

**Bruce A. Ware**

Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, KY

# Beholding the Glory of God's Supremacy

## I. Introduction: Need to Know God

In *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer writes, ". . . the Christian conception of God current in these middle years of the 20th century [written in 1961] is so decadent as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity" (p. 20). "So necessary to the Church is a lofty concept of God that when that concept in any measure declines, the Church with her worship and her moral standards declines along with it. The first step down for any church is taken when it surrenders its high opinion of God. . . We do the greatest service to the next generation of Christians by passing on to them undimmed and undiminished that noble concept of God which we received from our Hebrew and Christian fathers of generations past" (p. 22).

With Tozer's sober comments now in mind, permit me to offer to you this proposal: There is one particular conception of God, one comprehensive vision, as it were, of who God is, that is at one and the same time both the bedrock of a truly biblical, glorious, worship-inspiring view of God, yet it is an understanding that is barely known among evangelicalism, or worse, decried and denied outright by other popular misconceptions of God. So here we have it – there is a conception of God absolutely fundamental to understanding God rightly, yet it is unknown or denied in much of the evangelical church.

What is this fundamental, bedrock conception? It is the attribute of the self-sufficiency of God.

## II. Understanding God's Self-sufficiency

### A. Definition of Divine Self-sufficiency

**Positively Stated:** God possesses within himself, intrinsically and eternally, every quality in infinite measure.

**Negatively stated:** God has no need for anything outside of who God is, in and of himself. God needs nothing apart from himself, for he possesses every quality within himself.

## **B. Key Elements of the Definition**

1. God possesses every *quality that there is*  
All goodness, all beauty, all knowledge, all wisdom, all power, all holiness, all truth.
2. God possesses *these qualities within himself, intrinsically*  
As those qualities that make up his essential nature, and not by derivation from some supposed external source.
3. God possesses *these qualities eternally*  
He never has lacked nor will he ever lack any quality, but for all eternity these qualities have been his and his alone.
4. God possesses *these qualities in infinite measure*  
There simply is no limit, no boundary, no restriction that applies to them.

## **III. Scriptural Teaching**

### **A. Isaiah 40:12-17**

### **B. Psalm 50**

### **C. Acts 17:24-25**

### **D. Others: 1 Cor 4:7; Rom 11:33-36; James 1:17**

## **IV. Implications of God's Self-Sufficiency**

### **A. General Implications in Light of God's Self-Sufficiency**

Consider: Because God is infinitely and eternally full, rich, joyous, and satisfied, i.e., because God is fully self-sufficient:

1. God does not need the glorious creation he has made, either in whole or any part, including his creation of human beings. As humbling as it is true, God does not need us (Isa 40; Acts 17:25).
2. God does not need anything from us; he needs no help, no gifts, no service, no fellowship (Acts 17:25). Though he commands our obedience and calls us to service, he needs nothing that we are or have to offer.
3. God cannot receive anything from us that is not previously, rightfully, and entirely his and his alone (Acts 17:25; Jas 1:17). In fact, this is so much the case that God is both dishonored and offended when we approach him as if he needs what we have to bring him, as if we can give him something that he lacks (Ps 50).

4. Every good and perfect gift, necessarily, is from him and him alone (Acts 17:25; Jas 1:17). Imagine this: there is no truth thought, no good work, no discerning word, no talent, no ability, no gifting that is not from him. For every quality that exists in creation, and in your lives and mine, is there at all, and is there to the scope and extent that it is, only because God, in his grace and kindness, has granted this to us. While God possess all that he has – all that there is – intrinsically, in contrast, we have what we have – all that we have – by derivation. We owe him everything for all that we have and enjoy.
5. God alone is worthy of all honor, glory, praise, adoration, love, devotion, obedience and worship (Isa 42:8; 1 Cor 10:31).

## B. Key Questions that Arise because of God's Self-Sufficiency

1. Why are we here? What is our purpose?

Not what I learned in SS. The answer is NOT that God was lonely and needed fellowship. Ps 50 – he's offended and dishonored to think so.

Rather, particularly in relation to his people, the answer is this: though he doesn't need us, he loves us, and the purpose in creating and saving us is not that we might fill up some lack in him, but that he might fill us up with himself. He made us empty to be filled with his fullness, thirsty to drink of the water of life, weak to receive his strength, foolish to be corrected by his wisdom. In his love, he longs to give, to share the bounty. He wants us to experience in finite measure the fullness of joy and blessings that he knows infinitely—all to redound to the praise and glory of his name, the Giver and Provider of all the good we enjoy.

C. S. Lewis in, *The Problem of Pain*, says that God's love is not like ours, helping another while needing to be helped ourselves. No, God's love, says Lewis, is "bottomlessly selfless, by very definition; it has everything to give and nothing to receive."

2. Why does God demand our obedience?

Because he loves us, and he knows that our only true joy is found when we follow in his ways. His commandments lead us to life. His demands are given as a Lover. C. S. Lewis, again, says concerning the commandments of God, "Those divine demands, which sound to our natural ears most like those of a despot and least like those of a lover, in fact marshal us where we would want to go if we knew what we wanted." And, his sermon, "The Weight of Glory" makes the same point. We are far too easily satisfied. God calls us to life, and this is found only in obedience to his will and ways.

### 3. Why does God enlist our service?

Psalm 100:2 and Acts 17:25 – how to put these together? He doesn't need our service, so his call for us to serve is a call to participate in the privilege and joy of the ministry of grace that flows from him, into us and then through us, into the lives of others. We can take no credit. All we have is a gift from him, and he gives us what we have to be used in service to others. God is so shareful! He is so generous! Rather than just doing the work unilaterally, he devises a plan by which intends to see his work done in and through others, by calling and equipping them. We have absolutely no basis for boasting, either before God or others. Human pride is utterly shattered, it is devastated, when we understand in the depths of our souls the infinite and intrinsic fullness that is God's alone for all eternity. It not only is not about us; it is not of us, or from us, or because of us! All that we are—every quality that we possess; all that we have—every good and worthwhile characteristic; and all that we can do—every ability, both in its kind and in its degree – all are gifts to us from God. We simply cannot rightfully take credit for anything.

### 4. Why does God call us to pray?

Does God benefit from our prayers? Does he learn new things? Think of it, in Matt 6, in light of Jesus telling us not to worry since the Father already knows what we need, you might think that he'd teach regarding prayer, "don't bother." But God invented prayer as a tool, a mechanism, for drawing us close to him, in sensed dependency, trust, hope, faith, love, longing, anticipation. It is for relationship—for our relationship with him!

### 5. Why does he require our worship?

- a. It is our highest duty to worship God alone, for in him alone is the fullness of infinite perfection. Hence, Isa 42:8; 1 Cor 10:31.
- b. It is our greatest delight to worship God alone, for from him alone do we receive the fullness of everlasting joy and satisfaction. Hence, Isa 55:1-3; John 15:11.
- c. It is our ultimate destiny to worship God alone, for to him alone are we drawn to know the intimacy of his glorious presence. Hence, Isaiah 11:9; John 17:24.

## V. Conclusion

- Marvel at the glory of God's supremacy
- Be humbled by the glory of God's supremacy
- Find your true joy & satisfaction in the glory of God's supremacy
- Love, obey and worship God to the glory of God's supremacy