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**17 - Teleological Purpose and Eternal Security:
How the Ultimate Goal of Salvation Ensures that It Is Forever**

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Introduction

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Introduction

What is the teleological purpose of salvation, and is that salvation eternally secure? When these questions are boiled down into layman's terms (what is the purpose of my salvation and how can I know for sure that I am 'saved') regardless of where one sits on the theological pendulum regarding the nature of salvation, they strike deep seated emotions for legitimate reasons. It is the aim of this paper to offer a satisfactory answer by examining what it is that makes the Gospel good news.

What is the good news of the Gospel? Is it the news that one can escape the eternal torments of hell by simply believing that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of those who call upon Him and believing that He secured salvation by rising from the dead? Is the good news of the Gospel the news that I can spend eternity in heaven untouched by sickness, handicap and even death? Often we evangelicals bill the Gospel as the good news that a person can be spared from hell by responding to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection in faith. I would like to propose that the Gospel is so much more.

Teleology, by definition, is the hypotheses that there is design, purpose, and finality in the works of the created order and the study of

it; if this is true then it would seem logical that the human race was also originally created with design, purpose, and finality. To reach a satisfactory answer to what the teleological purpose of salvation is one ought to seek to understand two things: 1) the purpose of God and 2) the purpose of man.

A. The Purpose of God

What is it that God is most passionate for? A survey of the Bible might lead one to believe that God is most passionate for the exaltation of His name (e.g. glory). In fact, God makes it emphatically clear that it is His glory that He will not share with anyone else (Isa. 48:11). But what is God's glory anyway? Chris Morgan, in his helpful essay on "The Doctrines of God and Sin in Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Endless Punishment," suggests that "God's glory signifies and comprehends all of God's natural and moral attributes."¹ Likewise, William Farley in his article, "God's Highest Passion," defines God's "glory" as "His multifaceted perfection put on display. It is, among other things, His incomprehensible love, His infinite hatred of evil expressed in His wrath, His tender mercy, His amazing grace, His love of justice, His boundless wisdom, and His iridescent holiness." Farley further suggests that "God glorifies Himself by loving and exercising each of these traits."² And God delights in this glory in all that He does because it is the highest of all good to be pursued and enjoyed; as Daniel Fuller observes, "God's righteousness consists in his fully delighting in his praiseworthiness, or glory." For God to value anything above His own worth would seem to be idolatrous.³ This is why Jonathan Edwards was right in observing, "that the great end of God's works, which is so variously expressed in scripture, is indeed but ONE; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, THE GLORY OF GOD."⁴

¹ Chris Morgan, "The Doctrines of God and Sin in Jonathan Edwards' Defense of Endless Punishment," *Evangelical Theological Society*, 15:11.

² William P. Farley, "God's Highest Passion," *Discipleship Journal* (May/June, 2001): 24-25.

³ This is especially true if the Decalogue was not only birthed out of the moral character of God, but something that God is equally bound to obey since it has been birthed out of His moral character.

⁴ Jonathan Edwards, "The End for Which God Created the World," in *God's Passion for His Glory*, by John Piper (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998): 246.

There are many examples of how God pursues His own glory throughout scripture. In Isaiah, one discovers that God creates the redeemed for His glory.⁵ Paul, in the epistle to the Romans, even suggests that God creates some vessels for honorable use (the redeemed) and others for common use (the unredeemed).⁶

In redemptive history, one becomes aware that God chose Israel for the purpose of showing His glory in her.⁷ When God delivered Israel from the hand of Pharaoh and his army, He glorified Himself by hardening Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of defeating him and his army.⁸

When Israel began her journey to the promised Canaan, it was not long before they began to complain and rebel against their Creator. God would have been justified in destroying Israel in the wilderness (see Exod. 32:9-14), but instead spared Israel⁹ and brought her into the land for the glory of His name.¹⁰

⁵ "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, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made'" (Isa. 43:6-7).

⁶ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, *even* us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, 'I will call those who were not My people, 'My people', And her who was not beloved, 'beloved'" (Rom. 9:15-25; cf. Eph. 1:4-6).

⁷ "He said to Me, 'You are My Servant, Israel, in Whom I will show My glory'" (Isa. 49:3).

