

Glorification Message

This is the 12th message in our series on the doctrines of salvation. We've talked of many marvelous truths, of work that God had done in eternity past, his cross-work 2000 years ago, and the work he is doing now in our lives. Tonight, we're going to look far ahead in time, far forward, into eternity to come. And we have twenty minutes to do it in. So let's begin...

Romans 8:29-30 says:

29 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. 30 And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

We have already discussed many of the truths encapsulated in this package. Predestination in unconditional election. Conformed to the image of his Son in sanctification. The calling of by irresistible grace, and justification through his death on the cross. Finally, in the same breath, Paul says that those whom God justified he also glorified. And that is our topic for tonight: being glorified, or “glorification”.

So, we going to cover 4 points tonight, namely:

1. What is glorification?
2. When will be we glorified?
3. What will it be like to be glorified?
4. Who will be glorified?

Question 1. What is glorification?

The two verses we looked at summarize the steps of redemption: predestination, calling, justification, glorification. The end result, from v. 29, is “to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Thus to be glorified is to be completely conformed to the image of Christ.

There are two parts to that: the internal shaping of our spirit, and the external transformation of our bodies. If you're like me, you tend to think about lot about the inside transformation --- “conformed to the image of his Son” ... “do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” --- but think very little about this external transformation.

When I was first asked to take on this topic, I was quite excited. I was looking forward to talking about when we are finally done with sin, done with the sin nature, and have our hearts and minds completely transformed and made holy.

I was quite surprised then to find out that the doctrine of glorification is focused on the body. Not the transformed heart, but the resurrected body. Not the mind made holy, but the body made imperishable.

Julian has already taught about the crucial transformation of the heart when he preached on sanctification, the process of being conformed to God's image, a process that one day – praise God! – will be complete and we will be forever done with sin, done with trespass, done with iniquity! In Christ, the penalty for sin has been paid for every Christian, and one day, in glory, the consummation of our change will be attained and we will never sin again! Oh, what a day that will be!

But we will not be just sinless spirits for all eternity. Our life is not purely spiritual ... it is also physical. God loves creation, he loves matter, he loves stuff. And he will take these bodies we now inhabit, and redeem them completely, make them whole and perfect, and in these we will live with him forever.

That's what glorification means. Here is Wayne Grudem's definition:

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.

This blessing of a final, physical resurrection and restoration is seen both in the Old and New Testaments.

Job 19:25-27

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, 27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

In Daniel's prophecy of the future, we read:

Daniel 12:2

2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Martha, trained by Old Testament teachings, tells Jesus that she knows that her deceased brother Lazarus will rise again.

John 11:24

24 Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."

In the New Testament, we have much explicit teaching about the glorification of our bodies:

Romans 8:23-24a

23 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. 24 For in this hope we were saved.

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

So, glorification is receiving our resurrected bodies. A restored, renewed, revitalized body! One day you, Christiah, will be a holy, redeemed soul in a perfect, immortal body! Sounds great!

Let me ask you, do you hurt? Do you have pain? I don't mean emotional pain, or heart ache. I mean physical pain. Headaches, bad backs, bad knees, bad lungs, sore joints, creaky muscles, stomach aches, cramping, tremors, spasms, and weaknesses? Maybe you have had or have now even then heavier sufferings in your body: a stroke, a heart attack, cancer?

Let me assure you that if you are a believer in Christ, all of those things are temporary. They will all be cured. They are all given to you for a time, but only for a time. You're going to get a new body.

So, when does this glorification take place?

Question 2. When Will We Be Glorified?

When we die, our souls are separated from our bodies. While our bodies are left here on earth to return to dust, our souls are immediately transferred into God's presence.

Luke 23:43

And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

2 Corinthians 5:8

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

The Bible does not teach any such concept as purgatory, a place of suffering where souls are purified from sin, such as the Roman Catholic Church holds to.

Nor does it teach any sort of "soul sleep," where the believer's soul becomes asleep, unconscious, until the return of Christ. The believing soul comes directly into the presence of God, to be with Christ in Paradise, in Heaven. Conversely, the unbelieving soul goes directly into eternal punishment.

