

Our Purpose in Life

God's Purpose in Saving Sinners: God is a God of purpose. Everything He does is purposeful. Have you considered God's purpose in redeeming sinners? God's broad encompassing purpose is calling to Himself a people to live eternally with Him. Since the Fall, The difficulty is sinners cannot live in God's presence. Only the holy can live eternal life with God. Hebrews 12:14 (NIV) – *“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”*

God's ultimate purpose in saving sinners is to make them holy as He is holy so that they may live eternally with Him. Revelation 21:3 speaks of believers in heaven – *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’* Believers living with God in eternal life have satisfied God's purpose in redeeming sinners. That is not the end of God's purpose. He also has purpose for believers in eternal life.

Who Sins? Who sins? Paul reminds us everyone sins. Romans 3:23, – *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Everyone needs to be freed from the penalty for sin and to be made holy, that is free from the ability to sin.

Two Categories of Sin Problems: (1.) First is willful disobedience of God's moral law. That is what Paul refers to in Romans 3:23. The sin of willful disobedience to God's moral law comes under His righteous judgment and the penalty is death. (2.) Secondly, everyone has an inherited sin nature. Our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and fell from their original holy state, bringing about a broad disaster. They died spiritually, lost immortality, and began to die mortally. Their relationship with God changed as did their relationship with each other. Even the relationship between body and soul changed. Earth and its environment fell under God's curse.

Consequences of the “Fall” continue to affect every descendant of Adam. All are born spiritually dead. All have a sin nature inclining them to sin. People can do nothing in their own power to change that situation. Only God's intervention can correct the problem. How do sinners approach God to seek salvation?

Approaching God: The author of Hebrews points the way. Hebrews 11:6 – *“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to*

God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. First believe God exists and rewards those who seek him. The faith is necessary to please God is a gift of God to those who believe He exists and seek Him.

Breaking the moral law carries a legal penalty of death. God's first step toward His purpose in saving sinners is solving the legal problem. He does so by drawing sinners to Himself through Christ. John 14:6 – ***“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

Solving the Legal Problem: On the basis of Christ's redeeming work during His incarnation, God regenerates sinners who come to Him. He gives them faith and justifies them. Regeneration is God's act of giving to the sinner a new “spiritual heart” and new attitude toward God. Faith (trust) in Christ, as savior, is a gift of God. Justification is an act of God in which He declares the sinner to be legally righteous before Him by imputing to them Christ's righteousness. This in effect grants a pardon to the sinner from the penalty due their sin. That solves the problem of the death penalty for willful disobedience of God's moral law.

New Life in Christ: John 3:3 – ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*** Regeneration, the gift of faith, and justification are unilateral instantaneous acts of God. Sinners are passive under these acts. Together, these acts of God create a new believer. The Holy Spirit comes to indwell the new believer and their life in Christ begins.

Solving The Sin Nature Problem: On the basis of Christ's salvation work, regeneration, faith, and justification solve the legal problem, but the sin nature problem remains. Because of their sin nature, even justified believers will sin. In writing to believers, John says, 1 John 1:8 – ***“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*** That is a significant problem. Hebrews 12:14b (NIV) – ***“without holiness no one will see the Lord.”*** Sinners cannot live eternal life with God. Therefore, the sin nature must be dealt with.

Paul says in Romans 8:30 all who are justified will ultimately be made holy indicating that the sin nature problem will be solved. Regeneration, faith, and justification are the instantaneous first step in the process which is carried out totally by God. The believer is passive as God works. Dealing with the sin nature problem is different and requires both time and the believer's participation. The sin nature problem is an ontological (being) problem not a legal problem.

Solving the sin nature problem requires a “transformation of being.” The transforming process is called sanctification. Sanctification means “making holy.” Sanctification begins at justification and continues throughout mortal life. Sanctification is guided and made possible by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The process develops internal holiness to oppose and eventually defeat the internal sin nature.

Believers are to cooperate with the internal work of the Holy Spirit by doing external things corresponding to the Holy Spirit’s work within them (Philippians 2:13). Improper acting, thinking, or speaking may grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) or quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Thoughts, speech, and actions are to be consistent with what the Holy Spirit is doing in the believer’s heart.

Step-by-step, each believing, justified sinner is transformed into a moral image of Christ. Sanctification ends in what is called glorification at mortal death or when Christ comes again. Glorification completes the transformation of the redeemed, making them righteous and holy like Christ, both legally and experientially. Their sin nature will be gone. Justification by imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and the transforming, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit eliminating the sin nature are both absolutely essential.

Redeemed, Preparing for Eternal Life

When a sinner seeks salvation, the process is extremely simple, so simple even a child can hear the gospel, understand the basic point, believe and be saved. Behind that simplicity is a complex, costly enabling process ordained by God in eternity and implemented in “time” by Him through the incarnate Christ.