⁸ "Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.' And they did so.... As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them [the Red Sea]; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen'" (Exod. 14:4, 17).

⁹ 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" (Ezek 20:14).

¹⁰ "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. I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,'" declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.... I am not doing *this* for [Footnote continued on next page ...]

After bringing Israel into the promised land, God gave her victory over the inhabitants of Canaan, making Himself a name, and doing for them great and awesome things.¹¹ But, after Israel adulterated herself with other gods, God delivered her into the hands of other nations (as promised in Deut. 28-29), but God, in His mercy restored Israel from exile for the glory of His name.¹²

Israel proved unfruitful in her national existence, and while the Roman Empire had its foot on the neck of God's chosen nation, the True Vine (Messiah) entered into time and space for the purpose of glorifying Yahweh's name among all nations.¹³ Not only did Messiah (Jesus Christ) serve to glorify God's name among the nations, but He also laid down His life for the glory of the Father's name,¹⁴ which also served to vindicate the glory of God's righteousness.¹⁵

Not only has God passionately pursued His glory throughout redemptive history, but He will also judge mankind for dishonoring His glory.¹⁶ The concept of God judging mankind for dishonoring His glory is a truth to which most agree, but the nature of God's judgment has caused much debate throughout the ages.

What seems clear throughout the Bible is that God has done and will do all that is necessary for the purpose of filling all of the earth

your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel" (Ezek. 36:22-23, 32)!

¹¹ 2 Sam. 7:23.

¹² "Yet for my own sake and for the honor of my name, I will hold back my anger and not wipe you out. ¹⁰I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering. ¹¹I will rescue you for my sake—yes, for my own sake! That way, the pagan nations will not be able to claim that their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory" (Isa. 48:9-11, NLT)!

¹³ "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to You among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Your name" (Rom. 15:8-9; cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:16; Acts 2:14-35).

¹⁴ "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour?' But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:27-28).

¹⁵ Cf., D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Cross: The Vindication of God* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1999): 13, "On the Cross on Calvary's hill God was giving a public explanation of what He had been doing throughout the centuries. By so doing, and at the same time, He vindicates His own eternal character of righteousness and of holiness." Also See Romans 3:21-30.

¹⁶ "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.... and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures" (Rom. 1:18, 23).

with, not only the knowledge of His glory,¹⁷ but the radiance of His glory as well, for “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.”¹⁸

Throughout the Bible one can see that God is enamored with His glory. “From beginning to end, the driving impulse of God’s heart is to be praised for His glory. From creation to consummation His ultimate allegiance is to Himself. His unwavering purpose in all He does is to exalt the honor of His name and to be marveled at for His grace and power. He is infinitely jealous for His reputation,”¹⁹ and justifiably so. As stated earlier, for God to elevate anything other than His own self is to commit treason (idolatry) against His infinite worth.²⁰ A. W. Tozer was right in writing,

Since He [God] is the Being supreme over all, it follows that God cannot be elevated. Nothing is above Him, nothing beyond Him. Any motion in His direction is elevation for the creature; away from Him, descent. He holds His position out of Himself and by leave of none. As no one can promote Him, so no one can degrade Him. It is written that He upholds all things by the word of His power. How can He be raised or supported by the things He upholds?²¹

God is infinitely passionate for His glory.

If the above is true, then it stands to reason that all of God’s creation finds its purpose in bringing Him glory, for “When God was about to create the world, he had respect to that emanation of his glory, which is actually the consequence of the creation, both with regard to himself and the creature.”²²

Not only has God created all things for the “emanation of his glory,” but He purposes to fulfill that end and makes no apologies for

¹⁷ “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14).

¹⁸ Revelation 20:24.

¹⁹ John Piper, “Is God For Us or For Himself?” (Wheaton College Chapel Address: October 23, 1984).

²⁰ Cf., William P. Farley, “God’s Highest Passion,” *Discipleship Journal* (May/June, 2001): 24, “God must love and honor that which has the greatest moral perfection and give less focus to that which lacks moral excellence. Since nothing deserves His love more than God Himself, He must esteem Himself before His creation. It would be sin for Him to do otherwise. That is why Paul unabashedly exulted ‘that in everything [Christ] might have the supremacy’”

²¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961): 40.

