

**3<sup>rd</sup> Per “A Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World”**  
**By Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, (Banner of Truth, 1976), I, 94-121**  
**Part 1**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> in its fullness as God's chief end is a theological high point and an extremely practical reference point for which we need good biblical grounding. J. Edwards is helpful in this connection in the excellent thought-provoking work on the end for which God created the world. Some things to consider here are: a) distinction between chief and ultimate ends, b) key passages, and c) answers to objections. Edwards (1704-1758) is the last puritan philosopher-theologian of the American Colonies. This work on God's end in creation has two chapters (approximately 100 pages in regular print; the Banner edition has quite small print).

I. The teaching of reason (for perspective); general revelation

II. The teaching of Scripture (for support); special revelation

A foundational issue of sweeping worldview proportions is the issue of the purpose, significance and meaning of life. What is the meaning of human existence? What makes being alive, being here, and knowing that you are here, worthwhile? This is the question of meaning in its most general terms. To find an answer is a hopeless endeavor without a theological context. This is so because human existence is God designed and created. Thus, we need God's self-revelation to answer this quest for understanding. Edwards paves a highway into this forest.

Notice how the question develops. First, it is "what is the meaning of human existence?" Then it becomes "why did God create man and all things?" since human existence is created existence. Finally, it takes the form: "what does God tell us concerning His great end in creation and for history?" This question forces us to consider the most fundamental, most profound, and most practical principle of the entire Bible.

The answer is not found in man; it is not found in human existence; nothing in all of creation could move him to create. What moved him to create is something distinct from and logically prior to the creation. God's goal in creating cannot be found in the creation since it did not exist prior to His creative fiat. The great end of creation is not to be found in the creature but in the Creator himself. His ultimate goal that is pursued for its own sake is the highest and most valued goal of his own glory.

The great end of creation and man's created existence is the glory of God. *Soli Deo Gloria*, glory to God alone, is the meaning and end of every created fact in the universe. This is the purpose for history; it is the pinnacle goal of human life on earth throughout time. This is quite a sweeping foundational principle of worldview proportions! It promotes God-centeredness in a comprehensive way and in turn it inspires worship with humbleness of heart.

Therefore, the 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment (the duty to honor and glorify God's name) gives us a reference point for every fact and guidance for every activity. Fix your heart here for you can aim at nothing higher, you can have no greater purpose, and finding your true humanity here, you cannot have a more fulfilling goal to guide your every thought, word, and deed.

### Discussion

What are some ways that even unbelievers and the remnants of sin in believers glorify God?

a) Unbelievers become vessels of wrath that display the beauty of God's justice and holiness, Rom. 9

b) By God's providential working, unbelief and other sins are worked together for His people's good and His glory. Consider how the evil of Pharaoh against newborn sons is thwarted by God according to His design to give a savior in Moses, as Christ in anticipation. Unbelievers often unwittingly glorify God.

c) Everything creative thing man does glorifies God reflecting the image in which we are made and cannot escape.

d) All reinterpretation of God's speech in creation brings into view the wisdom of God; even the atheistic biologist does theology that glorifies God.