For believers, there are three key questions: (1.) **Who are we?** Answer: We are each one of God’s redeemed. (2.) **What are we here for?** Answer: To be transformed from a sinner to a redeemed, sanctified believer made holy and righteous, suitable for eternal life with God. (3.) **In view of the answer to the first two questions, how then shall we live?** That is the question we shall deal with.

A Believer’s Task as the Redeemed of God: Believers in the present life are to purposefully prepare for the coming eternal life with Him. That is a task with many facets. Our knowledge about eternal life is somewhat limited, but, though scattered, there is a surprising amount of information in the Bible. Here are some things we know. Eternal life will have purpose, structure, and be filled with activity.

More importantly, information is plentiful concerning how in this life believers are to prepare for eternal life. As an example, Jesus makes an important point in Matthew 6:19-21, ***“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*** What does He mean?

Things we treasure capture our heart. Therefore, we are to treasure things which please God. Not all things in earthly life can be treasures in heaven. A vital question is what can? A complete answer is not possible, but there are examples in Scripture. Some things in earthly life which can be treasures in heaven include our relationships: with God (faith, obedience, attitude), with family, and with other people. The right kind of knowledge stored in our mind and the right kind of wisdom will be treasures in heaven. The right attitudes toward people and things will be treasures in heaven.

Though they may seem ultra-important at present, wealth, power, social status, and quantities of worldly goods are not important issues for heaven and store no treasures there. **But the attitudes we develop toward things**, and the way we chose to use things will either store heavenly treasure or be a future disaster.

Overarching Purpose for Human Life: There are general principles which apply to every believer’s life. There are also specifics for each individual believer. Question 1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism and its answer spell out an overarching purpose for the life of every Christian. WSC Q 1: ***“What is the chief end of man?”*** Answer: ***“Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him forever.”***

“End” means “ultimate purpose.” Our ultimate purpose, established by our Creator, is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That is the “end” for which we were created. Humans are designed to prosper when they relate to God by thoughts, words, and deeds which glorify Him. This top-level answer provides no details, but it is a heading under which we can place details as we find them in the Bible.

How Do We Determine What a Life Lived to God’s Glory Looks Like? WSC Q 2 addresses that issue: ***“What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?”*** Answer: ***“The Word of God, which is contained in the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.”*** There is only one place in which to find the details of what

constitutes a life lived to God's glory. That place is the Bible. Since we cannot grasp the whole Bible at once, we need an organizing principle. WSC Q 3 points the way. ***“What do the Scriptures principally teach?”*** That is, what are the dominant themes of Scripture? Answer: ***“The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.”*** We are to learn from the Bible, what we should believe concerning God and what duty God requires of us. These principles are scattered in Scripture. We will collect some into categories.

What is Glory? Since the overarching purpose of life for every person is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, we need to understand what that means. The first step is to understand “What is glory?” The word glory signifies things like splendor, honor, power, intensity, wealth, profoundness, and dignity of position. God's glory includes all these ideas and more. God's glory fits into two general categories. (1.) Intrinsic glory, which is the glory He has within Himself. (2.) Extrinsic glory, which is the glory ascribed to God by His moral creatures.

God's Intrinsic Glory: God's intrinsic glory is the totality of who He is, the perfection and significance of His attributes. It includes His preeminence in all things, His sovereign power, self-existence, truth, grace, wisdom, love, and awesome brightness. Nothing can be added to God's intrinsic glory and nothing can be taken away. His intrinsic glory is permanent, complete, infinite, and inseparable from His being. God's intrinsic glory is and has been manifested to us in many ways, but the most complete manifestation is through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 says Christ is, ***“the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.”*** In His incarnation, Christ came filled with truth and grace. His earthly life displays facets of God's glory. In His sinless life we see holiness. In His atoning death we see mercy and justice. In His resurrection we see sovereign power.

God's Extrinsic Glory: This is where our glorifying God comes into play. God's ascribed or extrinsic glory is the proper acknowledgement of His intrinsic glory by His moral creatures. Ascribing glory to God is to properly acknowledge who He is, what He has done, and what He will do. We do that through worship, prayer, and praise. That is a true and right thing to do, but there is much more.

Bringing Glory to God in What We Do: Jesus, in His prayer in John 17:3, says to the Father, ***“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you***

gave me to do.” This is a powerful perspective on glorifying God. Each believer has been given abilities and skills to use for God. Each believer is given good works to accomplish. Completing the work God gives us glorifies Him.

Paul gives us a still wider view of how we glorify God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 – *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* It seems whatever we do in life – worship, work, care for family, and all the ordinary things of life – all can be done to God’s glory! How does that work? In all that we do, acknowledge that only through God’s provision are we able to do anything. Do things that please Him and avoid things that displease Him. We have no capability we did not receive from God. He is our Creator, Savior, Sustainer, and the source of all things. Living obediently acknowledges God and brings Him glory.