²² Jonathan Edwards, “The End for Which God Created the World,” in *God’s Passion for His Glory*, by John Piper (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998): 248.

doing so, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.”²³

I would like to suggest to the reader two things: First, not only is God passionate for His glory, but His aim and purpose as God is to that end; to put it another way: “The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy Himself forever” and second, all that He has created has been created with the purpose of glorifying God—especially mankind.

B. The Purpose of Man

As has been suggested above, all that exists, exists for a purpose,²⁴ and it is with purpose that God created humanity. As the reader is already aware, the Bible makes a clear distinction between the human race and the rest of the created order. In Psalm 19:1-2, one reads that, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” Creation reflects the glory of God, but there is only one creature that was set apart to bear the image of the Creator and that is man. This is why the Psalmist sings,

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.²⁵

The reason why God has placed humanity highest in the created order is because He, “created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”²⁶ On this passage, St. Augustine comments,

From this we are to understand that man was made to the image of God in that part of his nature wherein he surpasses the brute beasts. This is, of course, his reason or mind or intelligence, or whatever we wish to call it. Hence St. Paul says, *Be renewed in spirit of your mind, and put on the*

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble” (Prov. 16:4).

²⁵ Psalm 8:3-9.

²⁶ Gen. 1:27.

*new man, who is being renewed unto the knowledge of God, according to the image of his Creator. By these words he shows wherein man has been created to the image of God, since it is not by any features of the body but by perfection of the intelligible order, that is, of the mind when illuminated.*²⁷

God has wired every single human being with certain faculties (intellect, emotions, and will) specifically designed to not only reflect the image of God but, to enable every person to worship Him. God has wired these faculties into the soul, that part of every human that lives forever. In other words, God created Adam and Eve with thriving, living eternal souls designed to be keenly attuned to God as His image bearers. Adam and Eve’s thriving, living eternal souls affected their ability to respond to God intellectually, emotionally and volitionally.

Human beings were created for the purpose of worshiping God and the enjoyment thereof, or as Edwards once said, “God gave man a faculty of reason and understanding, which is a noble faculty. Therein he differs from all other creatures here below. He is exalted in his nature above them, and is, in this respect, like the angels. Man is made capable to know God, and to know spiritual and eternal things.”²⁸ In essence, God has wired human beings not only to worship Him but to love Him; when God created Adam and Eve, He created them for the purpose of a relationship with Himself—the divine romancer. Perhaps Henry Scougal was right in writing that true religion is, “a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the Divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul.... I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a Divine life.”²⁹ This is why St. Augustine prayed, “Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee.”

After creating Adam and Eve, God had commanded them that they could enjoy the entire Garden of Eden with one exception: they

²⁷ St. Augustine. *Ancient Christians Writers*, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis” (vol. 1; NY: Paulist Press; 1982): 96.

²⁸ Jonathan Edwards, “The Natural Men in a Dreadful Condition,” in *The Wrath of God*, edited by Rev. Don Kistler (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996) p. 3.

²⁹ Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2001): 41-42.

could not eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.³⁰ But as the reader is already painfully aware Adam and Eve did exactly what God had commanded them not to do: “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”³¹ It was this one act that not only resulted in condemnation to everyone born after Adam, for the Apostle Paul writes, “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”³²

From Adam all the way to our biological parents sin spread from generation to generation, or as the Psalmist put it, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”³³ Cornelius Plantinga, in his book *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, commented on this verse by describing the human condition:

sin is a plague that spreads by contagion or even by quasigenetic reproduction. It's a polluted river that keeps branching and rebranching into tributaries. It's a whole family of fertile and contentious parents, children, and grandchildren.³⁴

It is in this condition that every single human being is born an enemy of God.³⁵ In his commentary on Romans, the late Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote something that perhaps expresses the nature of the human condition best:

Adam's choice was an act of rebellion, the equivalent of a declaration of independence.... Adam, in effect, said, 'I am tired of having everything north, south, east, and west of this tree. I will be independent. I will run my own affairs.' It was not a request that God share the throne of

³⁰ See Gen. 2-3.

