

CHAPTER ONE

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF MAN

The Larger Catechism's Question One forces us to take our eyes off of ourselves, our own comfort, and salvation as our primary concern, and to fix them on the God of Glory, bidding us to seek our ultimate purpose and happiness in Him.

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Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF MAN

- 1 Q. What is the chief and highest end of man?
A. Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.*

I. THE ULTIMACY OF THE QUESTION: WHAT IS MY CHIEF AND HIGHEST END?

A. THE REVELATION ABOUT OURSELVES IN OUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

What is the ultimate purpose of human life? For what purpose were we born? Why did God create us? What are we supposed to be living for? What is our chief and highest end? These are the most important questions we will ever ask ourselves, and our answer to them will reveal our true selves.

If our answer to these questions is: the ultimate purpose of my life for which God created me is to glorify and enjoy Him forever, then it reveals that we are more concerned with the living God and with pleasing Him than with ourselves and with pleasing ourselves. It reveals that we love God because He is God, and not just because of the benefits we will receive by loving Him. Our answer to these questions reveals whether or not we are true Christians, because a Christian is a person who, withdrawing his eyes from himself, even from his own salvation as the primary focus of his life, fixes them on the God of the Bible and seeks his highest blessedness in knowing, serving, and worshipping Him.

B. THE GOAL-ORIENTED CHARACTER OF A FULL LIFE

Life must be consciously goal-oriented if it is to be lived to the fullest; but not just any goal will do. Making happiness the goal of life, for example, will never make one happy. Why? To most people, happiness is the satisfaction of all of one's senses: taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell. Reaching that goal may bring happiness to a dog, but it will never bring happiness to a human being. Why? Human beings are more than dogs. They are persons in the image of God, with deeper needs and higher goals than those on the level of their senses and instincts. Happiness is a by-product, not a goal. The only goal big enough to bring real and lasting happiness—physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually—is the glory and enjoyment of God in Christ. When our goal is to bring God glory before we die and to enjoy Him forever, then we are truly and eternally happy. Nothing else satisfies the human heart.

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ANSWER: TO GLORIFY AND FULLY TO ENJOY GOD FOREVER

A. THE STARTING POINT FOR THE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY

When a person begins his study of Christianity from the perspective of the first question and answer of the Westminster Larger Catechism, he has begun on the most elevated plane possible. "What is the chief and highest end of man?" is a far more comprehensive question than, and takes priority over the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" The Larger Catechism's Question One forces us to take our eyes off of ourselves, our own comfort and salvation as our primary concern, and to fix them on the God of Glory, bidding us to seek our ultimate purpose and happiness in Him.

If we approach Christianity from the question "What shall I do to be saved?" or "How can I receive comfort and other benefits from Christianity?" we place ourselves in danger of assuming that God exists for our benefit, and that the only reason we should accept Christ and the Bible is because of the benefits we can receive from

Him. The Westminster Larger Catechism removes this danger by beginning with, focusing on, and ending in the vision of God in all His glory, and by seeing the purpose of human existence, of salvation, and of all creation as glorifying that great God and enjoying Him forever. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36).

B. THE FULL EXPRESSION OF THE BIBLICAL CONCEPTION OF THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE

The uniqueness of the first question and answer of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms is the faithful way it concisely expresses the comprehensive Biblical understanding of the meaning of human life. We fail at arriving at a comprehensive Biblical understanding if we say merely that man’s chief end is to glorify God. That certainly is true and primary, but, according to the Bible, human beings exist not merely to glorify God, but also to delight in the God of glory. Man is not simply the object on and through which God manifests His glory; he is also the subject who perceives and delights in the glory of God. “No man is truly Reformed [i.e., Biblical] in his thought, then, unless he conceives of man not merely as destined to be the instrument of the Divine glory, but also as destined to reflect the glory of God in his own consciousness, to exult in God; nay, unless he himself delights in God as the all-glorious One.”¹

C. THE RELATION BETWEEN GLORIFYING GOD AND ENJOYING GOD

The glorifying and the enjoying of God are here connected as the *one* chief and highest end of human existence,

because God has inseparably connected them; and no one can truly design and seek the one, without, at the same time, designing and seeking the other. And we may here remark, that the glorifying of God is here set before the enjoyment of Him forever, to show that the former is the means by which the latter is obtained; that holiness on earth must precede happi-

1. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* (Cherry Hill: Mack Publishing Company, 1972), 397.

ness in heaven; and that none shall enjoy God forever, who have no desire to glorify Him in this world—Heb. xii.14; Matt. v:8.²

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Not to enjoy God, certainly, without glorifying Him, for how can He to whom glory inherently belongs be enjoyed without being glorified? But just as certainly not to glorify God without enjoying Him—for how can He whose glory is His perfections be glorified if He be not also enjoyed?³

III. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE ANSWER: MAN’S CHIEF END IS TO GLORIFY GOD AND TO ENJOY HIM FOREVER

A. THE REVELATION OF GOD’S CHARACTER AND WILL IN THE BIBLE

The first question and answer of the Larger Catechism presuppose that the Creator of the universe and of the human race has revealed His character and will to mankind in the Bible. Only the Creator may determine the ultimate purpose for any part of His creation. And therefore, the question must be answered in terms of the written self-revelation of the Creator, which is the Word of God. To know God and His will for us means that God and His will are knowable by revelation, for man cannot reach God by his own reason or experience. The Bible is that revelation (2 Timothy 3:15–16). Therefore, the question, “What is man’s chief and highest end?” (WLC 1) is, in fact, asking, “What does the Bible say is the ultimate purpose for the creation of the human race?” Our answer, to be correct, must be drawn totally and exclusively from that Biblical revelation.

Jonathan Edwards of early New England once wrote:

Indeed, this seems properly to be an affair of divine revelation. In order to be determined what was designed, in the creating of the astonishing fabric of the universe we behold, it becomes us to attend to, and rely on, what *he* has told us, who was the architect. He best knows His own heart, and what His own ends and designs were, in the wonderful works which He has wrought.⁴

2. Alexander Paterson, *A Concise System Of Theology on the Basis of The Shorter Catechism* (New York: Obert Carter and Brothers, 1856), 21.

3. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, 400.

4. Alexander Whyte, *The Shorter Catechism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 3.

B. THE PERFECTIONS OF THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

Human life is to be totally and consciously God-centered, and the entire universe is totally God-centered because God is God-centered. He does all things for His own glory and enjoyment (Rom. 11:35–36; Rev. 4:11; Eph. 1:11; Prov. 16:4; Ps. 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 109:21; 143:11). He is totally self-sufficient and absolutely independent of His creation, which He made for His own glory to be totally dependent upon Him (Acts 17:24, 25; Job 22:2, 3). He possesses in Himself everything that is necessary for His life and happiness (John 5:26). He stands in need of nothing He has made (Acts 17:24, 25). He lives by His own power and contains the fullness of life in Himself. He is totally and completely happy in Himself (1 Tim. 6:15). He loves Himself supremely (John 17:5, 24), with a perfect, eternal love.

If God were not God-centered, He would not be God. It would mean that He needs something or someone outside Himself to be complete and satisfied. But if God needs us as much as we need Him, He is in worse shape than we are. On the other hand, if God is God-centered and lives for His own glory, His ultimate concern is for the highest, most glorious, and most wonderful personal Being in and beyond creation—Himself!

We, as human beings, have been created in the image of God, and as Christians, have been recreated in the image of Christ (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), so that we can be “imitators of God” (Eph. 5:1), and live for His glory in the enjoyment of His presence and love. As we live God-centered lives, we are not only fulfilling the highest purpose for which a person can live, we are being “God-like” on a creaturely level, reflecting the way God lives and loves in our own lives and love.

God made all things in this universe for Himself, that is, for His own glory. But not all things can reflect His glory self-consciously. Yet it is self-conscious glorification that is the highest kind of glorification. Accordingly, God put all things in this universe into covenant relation with one another. He made man the head of creation. Accordingly, the flowers of the field glorified God directly and unconsciously, but also indirectly and consciously through man. Man was to gather up into the prism of his self-conscious activity all the manifold manifestations of the glory of God in order to make one central self-conscious sacrifice of it all to God.⁵

5. Cornelius Van Til, quoted in R. J. Rushdoony, *By What Standard?* (Fairfax: Thornburn Press, 1974), 89.

IV. THE MEANING OF “TO GLORIFY GOD”

A. 1 SAMUEL 2:30

Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, “. . . those who honor Me, I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.”