In general, we glorify God by doing his will, by reflecting his attributes and holiness in our life. Knowing *“what we are to believe concerning God”* and *“what duty he requires of us”* is essential to knowing how to live to please Him. Using these two categories to organize what we learn from the Bible helps fix God’s truth in our mind. We glorify God through believing and obeying Him. We glorify Him by confessing and repenting sin, gaining wisdom, practicing and defending His truth, being fruitful, walking cheerfully, and loving and praising Him.

A Useful Example: As we consider God’s purpose for our life, it would be helpful if there was a person in the Bible who is specifically mentioned as having achieved God’s purpose in their life. It would be even more helpful if that person’s life is described in a lot of detail. There is such a person, King David. David’s life is described in a lot of detail from his youth to his death. In Acts David is commended for achieving God’s purpose in his life,

Acts 13:36 – *“But David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep.”* Like Jesus, David completed the work God gave him to do. The things God gave David to do were pertinent to the time and circumstances of his generation. That is important and tells us how to look for what God intends for us. What situation has God placed us in? What talents and abilities has He given us?.

David is famous for killing Goliath, for being the great King who united the nation, and for writing many Psalms. He is infamous for his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah.

David was certainly not perfect, not sinless, but he accomplished what God purposed for him to do in his own generation. We know from other Scripture that God was pleased with David's life. Acts 13:22b – God said, ***“I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.”*** What an incredible accolade, one we would all like to hear!

The example of David's life shows us the important truth that sin, if confessed and repented, does not prohibit achieving God's purpose in life. God's plan for life unfolds as we live. He supplies abilities and skills. He says use them to His glory.

How Did David Serve the Purpose of God in His Own Generation: David lived at a time when Israel was beset by enemies, seemingly teetering on the brink of destruction. The great need of the nation was a leader who could win battles and draw the people together. David was God's choice. At a young age (10-13), God chose David to succeed Saul as king. Samuel was sent to anoint him. About 20 years later (about age 30) David became king of Judah, and later he united Judah and Israel.

David's success as a warrior began early. As a youth (age 16-17), he fought and killed Goliath of the Philistines, thereby eliminating a very real threat to the nation. When he became King, about 15 years later, battles remained to be fought to consolidate the kingdom and bring it to a position of strength. David did that. He was the warrior king and leader needed in his generation.

David also had a poet's heart for God. He wrote many Psalms to God's glory. He yearned to build a Temple for the Lord, but because of his warrior-spirit and the many enemies he killed, that was not to be. Building the Temple was a task given to Solomon in the next generation. Using his abilities and skills to successfully subdue enemies and unite the nation prohibited David from doing something he strongly desired to do. There is a lesson in that. If we are to achieve God's purpose in our life, there will be things we want to do which we can't do. David's sins were bad, but his remorse was great, and God's forgiveness was powerful, so that in spite of his sins, David served God's purpose in his own generation.

How Do We Serve God's Purpose in Our Generation? God's specific purpose for individuals differs from person to person and from generation to generation. There are general guidelines in Scripture which apply to all Christians, but, in addition, God equips each individual with abilities and skills for specific good works they are to do. Many things need to be done for the kingdom, physical, mental,

and spiritual. All kinds of people with different abilities and skills are needed. God gave skills and abilities to each of us with the needs of our generation in mind.

Discerning God's Purpose for Us: To discern God's purpose for our life, we need to pray for guidance and understanding as we pay close attention to the abilities and skills He has given us. They are like signposts pointing the way. It helps to think about things like: (1.) What personal abilities and skills has God bestowed on us? What strengths and weaknesses? (2.) What are the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of our church? (3.) What are the strengths, weaknesses, and need of our community? (4.) What are the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of our nation?

A Personal Example of God's Purpose: Being in my 80's, I look back and sense God's purpose for my life. I have experienced times when God opened unexpected opportunities, and experienced times when He closed opportunities I was confident were going to happen. He took me in several unexpected directions. In High School my goal in life was to be an Electrical Engineer. In God's grace, that happened with a Ph.D. at Georgia Tech. What I didn't realize at the time was that getting the degree would not be the most important thing about that experience.

It is clear now that the most important happening was when a man named Dr. Ben Dasher, head of the Electrical Engineering School, decided, for reasons unknown to me, that I should teach all the undergraduate courses. That was very unusual thing. Graduate-student instructors usually taught the same course over and over again to give them time for their own studies. I had never taught anything. It was difficult to even imagine doing what he asked. But I did. The surprise outcome was the discovery that God had given me the gift of teaching. Soon, and now for more than 50 years, God put the gift He gave me to work teaching His Word.

It has been my privilege to teach God's Word to many people week after week, year after year. If I had to say what I thought was God's purpose for my life, I would not look to my career for the answer, though I experienced many interesting things. I am convinced His principle purpose for my life was and remains teaching His Word. That I will do so as long as He enables me.

What Next: In Part 2 we will look at faith both as a general concept and specifically as faith in God. One cannot live a life to God's glory without faith.