

Systematic Theology

Week 9

CHBC

26 July 15

## God's Plan of Redemption Part IV

### *Death and Glorification*

#### Introduction

As we've been working through God's plan of redemption, last week, with John Joseph one of our newly recognized pastors, we considered God's glorious work to adopt rebellious sinners into his own family, to then sanctify them, and to preserve them unto the end.

Yet as we care for people and live out the Christian life, perseverance can be a troubling and trying topic. I'm guessing most of us have acquaintances and family and friends who have "fallen away" — they've left the faith. And even in our last members' meeting we had one of our own who had renounced the faith. While this causes us great sorrow, it should not come as a great surprise. For not all who have ever professed faith in Christ will be saved. False-professions are made; short-term enthusiasts fall away (Mt 13.20-22); and not all who say "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 7.21-23). And whether it is the pain of trials, the enticement of sin, or the despair of nagging doubts — finishing the race and fighting the good fight often feels like a battle too great for us.

But our hope is not that we persevere perfectly. Our hope is that God will preserve his people, amen? Let me repeat that: our hope is not that we preserve perfectly, because as John MacArthur says, if we could lose our salvation we would. But our hope is that God will preserve his people. He will finish this work he began in us (Phil. 1:6). Not one Christian will be lost. Not one will be left behind. Our savior says, "*And this is the will of the one who sent me — that I should not lose one person of every one he has given me, but raise them all up at the last day*" (Jn 6.39, NET). "*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand*" (Jn 10.28-29). Let's please notice something here of the

character of our savior. Notice how confident he is about securing our salvation! I don't know about you but when things try me in the Christian life — I get scared. I get discouraged. Like a kid afraid of monsters who refuses to go to sleep, I refuse to rest and trust something other than myself. But Jesus isn't like that! Brothers and sisters ours is a confident savior! Rejoice in that this morning! He says *"all that the father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out"* (John 6:37). What a promise. What an invitation. Maybe you're here visiting this morning – with a friend or you just wanted to check Christianity out. I just want to reiterate that promise and invite you to trust in it. Jesus will never — *never* — cast you out if you come to him in repentance and faith. Seek to understand that means in the morning service.

But maybe you're a Christian, or you want to be one, but you think you've committed the "unpardonable sin"? For, a long time, I was worried about having committed this sin. Are we damned beyond forgiveness? In Mt. 12.31, Jesus says, blasphemy against the Spirit will never be forgiven. But he's not referring to "really bad" sins like murder (Moses, David, even Paul were murderers), or adultery (David), or suicide. The Bible makes no distinction between mortal and venial sins. In context, blasphemy of the HS is to willfully, defiantly, and persistently attribute to Satan what is undeniably the work of God. To quote another, *"Blasphemy of the HS is not a one-time, momentary slip or inadvertent mistake in judgment, but a persistent, life-long rebellion in the face of inescapable truth. Blasphemy of the HS is not a careless act but a calloused attitude. The Pharisees had seen Jesus heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, teach the Sermon on the Mount, give sight to the blind, heal the paralytics. Blasphemy of the HS, therefore, is not just unbelief but unashamed unbelief that arises not from ignorance of what is true but in defiance of what one knows beyond doubt to be true. It is not mere denial, but determined denial... Blasphemy of the HS is by definition, unrepentant repudiation of the HS, and unrepentant identification of His work with the work of the devil."* (Sam Storms)

Drawing a parallel between the stubborn religious leaders of Jesus' day and our day is difficult. Maybe a good example is the unrepentant church leader who rejects what he knows to be true of God, and leads others to do the same. It's tough to say. But we can say with Rom 10.13, *"that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord (in repentance and faith) will be saved."* That includes men who have denied Jesus publicly (like Peter), and ordered others

to be put to death (like Paul). Isn't encouraging the heroes of the faith are great sinners too. If there's hope for them, there's hope for us.