1. THE MEANING OF “HONOR”

The Hebrew word for “honor” in this verse is *kabod*, which is also translated “glory,” so that the verse can also read, “Those who glorify Me, I will glorify.” *Kabod* means “weighty” or “heavy.” It refers to that which gives a person importance, and which makes a person impressive, deserving of recognition and praise. The glory of God is that which makes Him impressive, and that which makes Him impressive is: First, the revelation of Himself and all His perfections in Christ; second, the revelation of Himself and all His perfections in the Bible; and third, the display of Himself and all His perfections in creation and by His providence in our daily lives. The glory of the Christian, that which makes him impressive, is not of His own production; rather, it is the wealth, influence, and enlightenment bestowed upon him in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:3–4). “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

2. THE ELEMENTS OF HONORING GOD

The Greek word for “honor” or “glory” is *doxa*, which comes from a word meaning “to form an opinion or estimate of something or someone.” So then, we can say that honoring God or glorifying God involves appreciation, adoration, submission, and witness.

First, appreciation: we glorify God when we recognize God’s “impressiveness” in His self-revelation and have God-admiring thoughts about Him. Second, adoration: we glorify God when we praise Him and adore Him for His “impressiveness” as revealed in the Bible, Christ, and creation. Third, submission: we glorify God by submitting to the supremacy and finality of His revelation in total

dependence and obedience. Fourth, witness: we glorify God when we not only hold, but give a good opinion of God by the witness of our lives and verbal witness to others.

3. THE GLORIOUS PROMISE TO THOSE WHO HONOR GOD

When we truly honor God, we receive the greatest happiness from God a human being can experience: we are honored and glorified by God Himself. His promise is that if we honor Him, He will honor us. When God honors us, He makes us “impressive” as clay vessels holding priceless treasure (2 Cor. 4:7). He will hold and give a good opinion of us in Christ. He will more deeply reveal Himself to us in Christ and in His Word. He will manifest His own honor, glory, splendor, power, and radiance to us in the face of Christ through faith (2 Cor. 4:3–4). He will display His perfections dramatically in our lives and futures. He will make us recipients of salvation. What an honor to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

What an honor to know that “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11).

“The Lord God is the author of all joy and goodness to his children, and their protector against all evils.”

“As the natural sun is the light, life, and joy of all natural things, so God Himself is the light of all those who dwell in His house, their salvation, and the strength of their life.”

“Let the world have their rich ones, their powerful ones, and their wise ones, and their consolations in this world; let them trust and glory in their wisdom, their might, their wealth, and their possessions,—my heart triumphs in the living God.”⁶

What an honor to realize and experience the truth of the statement: “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). To contemplate in faith the revelation of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ, the image of God (2 Cor. 4:3–4; Col. 1:15), is

6. Diodati, Arnd, and Martin Luther, quoted in William S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 797, 799.

progressively to be transformed into that image. The effect of continuous beholding is that we are continuously being transformed “into the same image,” that is, into the likeness of Christ—and increasingly so: “from glory to glory” . . . Then at last the glory will be revealed to us in all its fulness (Rom. 8:18). . . . (I Jn. 3:2). . . . The image of Christ is the true seal of the Spirit with which the believer is impressed. . . . “Spiritual agency is here at its highest. The most wonderful changes are not only possible, but natural when such a cause [the Spirit] is operating. But the conditions must be observed, and they are mainly three. There is the turning to the Lord; every veil that might hide Him must be removed; and it is His glory and no other that is reflected. When these three things are secured, by continual reflexion of the Lord’s glory, Christians are transfigured into the very image of Him whose glory they have caught and retained, and step by step the likeness becomes more and more complete—‘unto the full measure of the maturity of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. iv.13).”⁷

Charles Spurgeon once said,

God can honour you, even though nobody else sees that he does it, in such a way that you will be more contented with that honor than if your name and fame were blazoned forth before the whole world.⁸

4. THE FRIGHTFUL CURSE TO THOSE WHO REFUSE TO HONOR GOD

But there is another side of 1 Samuel 2:30: “[T]hose who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.” “Lightly esteemed” denotes “to curse, to remove from covenant blessing.” “Despise” means “to attribute little worth to something, to undervalue, to treat something with contempt.” So then, we have two choices: First, follow the greatest purpose for living and enjoy the greatest happiness in life—honor God and He will honor us; or second, undervalue God and treat knowing and following Him as if it were an unimportant and undesirable thing, and He will curse us. If we treat God with contempt, He will treat us with contempt.