³¹ Genesis 3:6-7.

³² Romans 5:12-14.

³³ Psalm 51:5.

³⁴ Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way it's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1995): 53.

³⁵ “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10).

government with man; it was an ultimatum to Him to abdicate and leave full control to man.”³⁶

A.W. Tozer had this to say regarding the nature of sin:

The essence of sin is to will one thing, for to set our will against the will of God is to dethrone God and make ourselves supreme in the little kingdom of Mansoul. This is sin at its evil root. Sins may multiply like the sands by the seashore, but they are yet one. Sins are because sin is.³⁷

So what is the teleological purpose of mankind? The teleological purpose of mankind is that humanity exists for God and has been created for the purpose of eternity. The teleological purpose of mankind is shaped by the fact that humans are the only species that bear the image of God (the *imago dei*). Perhaps there is no better proposal for the teleological purpose of man than the one offered by *The Westminster Confession of Faith*: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

Mankind was created for a life of intimacy and worship with the divine Romancer (God). It was man who signified his intention of divorce from the One to whom he was created to be joined. The consequence was a hardening of the heart and the spiritual death of the soul resulting in the inability of the human faculties of intellect, emotion, and will to be able to respond to God in worship. The end result is the inability of any person to worship God as he/she was created to do.

The Apostle Paul gives the reader a snapshot into the heart of man. The picture is grim and the list is ugly, but the following passage is helpful in portraying the obstinate heart of man towards the glory of God.

as it is written,
There is none righteous, not even one;
There is none who understands,
There is none who seeks for God;
All have turned aside, together they have become useless;
There is none who does good,
There is not even one.”

³⁶ Donald Grey Barnhouse, “God’s River,” *Romans vol. II*, (Grand Rapids, MI: 1982): 192.

³⁷ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961): 37.

Their throat is an open grave,
 With their tongues they keep deceiving,
 The poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;
 Their feet are swift to shed blood,
 Destruction and misery are in their paths,
And the path of peace they have not known.
 There is no fear of God before their eyes.³⁸

Paul is clear about the human condition: “There is none righteous, not even one... there is none who seeks for God...” Not only does the human condition involve a disposition that wants nothing to do with God, but “there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

C. The Good News of the Gospel

 God could have left things the way they were with Adam and Eve, but instead chose to provide a solution that would become more specific with time. Right after the fall, God promised that a descendent of Eve who would come and crush the head of the serpent.³⁹ This same seed was promised to Abraham, only this time God was more specific with the promise that through Abraham’s offspring would come a great nation and that it would be through his offspring that all the families in the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

 As Abraham’s descendents grew, God revealed that the seed that would crush the serpent’s head would come from the line of Judah, for one reads in Genesis 49:10, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.” This is the first time where God revealed that a King would come and obedience will be given to Him by the peoples; similar language is used in Psalm 2,

 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.” He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath,

³⁸ Romans 3:10-18.

³⁹ Genesis 3:15.

and terrify them in his fury, saying, “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

With the writing of the commandments, God would call the people through Moses to be a Kingdom of Priests⁴⁰ identified by the God they follow.⁴¹ The Law was not only a system of laws, but it was a way to have a relationship with the God of the universe. The distinguishing mark that would set that people aside from all other peoples is not only the law that they followed but by the symbolic sign of every male being physically circumcised.⁴²

As time would tell, Israel would fall short of obeying and loving God time and time again; Israel’s problem was a hard heart obstinate against God. This is why in Deuteronomy one begins to get a sense that not only would God use a descendant of Eve to defeat the serpent, but that He would also cure the problem of the heart as well. Notice the language of Deuteronomy 30:6, “And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.” In other words, God would enable His people to not only Love Him but follow Him as well. The picture is simple: just like every parent was responsible for the circumcision of their new born son to identify that child as a member of the covenant community, God would do the same to His own children for the purpose of identifying them as true members of the covenant community. In essence God would open their hearts to love the Him with all of their heart, with all of their soul, and with all of their might.⁴³

⁴⁰ Exod. 19:6.

⁴¹ Exod. 20:1-21.

