**Theology**

**Introduction**

Each year in our Village Groups, we spend four weeks looking at *theology*. Don't let that term scare you! Theology simply means “the study of God,” and that's something all Christians can learn to enjoy. In fact, Jeremiah 9:23-24 tells us that understanding God is something we can boast about: *but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me* (v. 24).

Jeremiah doesn't mean “boasting” in the proud, self-righteous way that too often describes how we react to an increase in our theological knowledge. Rather, the study of God and His works should lead us to humility, trust, worship, and love for Him and our fellow man. That will be our aim as we study and apply what the Bible says about God, His work, and our place in it.

With this in mind, we will study theological concepts that describe different parts of our *salvation*. Think of "salvation" as an umbrella term. It's more than just forgiveness of our sins. It also includes things like our election, calling, regeneration, faith and repentance, conversion, justification, sanctification, perseverance, glorification, and union with Christ. Each of these concepts are like different facets of the same diamond, making the whole more beautiful. Over the next four weeks we will look specifically at *sanctification*, *perseverance*, and *glorification*.

As we study and apply these truths, we'll see that our salvation is even better than we think, and that knowing, trusting, and acting on the reality of it changes our lives.

Before proceeding to the lesson for Week 1, read the following quote from the late pastor and theologian Eugene Peterson, and then discuss with your group why studying doctrine is so important:

"*Our age has developed a loose geniality about what people say they believe. We are especially tolerant in matters of religion. But much of the vaunted tolerance is only indifference. We don't care because we don't think it matters. My tolerance disappears quickly if a person's belief interferes with my life. I am not tolerant of persons who believe that they have as much right to my possessions as I do and proceed to help themselves. I am not tolerant of businesses that believe that their only obligation is to make a profit and that pollute our environment and deliver poorly made products in the process. And [the apostle] John is not tolerant when people he loves are deceived about God, because he knows that such lies will reduce their lives, impair the vitality of their spirits, imprison them in old guilt, and cripple them with anxieties and fears. That is John's position: a lie about God is a lie about life, and he will not have it. Nothing counts more in the way we live than what we believe about God. A failure to get it right in our minds becomes a failure to get it right in our lives. A wrong idea of God translates into sloppiness and cowardice, fearful minds and sickly emotions. One of the wickedest things we can do is to tell people that God is an angry tyrant, because the person who believes it will defensively avoid him if they can. It is equally wicked to tell others that God is a senile grandfather. The person who believes it will live carelessly and trivially with no sense of transcendent purpose. It is wicked to tell a person a lie about God because, if we come to believe the wrong things about God, we will think wrong things about ourselves, and we will live meanly or badly.* ***Telling a person a lie about God distorts reality, perverts life and damages all the processes of living***."[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Theology**

**Week 1—Sanctification**

**Memory Verse:**

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth* (Colossians 3:1-2).

**TRUTH**

Christians know that their salvation, by grace through faith, delivers them from the penalty of sin. Their sins are forgiven, and they will be delivered from God's justice and eternal punishment in hell. This truth is summarized in the doctrine of *justification*, which is covered in other years of our Theology study.

But salvation in its totality is even better than that. Our salvation in Christ doesn't just deliver us from the *penalty* of sin, it also delivers us from the *power* of sin.

Think about it like this: Every Christian, at some point, has been convicted of a particular sin. They want to repent of that sin and do better. They try for a few days or weeks or months but find that they make little progress. As a result, they feel as if they have no power over sin and give up the fight.

Scripture provides us with a powerful answer to that dilemma. Read Colossians 3:1-17 and Romans 6:1-11 and then answer the following questions.

1. What ideas are common to both Colossians 3:1-4 and Romans 6:1-11? What ideas are unique to each?
2. What does it mean that we have died with Christ and been raised with him?
3. According to Romans 6:5-11, what was our relationship to sin before we died to it? How did we die to it? What is our relationship to sin now that we are dead to it?
4. What do we learn about our old self and our new self from Colossians 3:5-11? What tense are these verbs in?

In addition to justification (pardon for the penalty of sin), an important element of the Good News of salvation is *sanctification*. God doesn't just want to deliver us from the penalty of sin, but also from its power. He wants us to be able to experience victory over temptation and to see progress in our walk with Him.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sanctification this way:

*"Sanctification is a work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness."*

The first thing to notice is that some aspects of our salvation, such as regeneration and justification, are instantaneous. But sanctification, while no less a result of God's grace, is a *work*, or a process—sometimes a painfully slow one—by which we grow more and more into who we were truly meant to be in Christ.

We should also notice that it is meant to cover the entirety of who we are. That's why the Catechism says, "renewed in the whole man." Our sin has distorted and broken every part of who we are—our wills, our thinking, our emotions, our desires. Sanctification brings all those parts of us back in line with who we were meant to be as image bearers of God. That means there is no part of our life that we can hold back from God for any reason. It's all His, and He wants to restore and renew all of us—even if that's painful.