7. Philip E. Hughes, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 117–121.

8. Charles Spurgeon, “Honour For Honour,” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. L (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, [1904] 1978), 512.

B. 1 CHRONICLES 16:8–36

Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. *Glory in His holy name*; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad. Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face continually. Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done, His marvels and the judgments from His mouth, O seed of Israel His servant, Sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!

He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in all the earth. Remember His covenant forever, The Word which He commanded to a thousand generations . . . Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day. *Tell of His glory among the nations*, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens. Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and joy are in His place. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, *Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name*; Bring an offering, And come before Him; Worship the LORD in holy array.

Tremble before Him, all the earth. . . . Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; And let them say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.” . . . O give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good*; for His lovingkindness is everlasting. Then say, “Save us, O God of our salvation, And gather us and deliver us from the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name, and *glory in Your praise*.” Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting.

A study of this beautiful hymn of praise will help us understand the nature of glorifying God. It involves: First, verbal and musical praise to God; second, conscious dependence upon God for all things; third, meditation on the perfections, promises, and works of God; fourth, bearing witness to the glory of God to the world’s nations; fifth, worship and adoration of God; sixth, ascribing to God the glory (*kabod*) due to His name, i.e., holding and giving a good opinion of God. And in order to ascribe to God the glory due His name, we must believe whatever He has revealed about Himself in the Bible; we must make sure our testimony to the world is an accurate (Biblical) one; and we must live so that our behavior reflects God’s holy character.

C. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

The principle in this classic verse is obvious: everything must be done in order to bring God praise and to please Him. And the context of this verse makes its point even more specific. Chapters 8–10 are concerned with eating and drinking—eating meat offered to idols (chapter 8); eating and making a living by preaching (chapter 9); and feasts of idols and the Lord’s Supper (chapter 10). When our verse is seen in the light of these chapters, its point is clear: we glorify God when we are not ultimately concerned with ourselves and our liberties but are ultimately concerned with whatever will manifest and promote the glory of God and extend the kingdom of Christ.

First, we eat and drink to the glory of God when we acknowledge His good gifts to us with thanksgiving (1 Cor. 10:25, 30; 1 Tim. 4:3–5).

Second, we eat and drink to the glory of God when we eat and drink with love (1 Cor. 8:1–2; 8:13). We must put the spiritual welfare of others before the enjoyment of our own Christian liberties. Sometimes we will forego what we have liberty in Christ to do in order to advance the gospel and build up a brother in the faith. We will avoid anything that interferes with our full effectiveness for Christ (1 Cor. 8:9–10; 9:19–20; 10:23–24).

Third, we eat and drink to the glory of God when we eat and drink in communion with Him in Christ (1 Cor. 10:15–17).

In whatever we do, we are to do it all to the glory of God in order to praise Him and to declare His perfections to others so they will praise Him with us. We do so gladly because we are not our own. We have been bought with the price of the blood of Jesus. Therefore we will, by God’s grace, glorify God with our whole lives inside and out (1 Cor. 6:18–20).

D. PHILIPPIANS 1:9–26

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, *to the glory and praise of God*.

Now I want you to know brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well-known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do *it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

These verses present us with the ultimate goal of the Christian life and of our participation in the spread of the gospel (1:3, 5, 9, 11). In 1:3–11 Paul writes to the Philippians of his love for them because of their partnership with him in the evangelization of the world (1:4). He then prays for them that they will be successful in this work, and that their love, knowledge, and wisdom would abound (1:9–10), and that they would be thoroughly righteous for one all-encompassing purpose: “to the glory and praise of God” (1:11). Then in the following section (1:12–26), he defines how we are to live to the glory and praise of God by giving examples from his own life and experience.