But, although there is some uncertainty on this issue, the soul in the presence of God is without a body, it is a disembodied being. This is what some theologians call the "intermediate state," the state of the soul of a believer who has died before the final consummation.

So, when does the "intermediate state" end? When will these souls of believers be reunited with their perfected, resurrected bodies?

1 Corinthians 15:50-53

⁵⁰I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in 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. ⁵³For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

So the bodies of believers who have died will be glorified, resurrected, when Jesus returns, his second coming, the last trumpet. The souls of those believers will return with Christ and will be eternally reunited with their resurrected bodies. Similarly, those believers who are still alive when Christ returns will have their bodies instantly transformed to that resurrection state, without having to go through death. And so all believers will experience the joy of living in their perfected, resurrection bodies.

Question 3. What will it be like to be glorified?

What is a glorified, a resurrected body like?

1 Corinthians 15:35-49

³⁵But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” ³⁶You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. ³⁹For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. ⁴⁰There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. ⁴¹There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

⁴²So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

Our resurrected bodies will be imperishable. Not able to perish. Think of what that means. They will never be subject to sickness, or disease, or malady, or syndrome. They will be completely healthy and strong forever.

And they will not age! Imagine that! Do you feel yourself getting older? Do you notice that you don't always have the energy you used to? The stiffness that takes some time to go away? That old sports injury which flares up sometimes? Difficulty in walking, or dressing, or eating?

As I've gotten older, I've come to realize that as you age, you become more and more familiar with pain. Things hurt that you didn't even know you had. What you could get away with a few years ago becomes almost impossible now.

I remember my grandparents, who for breakfast had to take a dozen pills of various sorts. Now, I too, have a desk drawer full of hypodermic needles, serums, and all sorts of pills – yellow ones, blue ones, white ones. All to resist the slow ravages of arthritis in my body. While the medicine works pretty well, there is no cure, just a slowing of the progression of the disease.

I'm getting older, and so are you. And the problem with age, is that it only gets worse, not better. There is no healing, no recovery from getting old, from age, from the progression of the ravages of time.

But, in fact, there is a cure for aging! Growing older is temporary! Being old is only for a season, a season that will pass! If you are a believer in Christ, then one day you won't be old, or older, or sick, or weary, or in pain, anymore. Your body will be strong again, healthier than ever, suitable for an eternity in the presence and service of God.

And, in fact, all of creation will be renewed as well.

Romans 8:19-21

¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

In this renewed creation, the effects of the curse, of the Fall of Adam, will be removed. There will be a new heavens, and a new earth, one that is again “very good” in the sight of God, as it was in the beginning. And in this renewed world, we will live in our imperishable, immortal, perfected bodies. Yet, far more important than perfected creation and resurrected bodies, is the fact that God himself will dwell with us, and we will rejoice in his presence forever and ever.

Which brings us to our last question:

Question 4: Who will be glorified?

John 5:28-29

²⁸Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

In this passage, Jesus tells us that everyone will be resurrected. Everyone who has ever lived will be granted a resurrection body, whether believer or no. But this is not the same as being glorified.

The believer, who is the one who has “done good” because of the work of Jesus on his behalf, will be resurrected to life, being granted his or her own body redeemed, restored and perfected. This body is suited to dwelling forever in the presence of God and in his glorious creation.

But the unbeliever, who does not repent of sin and turn in faith to God, this is the one who will be judged on his actions and condemned as the one who has done evil. His or her resurrection will to be judgment, and that individual will be equipped with a body designed to permit eternal suffering under the wrath of God in hell.

If you're here tonight, and you aren't repentant for your sin, and you're not looking to Christ for forgiveness and righteousness, I urge you to hear this warning. All the beautiful things we've talked of tonight, they are not for you. Your future is one of vast darkness and eternal suffering. Flee from that future. Turn to Jesus, the one who said that whosoever will may come to him, and that he will not reject any who turn to him. Repent of your sin, beg God to forgive you, and look to him to redeem you and rule over you, and you will be saved. And one day, you will be resurrected to life, life forever, rejoicing in the presence of God!