

3rd Edwards Pt.5: the teaching of Scripture on God's end in creating the world

4A. God's ultimate end is but one (5, 7)

What that one end is and how good to sinners fits into it.

1B. God's glory is not manifold but one

We may speak of it in different ways such as it is internal and external (inherent and manifested), still, these are "several parts of one whole; or of the same whole viewed in various lights or in its different respects and relations" (119). We reach a point of obscurity that is unavoidable because this is such a sublime subject; the imperfection of language comes to its breaking point.

2B. God's glory has three notable aspects (119)

They are His infinite knowledge, infinite holiness, and infinite happiness (or joy). These are aspects of a single whole and God communicates them to His image bearers. Thus, He gives knowledge of Himself to us "to created understandings." His sharing what He knows of Himself and our knowing Him are one. Per Van Til: we have the privilege of thinking God's thoughts after Him; we know Him truly but, of course, not exhaustively. We know Him and think His thoughts in a human, finite, and creaturely way that is nonetheless according to truth.

Growth in restoration in the image of God is growth in the holiness of the truth; thus, holiness is one with knowledge (Eph. 4.24). Moreover, Jesus revealed the Father to His disciples (then and now) so that their joy may be full (Jn. 17.13). Thus, joyful knowledge of God in the holiness of the truth is a unit that reflects, and is one with, God's internal knowledge of Himself in holiness and joy in that He communicates His internal perfection to man His image bearer.

Bottom line for Edwards: our knowledge, holiness, and happiness are bound inseparably to the glory of God that is His great, chief, and ultimate end in the creation of all things. We properly reflect God's knowledge, holiness and happiness in Himself when we know Him through His self-revelation, love Him with holiness in awe of His holiness, and rejoice in being His reflection and sharing in His joy (man's "happiness arises from that which is an image and participation of God's own beauty," 120).

3B. God's ultimate end includes the saving of sinners

Edwards argues that our salvation must be an ultimate end, not simply a subordinate end because "if our good be not at all regarded ultimately, but only subordinately, then our good or interest is, in itself considered, *nothing* in God's regard" (114). Similarly, if He loves us only from a regard to a *further* end, entirely diverse from our good; then all the love is truly terminated in that, its ultimate object, and *therein* is his love manifested, strictly and properly speaking, and not in that he *loved* us" (114). However, the work of redemption flows from the love and good pleasure of God and so it is in itself pleasing to God (He chose us in Him according to His good pleasure; Father, so it seemed good in your sight).

Thus, saving sinners does serve the ultimate goal of glorifying God (it is a subordinate goal) but it is not merely a subordinate goal, it also one with His ultimate goal being carried in train with it.

Saving sinners is not merely a means to something further. It is also something in which God delights in itself. For example, consider the unity of the joy of Christ in saving us with our joy in our salvation. His joy shared in our experience manifests the glory of the joy of the triune God in saving us. This rises higher than a subordinate end per its unity with God's pleasure in His own glory and name. How deeply ought we to seek to honor God's name!

Hopefully, the profound character of these truths receives clarification by comparing how God seeks His own glory in judgment with how He does so in salvation. Edwards states that God takes delight in the judgment of sinners "with backwardness and reluctance; the misery of the creature being not agreeable to him on its own account" (114, i.e. as an ultimate end). It serves the end of manifesting His infinite justice (Rom. 9.24), but it is not something in which He takes delight in itself: I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33.11).

By contrast, the saving of sinners is His delight in itself and pleasing to Him for He loves us with an everlasting love. Here, with these thoughts from the 3rd command in our minds, we must fall down before God with thanksgiving to praise His name and the glory of His grace!

Relating our good to His glory

Begin with judgment: Without trying to deal with everything involved in such a sobering issue, we can gain some helpful insight by applying the distinction between ultimate and subordinate ends. If we think of judgment as a subordinate end in contrast to his glory as an ultimate end, we can understand the sense in which God delights in judgment. He does not delight in judgment in itself. As a subordinate and an inferior end, it has no value cut off from the ultimate end it serves. It is not something desired in itself. However, God does delight in judgment as a manifestation of his justice and true holiness.

Is it the same for redemption? Not something in which He delights in itself. But this is something He tells us that He delights in with love.