First (1:12–14), *God is glorified in us when we are content with His will*, whatever it is, being confident that Christ is in total control of our lives and futures, sovereignly bringing things to pass in our lives in order to advance His gospel through us.

Second (1:15–18), *God is glorified in us when we are rejoicing that Christ’s gospel is being proclaimed* regardless of who is doing it or who

receives the credit for doing it. Paul is not condoning any tampering with the gospel. For him there is only one gospel, and if anyone tampers with it, he should be cursed by God (Gal. 1:8–9). Here he is speaking of different motives for declaring the gospel, not of declaring different gospels.

Third (1:19–26), *God is glorified in us when we are being so devoted to Him and to spreading His gospel that we are willing to go to any length to please Him and to advance His kingdom, whether life or death.* In verse 21 Paul summarizes his life in one word—Christ. Jesus Christ is the source, goal, content, sustenance, motive, and joy of those who are glorifying God. Without Him, life is nothing.

E. JOHN 15:7–8

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. *My Father is glorified by this*, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

In this familiar chapter, John 15, Jesus is impressing us with the fact that a rich and full life is impossible without the active and diligent maintenance of an unbroken connection between ourselves and God in Christ. He shows us that the Christian life is not one of passivity and effortlessness, but rather that it involves continual exertion of energy and effort growing out of faith in Christ. Throughout this chapter, He emphasizes the necessity of “abiding in Christ” and of “bearing fruit for Christ.”

To abide in Christ (15:4), is to meditate on Christ as revealed in the Bible, to worship Him, and to pray that His influence would be felt in our lives. “Abiding in Christ” includes “abiding in the truth” (15:7), i.e., the study of the Word of God, applying it to our daily living and thinking. It includes “abiding in righteousness” (15:8, 14, 17), i.e., deliberate, habitual, and heartfelt obedience to Biblical Law for Jesus’ sake in all areas of our thinking and living. And it includes “abiding in love” (15:9–10), i.e., self-giving service and sincere, heartfelt love for one another (15:13).

When we abide in Christ, actively and perseveringly, fruit is produced in our lives. This fruit-bearing is lasting, substantial, and growing (15:3, 16). It includes answered prayer (15:7), true discipleship (15:8), Christ-likeness (15:9–10), fullness of joy (15:11), self-giving and self-sacrificing love (15:12–13), friendship with Christ, advanced

and deepened, coupled with an increasing understanding of His will (15:14–15), the ability to persevere in duty even in the face of the world's hostility (15:18–25). According to verse 8, it is in living this kind of life that we bring glory, honor, and praise to God.

F. MATTHEW 5:14–16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; Nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and *glorify your Father who is in heaven.*"

In this world of darkness, faithful Christians are the only light. Ultimately, Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, and because of our close union with Him, He shines His light of truth, life, and grace through us, His disciples. This light exposes things hidden in the darkness, explains the cause of the darkness, and shows the only way out of the darkness. Being lights in this dark world must become the greatest goal in the entirety of our lives. The essential characteristic of light is that it gives light, and the moment it ceases to give light it has no value. The person living and functioning as a true Christian will stand out like a "city set on a hill." In fact, he will not desire to hide his light "under a basket."

We must be lights in the world in the right way—"Let your light shine before men *in such a way* that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven". We are to manifest a life of good works, i.e., of faithfulness to God's Word in all facets of our life before a watching world, not with the desire that the world praise us, but with the desire that when it "sees [our] good works," it will "glorify [our] Father." We do not live for the praise of man, but for the glory of God; therefore, we do not fear men's faces. In the whole of his life in the world and as a witness to the world, the Christian will not seek to draw attention to himself, but to God. "Self has been forgotten in this poverty of spirit [5:3], in the meekness [5:5], and all other things [5:4–10]. In other words, we are to do everything for God's sake, and for His glory. Self is to be absent, and must be utterly crushed in all its subtlety, for His sake, for His glory."⁹

9. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In The Sermon On The Mount*, 2 vols. (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, [1959] 1966), 1:178.