Before we move on, any final questions on perseverance or blasphemy of the HS? *[Just one last thing – if you are at all worried about having blasphemed the Holy Spirit, chances are you actually haven't given that you're showing sensitivity to this sin. But if you have any more questions about it please feel free to email us, our contact info is on the back of the hand out, or talk to an elder].*

*Let's move on to point 2 on the front of your handout: **Death***

Every day we watch the news, we encounter enemies. Despite being in the mountains of Utah, my wife and I still heard of the tragic murders of those in the movie theater in Louisiana. Reading the paper, we hear of ISIS militants, home-grown terrorists in Tennessee or South Carolina, Iranian bombs. These are all enemies. But according to the Bible the last great enemy we face in this life is not terrorism, a political regime, or those bent on destroying freedom of speech and religion. The last great enemy, according to the Bible, is death itself. 1 Cor 15.26 says, *"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."*

But increasingly our culture views death not as an enemy, but as a friend, maybe even our final hope. It was for 29-year-old Brittany Maynard, who chose the relief of death over the trials of life. Whether we're talking physician assisted suicide (also known as "death with dignity," if there is such a thing) or 50 million aborted babies since *Wade v. Roe*, death is to be welcomed not feared, cherished not abhorred. By the way, the number of aborted babies represents about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of our current population. And if you've seen the Planned Parenthood videos as of late, it's undeniable that our culture *at least* has a calloused and casual view of death.

*But the Bible (SLOW)...* presents a different view of death. It's not "passing away and passing on" (Mary Baker Eddy). It's not sailing blissfully off into the sunset. The Scriptures make clear that death is a curse (Gen 3.19). It's a direct consequence and punishment of human sin. The wages of sin is death (Rom 6.23). And all die, because all have sinned (Rom 5.12). Death is not natural. It's not peaceful. It's tragic and terrifying, for it reflects God's right judgment of us in our sin. There is nothing romantic about death in the Bible. It's so horrible that even the one who would triumph over it was overcome with grief and anger at the tomb of his friend Lazarus (Jn 11.33-36). Death

was not Lazarus' friendly deliverer, or the portal to a "better life." Looking death in the eye, Jesus saw it for what it was.

The reason we do not mourn as those who have no hope is not because we know death is good, but because we know that God's love and life are more powerful than the jaws of death (1Thess 4.13). Though we feel its bite, Christ has removed the sting of death and we take hope in that (1 Cor 15.54-57).

So (*pause*) as those who have hope, we should consider: What happens when we die? This is point B on the inside of your handout. There has been a popular (and profitable!) market of "heavenly tourism genre" books of late. Right, books like "Heaven Is For Real" that recently came out, speak of people who die and go to heaven and then come back and tell us all these things about it. Brothers and sisters let me be clear: The things those books say are not true. As Jesus says, God's Word is truth (John 17:17). The Bible gives us precious, little details about the state we are in between death and heaven or what's known as "the intermediate state" (that's the first bullet on the inside of your handout, "the intermediate state.") Most of what the Bible says on heaven refers to the everlasting state (what happens after the final resurrection), not the intermediate state (what happens between death and the final resurrection).

But on the intermediate state, the Scriptures *do* say that when we die, our souls and bodies separate as they await that final reunion in the new heavens and new earth. We're not simply in some suspended contemplative space. Nor are we lost souls wandering through the shadows or crossing back and forth on the river Styx. Paul says, "*To be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord*" (2 Cor. 5.8). So when we die, we are made part of the true Zion, alongside "*innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*" like it says in (Heb. 12.22-23). Brothers and sisters, how incredible does that sound — when we die, we will be alongside countless angels at a party in heaven!? Do you ever stop to consider that? I know I haven't enough. I was on a plane when I was preparing for this class and I was looking at the window at 30,000 feet being like where is this party at – pilot take me there!? But Jesus is the true and only pilot who can bring us there, amen? When we die, our souls go immediately to be with Him and enjoy — this is going to be the happiest time, we're going to *enjoy* — continuous, conscious, personal existence with our Lord as we await

resurrection of our bodies on the last day. I should just stop the class here and we can just sit and marvel.