⁴² See Genesis 17:1-14.

⁴³ Deut. 6:4-9.

This promise to circumcise the heart was a promise of a new covenant unlike the covenant made in Exodus 19-20. Notice the following new covenant passages:

Jeremiah 31:31-34. Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.⁴⁴

Ezekiel 36:26-27. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Joel 2:28-29. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. “And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

⁴⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000): 90, “Jeremiah says: ‘Take away the foreskin of your hearts ye men of Judah’ (4:4). This prophet also speaks metaphorically, but with a turn towards the ethical, of uncircumcised ears, meaning inability to hearken (6:10). He threatens the Israelites with judgment, because, like the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites, they are ‘circumcised in uncircumcision’, i.e. while having the eternal sign, they lack the circumcision of the heart 9:25, 26). The statement implies that, though for others circumcision might be purely external thing, for Israel it ought to be something more. Similarly, Ezekiel represents Jehovah as complaining that the house of Israel have brought into the temple aliens uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh (44:7). From law and the prophets the ethical and spiritual interpretation passed over into the New Testament, where we find it with Paul (Rom. 2:25-29; 4:11; Eph. 2:11; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11).”

The New Testament picks up on this same new covenant language and reveals that just as Moses mediated the old covenant, Christ mediates the new. This is reason why Moses told Israel:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers- it is to him you shall listen- just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.’⁴⁵

This is why the author of Hebrews wrote that Jesus was not only a better prophet than Moses,⁴⁶ but that “Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.”⁴⁷

How was the new covenant enacted? The new covenant was enacted not by the blood of goats and bulls, but by the “blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God.”⁴⁸ No longer would the people of God be distinguished by the removal of male foreskin, but instead by the removal of the hardness of the heart. It is on the above point that Thomas Schreiner suggests that, “Belonging to the people of God is no longer based on circumcision. All that is necessary is the circumcision of the heart, and such circumcision of the heart enables one to keep the law.”⁴⁹

This “heart circumcision” as spoken of in Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36 is a phenomena that belongs to the new covenant, inaugurated by Jesus at Calvary and put into effect on Pentecost through the Spirit of God,⁵⁰ or as Peter Toon writes,

⁴⁵ Deut. 18:15-18.

⁴⁶ See Heb. 3.

⁴⁷ Heb. 8:6-7.

⁴⁸ Heb. 9:14.

⁴⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000): 144.

⁵⁰ See Luke 22:20 and Acts 2.

Like the old covenant, the new covenant will create a right relationship between God and his people, center around the law (God's will), and include all the people of God. However, unlike the old covenant, the new belongs specifically to the last days ("the time is coming"); further, it involves creating new people through special divine action. God will directly implant his will in the hearts of his people through the Holy Spirit's presence there; and thereby they will come to enjoy a full communion with God, know what he requires of them, and experience the sense of being forgiven of their sins.

From the New Testament we know that this prophecy pointed to Christ's work on the cross, where the new covenant was inaugurated and also to the Spirit's work of bringing the effects of Christ's saving work into human souls. Personal inward regeneration is a part of the benefits of the new covenant.⁵¹

This is why when the apostle Peter explained the reason behind the multiple tongues that he and the rest of the disciples were uttering, he put in plain words that what the crowd was experiencing was the outpouring of God's Spirit in the new covenant age.

No wonder the author of Hebrews states specifically that the Jesus Christ is "the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance." Hebrews is very clear, Jesus enacted the new covenant when He died on the cross. Therefore, as Hebrews 8 already states, the new covenant promise of a heart circumcision as cited in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted word for word in Hebrews 8 as being a phenomena for today:

For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

⁵¹ Peter Toon, *Born Again: A Biblical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987): 57.