We live a life of “good works” in such a way as to lead other men to glorify God, rejoice in Him, and give themselves to Him. Not only are we to glorify God by our faithful, worshipful lives, but we are to do so in order that other people may glorify Him with us also.

Because we are “Christians,” we have true sorrow in our hearts for those lost in this world of darkness and sin. We realize they are in darkness and depravity, under the condemnation of God, and our hearts are moved for them. “In other words, the more we draw our life from Him, the more we shall become like Him; and He had a great compassion for the people. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. He had great sorrow for them in His heart, and it was that which determined His conduct and behaviour. He was not concerned about Himself; He had compassion for the multitude. That is the way in which you and I are to live and to regard these matters. In other words, in all our work and Christian living, these three things should always be uppermost. First, we shall always do it for His sake and His glory. Second, we shall lead men to Him and to glorify Him. And third, all will be based upon a love for them and a compassion for them in their lost condition.

That, then, is the way in which our Lord exhorts us to show what He has made of us. We must function as men and women who have received from Him life divine. He ridicules the opposite. He puts before us this wondrous picture of becoming like Himself in this world. It was as men and women saw Him that they were led to think of God. Have you noticed how often, after His miracles, we read that the people “gave glory unto God”? They said, “We have never seen things like this before”; and they glorified the Father. You and I are to live like that. In other words, we are to live in such a way that, as men and women look at us, we shall become a problem to them. They will ask, “What is it? Why are these people so different in every way, different in their conduct and behaviour, different in their reactions? There is something about them which we do not understand; we cannot explain it.” And they will be driven to the only real explanation, which is that we are the people of God, children of God, “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” We have become reflectors of Christ, re-producers of Christ. As He is “the Light of the world” so we have become the “light of the world.”¹⁰

10. *Ibid.*, 1:178–179.

V. THE MEANING OF “FULLY TO ENJOY HIM FOREVER”

A. THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD

Our ultimate purpose with reference to God is to glorify Him. Our ultimate purpose with reference to ourselves is to enjoy God, i.e., to rest in Him and to delight in Him as our greatest happiness and as the source of all that is good in our life and destiny. To enjoy God is to have joy in Him and because of Him. “Joy is the purest, deepest, and most satisfying delight that can possess the heart of man . . .”¹¹ To enjoy God is to be happy in His presence, where there is “fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Ps. 16:11).

Every page of John Calvin’s writing rings with the note of fullness of personal joy in Almighty God:

[H]ow can the thought of God penetrate your mind without your realizing immediately that, since you are his handiwork, you have been made over and bound to his command by right of creation, that you owe your life to him? . . . Again, you cannot behold him clearly unless you acknowledge him to be the fountainhead and source of every good. From this too would arise the desire to cleave to him and trust in him, but for the fact that man’s depravity seduces his mind from rightly seeking him.

For, to begin with, the pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. And it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him to be as he manifests himself; furthermore, the mind always exercises the utmost diligence and care not to wander astray, or rashly and boldly to go beyond His will. It thus recognizes God because it knows that he governs all things; and trusts that he is its guide and protector, therefore giving itself over completely to trust in him. Because it understands him to be the Author of every good, if anything oppresses, if anything is lacking, immediately it betakes itself to his protection, waiting for help from him. Because it is persuaded that he is good and merciful, it reposes in him with perfect trust, and doubts not that in his lovingkindness a remedy will be provided for all its ills. Because it acknowledges him as Lord and Father, the pious mind also deems it meet and right to observe his authority in all things, reverence his majesty, take care to advance his glory, and obey his commandments. Because it sees him to be a righteous judge, armed with severity to punish wickedness, it ever holds his judgment seat before its gaze, and through fear of him restrains itself from provoking his anger. And yet it is not so terrified by the awareness of his judgment as to wish to with-

11. Whyte, *The Shorter Catechism*, 2.

draw, even if some way of escape were open. But it embraces him no less as punisher of the wicked than as benefactor of the pious. For the pious mind realizes that the punishment of the impious and wicked and the reward of life eternal for the righteous equally pertain to God's glory. Besides, this mind restrains itself from sinning, not out of dread of punishment alone; but, because it loves and reveres God as Father, it worships and adores him as Lord. Even if there were no hell, it would still shudder at offending him alone.¹²