But some have taken the Bible's image of "sleep," which is a reference to death as supporting a kind of "*soul sleep*" — that's the second bullet on the left hand side on the inside of your handout. According to this view, Christians are in some suspended state of unconsciousness until the final judgment. If you want a fun word of the day, it's called *psychopannychism* (psych=soul, + abbreviations of all+night). Fun theological fact for the day: John Calvin wrote his very first theological tract *against* this view. For the Bible speaks of the intermediate state as a conscious existence, not a sleepy one, not soul sleep. After all, consider what Jesus says to the thief on the cross: "Today, you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23.43). Praise God that when we die we don't just enter some ethereal comma! We enter into the presence of Jesus!

Yet others have suggested the intermediate state affords all the opportunity of *postmortem salvation* – or, in other words, that we can be saved after we die; this is the third bullet in this section. This view is especially attractive for those who want to say everybody must repent and believe in order to be saved, and yet they want a way for people to be saved, though they have never heard of Christ in this life. Recall the parable of the rich man in Lk 16.19-31. There was no second chance, no post-mortem opportunity for that rich man who rejected God. And of course, no one is condemned merely for consciously rejecting Christ. Rather, all of us are condemned and lost because of conscious, willful sin. Right, Paul says in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words our problem is not fundamentally that we don't know Jesus, but that we have consciously and willfully sinned and thus deserve God's wrath. A wrath we will face in the next life if we don't turn to Jesus in this life; this life is the only chance we got, which is why we should be so urgent to share the good news. Heb 9.27 says, "*it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*"

This means that the idea of *purgatory* is *not* consistent with the intermediate state. Purgatory is the Roman Catholic doctrine, which teaches that though Christ has forgiven the guilt of sin, the punishment for sins must be suffered before one can be fully cleansed and enter into heaven. Purgatory is a place of purification and preparation. The duration and intensity of those sufferings is determined by sins committed. One's stay in purgatory may be lessened by the prayers of those living, the good works of the faithful, or the mass. The

Pope has jurisdiction over purgatory; any indulgence (money) given to the church on behalf of the dead may lighten one's suffering, or eliminate them all together. This doctrine, this abuse of Scripture is what led to Luther's 95 thesis and spurred the Reformation. And to be clear: there is no Scriptural warrant for purgatory. The best the Church of Rome can do is point to II Maccabees 12:42-45, which itself is not canonical (By that I mean it's not in the Bible), nor does it even clearly teach the doctrine. Therefore, there is no point in praying for the dead, much less purchasing indulgences or expending efforts to secure an early release of the departed from the punishments of purgatory.

Lastly, the intermediate state rejects the very notion of *annihilationism*, where those who die in unbelief are annihilated, body and soul completely destroyed, whereas believers eternally exist with the Lord. (Just so you're tracking with me, we're on the second to last bullet point on the inside of your handout, left-hand side). Though *Annihilationism* is supported by Seventh-Day Adventists and some prominent British evangelicals (Lewis, Stott), it is *not* supported by Scripture. Yes, even C.S. Lewis gets things wrong.

We know this because speaking of the end times, Daniel writes, "*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Dan. 12:2). Sinners and saints will continue to exist forever. This is an important truth because it teaches us to care for people because we know they're going to exist forever and we want them to exist in God's joy, not under his wrath. So when we're dealing with someone, especially someone difficult – maybe someone we don't really like, maybe our spouse – just remember: this is a person; there might very well be eternal ramifications of our dealing with them. This fact brothers and sisters – that people last forever is why — one of the most loving things Jesus ever did was talk not merely about eternal life, but about eternal punishment, too (Mt 25:46), where the fires of hell are "eternal" and "unquenchable" (Mt 3:12; 18:8; 25:41). If anyone comes at you and says Jesus never talked about hell, you can simply rest assured that they haven't read the Bible that well; In love, Jesus clearly talked about it, and the references are right there on your handout for you to look up.

