

Beholding the God of Self-Sufficient Fullness

Isaiah 40:12-17; 27-31

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I. Introduction to God's Self-Sufficiency

- Our Culture's Mandate of *Self*-esteem vs. the Bible's Mandate of *God*-esteem
- God's Self-Sufficiency Defined: God possesses within Himself, intrinsically and eternally, every quality in infinite measure.

II. God's Self-Sufficiency Exhibited (Isa 40: 12-14)

A. God's Immensity and Power (40: 12)

B. God's Knowledge and Wisdom (40: 13-14)

C. Implications for Us (40: 15-17, 27-31)

D. Other Key Texts:

Psalm 50

Acts 17: 24-25

III. God's Self-Sufficiency Denied

A. The Process View of God

B. The Popular Evangelical View of God

IV. Implications and Applications of God's Self-Sufficiency

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

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 true 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?

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 his purpose in creating and redeeming 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 instructed and 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 blessing 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 his *The Problem of Pain*, says that God's love is not like ours, helping another while needing also to be helped. No, God's love, says Lewis, is "bottomlessly selfless, by very definition; it has everything to give and nothing to receive" (p. 50).

2. Why does God demand our obedience?

Because he loves us and wants our best, and because he knows that our only true joy is found when we follow in his ways, he demands (yes, demands!) that we obey him. His commandments lead us to life. That is, His demands are given as from 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 should want to go if we knew what we wanted" (p. 52). As he says in his sermon, "The Weight of Glory," 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 he intends that some of his work be done in and through others, by calling and equipping and using 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 we ever are or ever do.

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, Isa 11:9; John 17:24.

V. Conclusion

Marvel at the glory of God's self-sufficient fullness; be humbled by the glory of God's self-sufficient fullness; find your true joy and satisfaction in the glory of God's self-sufficient fullness; and love, obey and worship God to the glory of God's self-sufficient fullness.

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