B. THE FULL AND ETERNAL ENJOYMENT OF GOD

Believers in Jesus know and enjoy God in this life (Gen. 5:24; 1 John 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:9), as well as in the life to come in eternity (Ps. 16:11; Rev. 22). The difference is that in this life the enjoyment is incomplete, having just begun, while in eternity it will be full and complete. In both instances it is satisfying, sanctifying, and exhilarating—"the joy of the LORD is my strength." When God raises us from the dead at the second coming of Christ, we shall enjoy God ecstatically, perfectly, totally, constantly, and eternally (2 Cor. 5:8). But, as we have said, believers do not have to wait until death to enjoy God. We do so now through faith in Jesus Christ: "Our [present] fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

The Psalmist rejoiced that the Lord was guiding him in this life and was bringing him into His glory after death. Today the Christian can say with the psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven *but You*? There is no one on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and heart may fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:25-26). This kind of relationship with God is initiated and established by God, not by man. It is based on the fact that it is the gracious desire of God that all His people be one with Him, as God the Father, Son, and Spirit are one in each Other. Jesus prays that all of God's people be one as "even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in us. . . . The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one" (John 17:21-22).

This enjoyment of God as the fountain of life for us is found in Jesus Christ, through faith in Him and in His finished work on our behalf by which we are reconciled with God (1 Pet. 2:24). From this

12. John Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. by John T. McNeill, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1940), 1:42.

union and communion with Christ flows our joy in God. Our present enjoyment of God is a pledge and foretaste of our full and perfect enjoyment of Him when we are admitted into His glorious presence at death and at the resurrection, when we will be given a full sense of His love, and fully and eternally rest in Him with incomparable ecstasy (Ps. 4:6, 7; 16:11).

Augustine taught us that if we delight in God here, we will enjoy God forever. If we would know the way to eternal life, “we must come to know God and ourselves, God in His love that we may not despair, ourselves in our unworthiness that we may not be proud. And would we know what the goal is—what is that but the eternal enjoyment of this God of love? ‘When he who is good and faithful in these miseries shall have passed from this life to the blessed life, then will truly come to pass what is now wholly impossible—that a man may live as he will. For he will not will to live evilly in the midst of that felicity, nor will he will anything that shall be lacking, nor shall there be anything lacking which he shall have willed. Whatever shall be loved will be present; and nothing will be longed for which shall not be there. Everything which will be there will be good, and the Supreme God will be the supreme good, and will be present for those to enjoy who love Him; and what is the most blessed thing of all is that it will be certain that it will be so forever.’”¹³

C. THE WAY TO THE ENJOYMENT OF GOD

How are we to enjoy God? How are we to maintain and deepen this joy? Exodus 20:24 gives us the answer. God says: “In every place where I cause My Name to be remembered” (i.e., reveal My character and will), “I will come to you and bless you.” In other words, God is known and enjoyed in all those places where He has chosen to reveal Himself, where He has commanded His people to meet with Him: in Christ, in the church, in worship, in prayer, in the Word of God, in the sacraments, in Christian fellowship, and in the fulfillment of all those responsibilities and privileges which God has commanded us in His Word. In all these “places,” these means of grace, the enjoyment of God will never come to an end.

Thomas Watson, the great Puritan, in his own colorful way, described how we should enjoy God:

13. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, 399.

Let it be our great care to enjoy God's sweet presence in his ordinances [commanded means of grace]. Enjoying spiritual communion with God is a riddle and mystery to most people. Every one that hangs about the court does not speak with the king. We may approach God in ordinances, and hang about the court of heaven, yet not enjoy communion with God. We may have the letter without the Spirit, the visible sign without the invisible grace. It is the enjoyment of God in a duty that we should chiefly look at. Psa. xlii.2 says, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Alas! What are all our worldly enjoyments without the enjoyment of God! . . . It should be our great design [purpose], not only to have the ordinances of God, but the God of the ordinances. The enjoyment of God's sweet presence here is the most contented life: He is a hive of sweetness, a magazine [warehouse] of riches, a fountain of delight, Psalm xxxvi. 8, 9. The higher the lark flies the sweeter it sings; and the higher we fly by the wings of faith, the more we enjoy God. How is the heart inflamed in prayer and meditation! What joy and peace is there in believing! Is it not comfortable being in heaven? He that enjoys much of God in this life carries heaven about him.¹⁴

