 1:5-6 "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, **to the praise of the glory of His grace**"

Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart during the exodus?

Exodus 14:4 (ESV) And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord."

Why did God redeem and establish Israel as a chosen people?

2 Samuel 7:23-24 "And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went **to redeem for Himself** as a people and **to make a name for Himself**, and to do a great thing **for You** [O Lord] and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom **You have redeemed for Yourself** from Egypt, from nations and their gods? "For **You have established for Yourself** Your people Israel as Your own people forever"

Why didn't God cast away his people when they rejected him as

king and asked for a king like the nations? 1 Samuel 12:22, "the Lord will not cast away his people **for his great name's sake.**"

Why did God protect his people against the Assyrians (the angel of the LORD killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night)?

2 Kings 19:34 "For I will defend this city to save it **for My own sake** and for My servant David's sake."

TURN TO EZEKIEL 20

Why did God not pour out his wrath on Israel's idolatry in Egypt?

Ezekiel 20:8-10 "But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. "But I acted **for the sake of My name**, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. "So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness."

Why didn't God wipe them out in the wilderness?

"But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them. "But I acted **for the sake of My name**, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out." (Ezekiel 20:13-14, NASB95)

Why didn't God judge the children, the next generation, who still rebelled?

20:21-22 "But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. "But I withdrew My hand and acted **for the sake of My name**, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out." (Ezekiel 20:21-22, NASB95)

20:44 "Then you will know that I am the Lord when I have dealt with you **for My name's sake**, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord God.'

Why was God gracious later in their history and why will he still be gracious to them?

Ezek 36:20-22 "When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord; yet they have come out of His land.' "But **I had concern for My holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, "**It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went."

36:32 "I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

This may be new to some of you. I mean, isn't God focused on us? We think what God does is mainly for our sake, or for our benefit, right? The Bible says it the other way – everything God does is for God. The fact that we're saved, on our way to heaven, and can live a blessed life on earth, is just a side-benefit, it's an extra, almost an afterthought, a generous overflow of God's greatness, which He could have kept to Himself. God's Glory and God's Name is what it's all about; all else is secondary and subordinate to this end.

God forgives our sins for His own sake, for the Glory of Himself. He doesn't do it mainly for us, although we certainly benefit, but His ultimate goal is His own glory and His own name.

Now some of us may not be comfortable with this whole concept of God being so self-focused and doing things for Himself – I mean, that sounds almost selfish, right? Well, it's not – it's God-centered.

It is selfish for us to draw all the attention and focus to ourselves because we don't deserve it, and others don't benefit when we're like that. Well, it's not wrong for God to do that because He deserves it, and also because others benefit greatly from this God-centered-ness. Unless God is at the center of everything, including Himself, His creatures will be unsatisfied, so in reality God's exaltation of Himself and His glory is one of the greatest examples of His love, because only in a Supreme God can we be supremely satisfied. It's not a sin to exalt God, even if you are God. In fact, it would be a disservice and tragedy if God focused everything on a fallen world and depended on us unreliable and pathetic sinners. If God didn't draw all the attention, glory and focus to Himself, we would be the losers.

You see, everything God does for us is for His glory and name. God is passionate about His own glory. He cares more about His own name than He does about you. Jesus didn't come to earth and die on the cross to make much of us, but so that you can make much of God forever! God doesn't save us because we're so great but because He's so great! God doesn't choose us and forgive us so we think "Wow, I'm really, really special" but to make us think "WOW, GOD IS AWESOME!" How amazing that there's nothing desirable about us, but God still gives us grace and mercy.

I love the way John Piper said it, “God does not save us to boost our self-esteem, but to deliver us from self-centeredness, so that we can delight in Him, the only Satisfying Being in the universe”

The theme of Isaiah 43:7 and the theme of that book by Jonathan Edwards is what John Piper said literally changed His life, and he said it is probably the topic He talks about the most. (I give you the title in your bulletin of a great book you can read on this further if this is new to you). When Piper spoke at the Shepherd's Conference He said this drives everything he does and everything he writes – God’s God-centered-ness. And this very passage in Isaiah 43 is quoted multiple times in many of His books and is a critical text in His theology.

I can’t explain this any better than him, so let me use his words: “My experience in preaching and teaching is that American evangelicals receive this truth with some skepticism if they receive it at all. None of my sons has ever brought home a Sunday school paper with the lesson title: "God loves himself more than he loves you." But it is profoundly true, and so generation after generation of evangelicals grow up picturing themselves at the center of God's universe. ... if God is truly for us, if he would give us the best and make our joy full, he must make it his aim to win our praise for himself. Not because he needs to shore up some weakness in himself or compensate for some deficiency, but because he loves us and seeks the fullness of our joy that can only be found in knowing and praising him, the most beautiful of all Beings ... When he does all things "for the praise of his glory," he preserves for us and offers to us, the only thing in the entire world, which can satisfy our longings. God is for us, and therefore has been, is now and always will be, first, for himself. I urge you not to resent the centrality of God in his own affections, but to experience it as the fountain of your everlasting joy.” --John Piper

HOW CAN WE GLORIFY GOD?

This whole “glory of God” concept is so lofty and sounds great, but how does this actually happen in our everyday life?

1. By the way we rejoice in the LORD

The chief end of man is not just to glorify God, it is also to enjoy Him forever

Isa 41:16 “You will *rejoice* in the Lord, you will *glory* in the Holy One”

Isa 42:11b-12 – “... let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD”

Isa 44:23 “Shout for *joy* ... *shout joyfully* ... break forth into a shout of *joy* ... for the Lord has redeemed Jacob and in Israel *He shows forth His glory*”

Lk 1:46 “My soul *glorifies* the Lord, my heart *rejoices* in God my Savior”

Phil 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice ...”
v. 19-20 “And my God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

God’s glory and our joy are very closely tied. God’s glory should make us rejoice. And in turn, when we rejoice in God, we give Him more glory than if we just have a right theology.

David Brainerd, wrote in his journal:

“This day, I saw clearly that I should never be happy, yea, that God Himself could not make me happy, unless I could be in a capacity to ‘please and glorify Him forever.’ Take away this and admit me into all the fine havens that can be conceived of by men and angels, and I should still be miserable forever ... Oh to love and praise God more, to please Him forever! This my soul panted after and even now pants for while I write. Oh, that God might be glorified in the whole earth ... (I) was again melted with desires that God might be glorified, and with longings to love and live to Him ... And oh, I longed to be with God, to behold His glory and bow in His presence”

2. By the way we pray to the LORD

Jer. 14:7, 21 “Although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for thy name’s sake ... Do not despise us, for Thine own name’s sake; Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory

‘So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and **for Your sake**, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary ... **for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.** “O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! **For Your own sake**, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.’ (Daniel 9:17-19, NASB95)

Ps 25:11 “For Thy name’s sake O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great”

Ps 79:9 “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name; and deliver us, and forgive our sins for thy names’ sake”

Ps 143:11 “For the sake of Your name, O Lord, revive me”

For the sake of YOUR name, not because I deserve it, but because your name deserves it