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”⁵²

Therefore Craig Blaising is right in writing, “It is indisputable that the New Testament views the New Covenant predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel as established in the death of Jesus Christ with some of its promised blessings now being granted to Jews and Gentiles who are believers in Jesus. These are not blessings which are *like* those predicted by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They are *the very same* covenant which they prophesied which is in effect today.”⁵³

If the above is true, then the implications the present new covenant reality has on the teleological purpose of salvation is staggering. But let the reader understand that in order to accept the new covenant as being a present reality, one needs to acknowledge that these promises have not yet been fully realized; on this point Blaising is again helpful,

While the New Testament is clear on the fact that the new covenant has now been inaugurated, that is that blessings belong to the new covenant are now being dispensed to all those who believe in Jesus (whether Jew or Gentile), it is equally clear that new covenant promises are not yet fully realized. The promises in Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel describe a people who have the law written in their hearts, who walk in the way of the Lord, fully under the control of the Holy Spirit. These same promises look to a people who are raised from the dead, enjoying the blessings of an eternal inheritance with God dwelling with them and in them forever.⁵⁴

So what is the good news of the Gospel? The Gospel is the good news that I can love and worship God like I was created to do. Heaven, forgiveness of sin, deliverance from hell—these are only benefits that free us to do what we were created to do, what we were wired to do, what we must do. We must worship God, for it is here that true love is not only expressed but experienced. The good news of the Gospel is that I, a sinner, can know and enjoy God forever. In what is probably his most important book, *God is the Gospel*, John Piper sums up the Gospel this way,

⁵² Heb. 8:8-12; comp. Jer. 31:31-34.

⁵³ Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002): 202.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 208.

the Christian gospel is not merely that Jesus died and rose again; and not merely that these events appease God's wrath, forgive sin, and justify sinners; and not merely that this redemption gets us out of hell and into heaven; but that they bring us to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ as our supreme, all-satisfying, and everlasting treasure. "Christ...suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, *that he might bring us to God*" (1Pet. 3:18).⁵⁵

D. The Teleological Purpose of Salvation

So back to the original question for which the paper attempts to answer: "What is the teleological purpose of salvation?" As stated already, if the new covenant has been inaugurated with the death of Christ, then the implications to the above question is staggering.

What does all that has been discussed above mean for the reader? It means this: The promise of the new covenant is a promise of transformation; it is the promise that God through His Spirit will remove the hardness of the heart so that it can beat for God. The new covenant is the promise that God will take a Romans 3:10-18 heart and transform it into a Jeremiah 31:31-34 (or Hebrews 8:8-13) heart that loves and worships God. It is the promise that God will take what is spiritually dead and make it alive in Christ so that he/she can in turn respond to Him with the faculties that He had given for the purpose of worshiping Him, which the apostle Paul so clearly explained in Ephesians 2:1-10,

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may

⁵⁵ John Piper, *God is the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005): 167.

boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What is it that is made alive in God? It is the soul that God makes alive. God gives life to what was once dead because, “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” The Christian is made spiritually alive so that he/she can live a life of good works unto God; this is exactly the point behind Paul’s statement that, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come.”⁵⁶

The teleological purpose of salvation is a transformation from the old nature to a new nature, from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, from a heart that rejects God to a heart that loves Him, from a will that follows the prince of the power of the air to a will that follows after God. The teleological purpose of salvation is to be conformed into the image of Christ,⁵⁷ so that the Christian might take on the nature of Christ. Perhaps Charles Haddon Spurgeon best describes what the nature of salvation looks like in His book *All of Grace*,

The old nature is very strong, and they have tried to curb and tame it; but it will not be subdued, and they find themselves, though anxious to be better, if anything growing worse than before. The heart is so hard, the will is so obstinate, the passions are so furious, the thoughts are so volatile, the imagination is so ungovernable, the desires are so wild, that the man feels that he has a den of wild beasts within him, which will eat him up sooner than be ruled by him....

Dear friend, salvation would be a sadly incomplete affair if it did not deal with this part of our ruined estate. We want to be purified as well as pardoned. Justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all. It would call the leper clean, and leave him to die of his disease; it would forgive the rebellion and allow the rebel to remain an enemy to his king. It would remove the consequences but overlook the cause, and this would leave an endless and hopeless task before us. It would stop the stream for a time, but leave an open fountain of defilement, which would

⁵⁶ 2 Cor. 5:17.