VI. THE ROOTS OF THE FIRST QUESTION AND ANSWER OF THE LARGER CATECHISM

The historical roots of the first question and answer of the Larger Catechism are in the Bible, Augustine, and John Calvin. The Old Testament and the New Testament define the purpose for human existence along the lines of the Larger Catechism. Augustine, who lived in the fourth century, wrote in his *Confessions*:

Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord: and our heart is restless till it finds its rest in Thee . . . Let God be all in all to thee, for in Him is the entirety of all that thou lovest . . . God is all in all to thee: if thou dost hunger He is thy bread; if thou dost thirst He is thy drink; if thou art in darkness, He is thy light . . . if thou art naked, He is thy garment of immortality, when this corruption shall put on incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality.¹⁵

In the sixteenth century, John Calvin wrote in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

[W]e are all created to this end, that we should know the majesty of our Creator; and knowing Him, should hold Him in esteem, and honor Him with all fear, love, and reverence. . . . *It is necessary, then, that the principal*

14. Thomas Watson, *Body Of Divinity* (Grand Rapids: Sovereign Grace Publishers, n.d.), 15.

15. Warfield, *The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, 398.

care and solicitude of our life should be to seek God and to aspire to Him with all affection of heart and not to rest anywhere save in Him.¹⁶

Calvin's Catechism (1545) opens with these words:

What is the Principall and chief end of man's life? To know God. What moveth thee to say so? *Because He has created us, and placed us in this world to set foorth His glory in us:* And it is good reason that we employ our whole life to His glorie, seeing He is the beginning and fountaine thereof. What is then *the chief felicitie of man? Even the self-same;* I meane to know God, and to have His glorie shewed foorth in us. Why doest thou call this mans chiefe felicitie? Because that without it, our condition or state were more miserable than the state of brute beastes. Hereby then wee may evidently see, that there can no such miserie come unto man, as not to live in the Knowledge of God? That is most certaine. But what is the true and right knowledge of God? When a man so knoweth God, that he giveth Him due honor. Which is the way to honor God aright? It is to put our whole trust and confidence in Him; to studie to serve Him in obeying His wil; to call upon Him in our necessities, seeking our salvation and all good things at His hand; and finally to acknowledge both with hearte and mouth that He is the lively fountaine of all goodnesse.¹⁷

It will be a great comfort in a dying hour, to think we have glorified God in our lives. It was Christ's comfort before his death: John xvii. 3.—“I have glorified Thee on the earth.” At the hour of death, all your earthly comforts will vanish: if you think how rich you have been, what pleasures you have had on earth; this will be so far from comforting you, that it will torment you the more. What is one the better for an estate that is spent? But to have conscience telling you, that you have glorified God on the earth, what sweet comfort and peace will this let into your soul!¹⁸

It is a great matter to enjoy God's ordinances, but to enjoy God's presence in the ordinances is that which a gracious heart aspires after. Psalm lxiii. 2. “To see Thy glory so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.” This sweet enjoyment of God, is, when we feel His Spirit cooperating with the ordinance, and distilling grace upon our hearts. . . . In the Word we hear God's voice, in the sacrament we have His kiss. . . . Oh how sweet is it thus to enjoy God!¹⁹

How wicked are they who prefer the enjoyment of their lusts before the enjoyment of God! . . . Who for a drop of pleasure would drink a sea of wrath?²⁰

16. *Ibid.*, 381.

17. *Ibid.*, 382.

18. Watson, *Body of Divinity*, 14.

19. *Ibid.*, 15.

20. *Ibid.*, 15.

Let this be a spur to duty. How diligent and zealous should we be in glorifying God, that we may come at last to enjoy Him!²¹

In 1876 Thomas Carlyle made this confession:

The older I grow, and I am now upon the brink of eternity, the more comes back to me the first sentence of the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes, "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever."²²

21. *Ibid.*, 18.

22. Whyte, *The Shorter Catechism*, 2.