

# **SOTERIOLOGY: The Glorious Doctrine of God's Great Salvation**

## **Lesson 11: Eternal Life and Glorification**

*<sup>28</sup> ... we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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)*

The application of salvation takes place in HISTORY. In time and space God calls, regenerates, converts, justifies, adopts, sanctifies, and preserves his people. However, God's plan of salvation is larger than redemptive history. It is rooted in eternity PAST, where God chose a people for himself and planned to join them to his Son (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9). And it culminates in eternity FUTURE, when God's people will be glorified and enjoy eternal life in its fullness. (1 Cor 15:42-44, Titus 3:6-7).

### **I. What do we mean by "Glorification"?**

**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, and 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. (Wayne Grudem)

The glorification of the Christian is that we shall share in God's glory when we are in our resurrected bodies in the new heavens and new earth, experiencing deeper fellowship with God and not being at risk of falling away into sin, God's glory finally being "all in all." (Gerald Bray)

### **The New Hampshire Confession, XVII: Of The World to Come**

*We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness.*

### **II. Stages of our Glorification**

#### **Stage 1: The INTERMEDIATE State**

When a believer dies, his immaterial soul/spirit departs his sin-cursed body and enters Christ's IMMEDIATE presence in glory.

*<sup>42</sup> And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." <sup>43</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)*

If we use the simplest of definitions for both paradise and heaven, we see that they are synonymous. They both refer to a place of happiness that is filled with the good presence of God. (see: 2 Cor. 12:4)

At this transformation personal IDENTITY continues.

*<sup>17</sup> ... Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup> And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. <sup>3</sup> And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. (Matt 17:1-3)*

Here, believers will know that they are at HOME with the Lord.

*<sup>8</sup> Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (2 Cor 5:8)*

This is not a perfect or FINAL state, however. We will long for reunion with our bodies.

From the Westminster Shorter Catechism, #37:

Q: "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?"

A: "The souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness, and to immediately pass into glory: and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

We are fine using the term "HEAVEN" of this preliminary, bodiless state of glory.

## **Stage 2: The RESURRECTION of the Body**

At the SECOND COMING of Christ the bodies of Saints will be reunited with their spirits. This is "glorification proper".

*<sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ... (Titus 2:13)*

This great event is a CORPORATE experience that all believers will enjoy together. At this moment, we will all be conformed to the image of the resurrected Christ. Scripture teaches that we will share in Christ's glory. As Christ was glorified when He received a glorious body and returned to heaven, so will we receive the same:

*<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3:20-21)*

*<sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> 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. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*"Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:50-55)*

## **Stage 3: Our VINDICATION at the Judgment Seat of Christ**

At the *bema*, the CHARACTER of believers works will be examined:

*<sup>10</sup> Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; <sup>11</sup> for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." <sup>12</sup> So then each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Rom 14:10-12)*

*<sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— <sup>13</sup> each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup> If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)*

*<sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Cor 5:10)*

The criterion for this judgment is weighed heavily by the MOTIVES that drive our lives and service:

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (1 Cor 4:5)*

This judgment is not to be DREADED by believers. One way or the other, Christ will be GLORIFIED and we will be REWARDED. (1 Cor 9:25, 1 Thess 2:19, 2 Tim 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Pet 5:4)

#### **Stage 4: Our ENTRY into Heaven**

As embodied spirits made perfect, believers are now granted access into the eternal state where we will dwell with God FOREVER in the New Heavens and New Earth.

*<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup> And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. (Rom 8:20-24a)*

*<sup>21</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (Rev 21:1-3)*

Humanity's first habitat was a richly adorned GARDEN. Redeemed humanity's final dwelling will be a CITY of incomparable glory with a garden, a river of life, and the tree of life! It is the final RESTORATION of all things to God's intended design and the great aim of our salvation!

### **III. A Summary**

Our glory is about RESTORATION ...

Our glory in Christ is PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE ...

Our glory is about TRANSFORMATION ...

Our glory is about PARTICIPATION ...

Our glory is about ETERNAL LIFE ...

Our glory is about RENEWED CREATION ...

Our glory is about ENJOYING CHRIST ...

#### IV. A Concluding Challenge:

**“Would you be happy in heaven if Christ were not there?”**

*The critical question for our generation—and for every generation—is this: If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven, if Christ was not there?*

*Today—as in every generation—it is stunning to watch the shift away from God as the all-satisfying gift of God’s love. It is stunning how seldom God himself is proclaimed as the greatest gift of the gospel. But the Bible teaches that the best and final gift of God’s love is the enjoyment of God’s beauty. “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple” (Ps. 27:4). The best and final gift of the gospel is that we gain Christ. “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (Phil. 3:8). This is the all-encompassing gift of God’s love through the gospel—to see and savor the glory of Christ forever.*

*In place of this, we have turned the love of God and the gospel of Christ into a divine endorsement of our delight in many lesser things, especially the delight in our being made much of. The acid test of biblical God-centeredness—and faithfulness to the gospel—is this: Do you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because, at the cost of his Son, he enables you to enjoy making much of him forever? Does your happiness hang on seeing the cross of Christ as a witness to your worth, or as a way to enjoy God’s worth forever? Is God’s glory in Christ the foundation of your gladness?*

*From the first sin in the Garden of Eden to the final judgment of the great white throne, human beings will continue to embrace the love of God as the gift of everything but himself. Indeed there are ten thousand gifts that flow from the love of God. The gospel of Christ proclaims the news that by his death he has purchased ten thousand blessings for his bride. But none of these gifts will lead to final joy if they have not first led to God. And not one gospel blessing will be enjoyed by anyone for whom the gospel’s greatest gift was not the Lord himself ...*

*... When I say that “God Is the Gospel”, I mean that the highest, best, final, decisive good of the gospel, without which no other gifts would be good, is the glory of God in the face of Christ revealed for our everlasting enjoyment. The saving love of God is God’s commitment to do everything necessary to enthrall us with what is most deeply and durably satisfying, namely himself.”*

- John Piper, **God is the Gospel**, Introduction

*The best news of the Christian gospel is that the supremely glorious Creator of the universe has acted in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection to remove every obstacle between us and himself so that we may find everlasting joy in seeing and savoring his infinite beauty. The saving love of God is his doing whatever must be done, at great cost to himself, and for the least deserving, so that he might enthrall them with what will make them supremely happy forever, namely, himself. Therefore, the gospel of God and the love of God are expressed finally and fully in God's gift of himself for our everlasting pleasure. "In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psa 16:11).*

- John Piper, **God is the Gospel**, ch. 11