

No.19, The Believer's Final State – Glory

In a number of studies the focus has been upon the state of grace into which men are brought according to the eternal purpose of God. Those whom God foreloved He also predetermined to be conformed to Christ's image. Therefore, He calls them by His Spirit through the power of regeneration and introduces them to the state of grace, resulting in their union with Christ and all the blessings that such a union brings. Much more could be said about the state of grace, involving such areas of study as justification, adoption, and sanctification. However, we will conclude this study by giving some attention to the final state that marks the experience of the child of God, namely the state of glory or glorification.

As we have noted, Christ accomplished redemption on behalf of His people through both His sinless life and His atoning death. But He then applies that redemption to His people in a series of divine acts, the last of which is glorification. As Dr. John Murray once put it – "Glorification is the final phase of the application of redemption." Some basic facts about glorification should be noted:

- (a) Glorification is the attainment of the divine purpose to which God's people were appointed – i.e. conformity to the image of Christ, Rom 8: 29 & Eph 1: 4, 5. Therefore, glorification will undoubtedly take place.
- (b) Glorification was therefore purchased by the vicarious work of Christ. See Rom 8: 32 where it is stated that Christ was not spared but was delivered up for His people, i.e. to death; and, therefore, having delivered Christ up God will through Christ give His people all things. See also John 17: 4 – since Christ finished His vicarious work He is able to pray for the glorifying of His people, v.v. 22, 24.
- (c) Glorification is extended to the saints because of their union with Christ. Union with Christ is the basis of every aspect of God's grace in the lives of His people, including their glorification. See Rom 8: 17 – believers are joint-heirs with Christ; thus while in this life they have to suffer for His sake, the day comes when they will be "glorified together" – that is together with Christ. The glory that He has been given they will be given because they are joined to Him and are in union with Him.

In the light of these basic truths about glorification the question then arises as to when glorification actually occurs. And the answer to that question is the revelation of what glorification actually is. Note the following.

1. Glorification is not the blessed state into which believers enter at death.

When believers die they enter into a state of blessedness: (a) at death their souls are fully sanctified & purged from sin, Heb 12: 23; (b) these disembodied souls go immediately to be with Christ, 2 Cor 5: 8. See Shorter Catechism Q. 37 & answer for a declaration of the believer's entrance into this blessed state. *However, this transformation at death is not glorification.*

2. Glorification has in view the destruction of death.

The redemption purchased by Christ for His people is not only redemption from death but from its consequences too including death. Glorification will bring about the overthrow of death and the complete & final redemption of the whole person body & soul. However, at the decease of a believer he or she is not fully delivered from death for the body continues under the power of death, that last enemy yet to be destroyed. Therefore, while at death the souls of His people live on in bliss, their bodies turn to dust, which means that nothing short of the resurrection & the abolition of death can constitute the glorification to which God intends His people to come, v.54.

3. All believers will enter upon glorification simultaneously.

This is clear from the fact that glorification will not occur until the resurrection of the bodies of the dead saints and the transformation of the bodies of the living saints. That event will occur for all the saints together at the same time, with no priority for one above the other, 1 Cor 15: 51, 52.

This again shows that the death of the believer and his blessedness is not glorification. Death for the believer is highly individualised. Each believer dies at his appointed time, and thus has his own time to depart and be with Christ, 2 Tim 4: 6 & 2 Pet 1: 15. But this is not the case with glorification – there is only one point for the glorifying of the entire body of Christ, 1 Thess 4: 15-17.

4. Glorification is inseparably linked with the coming of Christ in glory.

The Lord's return will be the grand finale of the whole drama of redemption. Christ will come in the glory of the Father and in His own glory, Titus 2: 13. But this appearance in glory by Christ will be coincidental with the glorifying of His people. See Rom 8: 17, 18 – note in v.17 that the saints & Christ will be glorified together. In other words the glorifying of the saints has no meaning apart from the appearance of Christ in His glory at His coming. Thus, the coming of Christ is indispensable to the glorifying of the Lord's people, which means that the time when the entire Church will be glorified is firmly fixed to coincide with the return of the Lord, 1 Pet 4: 13.

5. Glorification is also inseparably linked with the renewal of creation.

This fact also assists us in pinpointing the time for the glorifying of the saints. Scripture teaches that creation is going to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, Rom 8: 21. Notice that creation will enter into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." The glorification of the saints will bring in what will essentially be the

glorifying of creation. Note v.23 – the groaning of the saints will not end until the resurrection of the body which will occur at Christ's coming, implying that creation will be released from its bondage at that time also.

Rev. John Greer