Brothers and sisters, though death is the last great enemy, Christ has conquered death. Thus the Christian can face death not finally in fear, but with the hope that death won't have the last word. Thus we, can say with

Paul, *“to live is Christ, to die is gain”* (Phil 1.21). We can join Paul in his song, *“O death where is your victory?”* (1 Cor. 15:55). In the morning service we’ll sing, that we will glory in our Redeemer, who crushed the power of sin and death. Amen.

Let’s move on to point III on the right hand side on the inside of your handout: **Glorification.**

Believe it or not, going to heaven when we die is not our final hope. Right, we don’t just want to be in the intermediate state; we want to be in the final state. That final state is Glorification. Glorification is the final hope of the Christian.

Glorification is “the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive -- thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like His own.”

This is the big one, the final step. At one moment, we will be completely redeemed, completely free from death and sin, and free purely to praise God in His very presence. We will be perfected.

If you are going to choose a text to meditate on glorification, all you have to do is turn to I Corinthians 15. In it Paul says, *“Behold! I tell you a mystery...we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed”* (I Cor. 15:51-52).

But how do our bodies change and become glorified when they are 6 feet underground and eaten by worms? This is likely the question that Paul is responding to in I Corinthians. He answers it by using the analogy of a seed that needs to be buried in order to become the plant it was made to be. While not conclusive, it is suggestive that there will be some form of continuity with our old bodies once they become glorified (Rom. 8:11). If I die tomorrow will I have a 25-year-old’s body in heaven? I don’t know.

Scripture simply tells us that our bodies will be like Christ’s. Philippians 3:21, says that Christ *“will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”* Notice how again, we can take no credit; Christ is the actor in

that sentence, *he* is the transformer our bodies.

To be clear: Glorification applies to our *physical* bodies. Paul says, “*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable*” (I Cor. 15:42). This means that our bodies will be like Christ’s not because we will look like him, but because our bodies will not wear out, grow old, be sick, or obtain injury (Rev. 21:3-5). This is why the Scriptures say that, “when we see Jesus, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2).”

Our glorified bodies will be perfected. We can rejoice that our new bodies will be made in God’s image, as He originally intended it, being conformed to the likeness of Christ.

Are you eagerly hoping for Christ’s return when salvation will be complete and our bodies will be like Christ’s?

I want to conclude today with this question: Are there specific times in life that have caused you to desire heaven more? Anyone willing to share?

*[If there’s still time] You know, one of the beauties of being a part of a local church is having friendships with people unlike you primarily because you both believe in Jesus. And I just want to say how encouraged I am as a young man, when I see older saints, whose bodies are breaking, and aching and being riddled with pain – these saints are a great testimonies of hope in glorification. Of a hope that one day these bodies won’t break. Cancer won’t be able to get in them. You’ll never look in the mirror again and wish you were a different size. Because every time you look at yourself, you can be reminded that you are Christ’s, and he is yours. What a hope. Mark recently tweeted, “Our examples of enduring hardship are often more powerful than our stories of success and triumph.” Keep enduring brothers and sisters. **Next week we’ll be talking about the doctrine of the church, our brothers and sisters with whom we gather to rejoice in this hope, but for now let me pray for us.***

## PRAYER

NICK’S NOTES

### 8. GLORIFICATION

(1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:14-16; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:53; Rev. 21:35)



Glorification is that saving blessing wherein believers enjoy the full and final realization of our union with Christ, in which the saints will be transformed so as to bear perfectly the image of Jesus Christ for eternity.

Glorification is “the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of all believers for all time who have died, reunites them with their souls, and changes the bodies of all believers who remain alive -- thereby giving all believers at the same time perfect resurrection bodies like His own.”

At one moment, we will be completely redeemed, completely free from death and sin, and free purely to praise God in His very presence. We will be perfected.

### **Philippians 3:20-4:1**

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. **4:1** Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

### **Romans 8:23**

<sup>23</sup> Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

### **1 Cor. 15:51-53**

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- <sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

The church does not await the return of Christ so that we may be united to him; rather, the church is united to Christ, and so eagerly awaits the consummation of this union.