⁵⁷ “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:28-30).

sooner or later break forth with increased power. Remember that the Lord Jesus came to take away sin in three ways; He came to remove *the penalty* of sin, *the power* of sin, and, at last, *the presence* of sin. At once you may reach to the second part--the power of sin may immediately be broken; and so you will be on the road to the third, namely, the removal of the presence of sin. “We know that he was manifested to take away our sins.”⁵⁸

There are some who would disagree with Surgeon’s premise that “justification without sanctification would not be salvation at all.”⁵⁹ In fact, there is a movement in Evangelicalism known as Free Grace Theology that teaches that sanctification is more or less icing on the cake of Soteriology, but not something that will necessarily take place in the life of every Christian.⁶⁰ Zane Hodges, who popularized the above view advocates that a person can be a Christian without any change in his or her character at all.⁶¹ But, the question the reader must ask is this: Does such a view of salvation fall in line with the promises of the new covenant?⁶²

The nature of the new covenant is a circumcised heart enabled to love and obey God. What does this love and obedience look like? It looks like the love and obedience found in Deuteronomy 6:5-6, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.” This is the essence of true worship and the reason behind the substitutionary death of Christ. Jesus came to

⁵⁸ C. H. Spurgeon, *All of Grace* (Pilgrims Publications): 18.

⁵⁹ To get a better understanding for why this is see Zane Hodges’ *Absolutely Free* or Robert Wilkin’s *Secure and Sure*.

⁶⁰ This view of sanctification is best represented by Zane Hodges, Bob Wilkin, and Joseph Dillow.

⁶¹ Zane Hodges, *The Hungry Inherit* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1972): 59-65.

⁶² Many evangelical theologians would disagree with Zane Hodges; notice the following affirmations in the book, *This we Believe* (247), on a theological statement of what the gospel is:

“We affirm that saving faith results in sanctification, the transformation of life in growing conformity to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification means ongoing repentance, a life of turning from sin to serve Jesus Christ in grateful reliance on him as one’s Lord and Master (Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:4, 13-14). We reject any view of justification which divorces it from our sanctifying union with Christ and our increasing conformity to his image through prayer, repentance, cross-bearing, and life in the Spirit.

“We affirm that saving faith includes mental assent to the content of the Gospel, acknowledgement of our own sin and need, and personal trust and reliance upon Christ and his work. We deny that saving faith includes only mental acceptance of the Gospel, and that justification is secured by a mere outward profession of faith. We further deny that any element of saving faith is a meritorious work or earns salvation for us.”

die not only to secure eternal life for a people, but even more—to purchase sinners for the purpose of transforming them into members of His Kingdom whose disposition of loving God intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally, fall in line with what Jesus said was the most important command in the Bible: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”⁶³

Just as God has wired the intellect, emotion, and will of every human being into the human soul, love as it is rooted in the emotions is unable to be expressed to a benevolent God until the soul is made alive in Christ through the quickening of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, love for God as it is expressed in the human faculties of intellect, emotion, and will is the teleological purpose of salvation. The assurance of possessing such a salvation is not rooted only in mental cognition; assurance of salvation is rooted in all the human faculties: intellect, emotion, and will. The assurance of one’s salvation is rooted in the character of God, the promises of scripture, and the nature of the new covenant; it is on this point that D.A. Carson is helpful,

the biblical writers offer believers all the assurance they could ever want, grounding such assurance in the character of God, the nature of the new covenant, the finality of election, the love of God, and much more beside. But they never allow such assurance to become a sop for spiritual indifference; indeed, the same vision is what drives them to insist that the God who has called them to his new covenant works powerfully in them to conform them to the likeness of his Son, to the fruitfulness the Spirit empowers us to produce. This becomes both an incentive to press on to the mark of the upward call in Christ Jesus, and an implicit challenge to those who cry “Lord, Lord” but do not do what He commands.⁶⁴

Love is the heartbeat of true worship and the avenue to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; this is why the apostle Paul concludes his letter to the Corinthians with these stunning words: “If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be damned.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Mark 12:30.

⁶⁴ D.A. Carson, “Reflections on Christian Assurance,” *Westminster Theological Journal* (1992): 54:1-29.

⁶⁵ 1 Cor. 16:22.

As a final thought in an attempt to bring this paper to an end, I can think of no other appropriate passage to close with than the doxology found in Jude 1:24-25, “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

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