This is the process of becoming who you were meant to be in Christ—a restored, loving, obedient, trusting child of God in all parts of your life. When we put it that way, isn’t that what all Christians want? More than reputation, comfort, or riches, the increasingly sanctified life is the good life.

Next week we’ll look at how we grow, but for now we need to see from the passages in Romans and Colossians that by grace we have the power to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God because of our union with Jesus in his death and resurrection. We are not helpless before sin. While we'll never be perfect in this life, we can, by God's grace, make progress in becoming more Christlike because we have died to sin and are no longer enslaved to it. We have put off the old self and put on the new!

**EQUIPPING**

1. Think through sins you have struggled with over the years. Name them here.
2. In what ways have you felt powerless before those sins? Why did you feel that way?
3. What were you telling yourself was true when you gave in?
4. How was that different than the Truth?
5. During those times, would it have made a difference if you really believed what we read in Colossians 3 and Romans 6 say? How?

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. What sins have you struggled with the most this week? Why?
2. What about God have you failed to appreciate most this week? How has that impacted your relationships and decisions?
3. How have you been repenting, believing, and fighting about sins you've confessed in the past to your group?

**MISSION**

1. How would the main idea of this lesson—that we have power to obey God because of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection—help you in talking to your friends about Jesus?
2. What next step can to you take to serve the physical needs of the lost people God has placed in your life? Ask your group to pray for you and to hold you accountable for doing it.

1. What next question can you ask a lost person in your life to point them to God? How can you expose them to God’s grace? Ask your group to pray for you and hold you accountable for doing it.

**SUPPLICATION**

It's important that your group spend time praying together regularly. Below are some suggestions to get you started.

1. What burdens or concerns can your group pray about for you? What are the requests of the others?
2. Spend time praying for the lost people in your lives.
3. Spend time praising God for the power He has given you over sin through your union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

**Theology**

**Week 2—Sanctification (continued)**

Memory Verse:

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory* (Colossians 3:3-4).

**TRUTH**

Last week we looked at our power (by grace) to grow in Christ. This week we want to look at how we do that. The answer is in a seldom used but important word: *mortification*.

Reread Colossians 3:1-17 and then answer the following questions:

1. Verse 5 tells us that our sin is "earthly." What, then, do verses1-2 mean when they instruct us to seek and "set your mind on things above?" What is your mind typically set on?
2. Verses 5 and 8 instruct us to put our sin away or to “put it to death.” What do you think it means to put your sin to death?
3. If we are to forgive as God forgave us, and to let the word of Christ dwell in us, then what sort of messages must we be filling our mind and heart with?

*Mortification* is the word used to refer to the process of putting our sin to death. It comes from a Latin word that literally means "to put to death." We learned last week that we are dead to sin, so mortification is the process of realizing in experience what is already true.

How do we put sin to death? First, by believing that our penalty for sin is paid completely. That is why Scottish minister Thomas Chalmers once wrote, "Thus it is, that the freer the Gospel, the more sanctifying is the Gospel; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness."

In modern day language, this means that the more you understand of God's forgiveness and grace towards you, the more you will want to live faithfully for Him. The English Puritan Thomas Manton wrote, "The more you believe God to be gracious, the more you will want to please Him." If you are finding that you are drawn to the world, then it is quite possible that you are failing to see and believe the beauty of Christ.

Second, we can put sin to death by believing what we learned last week: that sin does not have power over us unless we give it power over us. Too often, we fight sin by simply trying to stop the behavior. But to mortify a sin, or put it to death, we must get below the surface and fight with faith. To kill a plant, you must kill its roots. It's the same with sin. That's because every sin is not just a failure of the will, but a failure of faith.

Sanctification, while by grace, does require effort. (Someone once said, "Grace is opposed to earning, not effort.”) But our effort should not just be aimed at stopping bad behavior. We must make effort to simply *believe* the Gospel at the place where we are tempted so that our sin might be pulled up by the roots. That's why English theologian John Owen wrote, "Our struggle in living the Christian life is not doing, it is believing."

Turn the page to read some excerpts from Pastor Tim Keller’s article “Preaching the Gospel to the Heart.” In these readings, he explains what it means to *mortify* a sin, or put it to death by faith. We'll see that by setting our minds on things above—that is, the great truths of God's grace towards sinners like us—we can begin to kill our sins *at the root*.

**Excerpts from “Preaching the Gospel to the Heart” by Tim Keller**[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Understand the 'Sin under the Sins'**

Here is an excerpt from Martin Luther Treatise Concerning Good Works (1520):

*“All those who do not in all their works or sufferings, life and death, trust in God's favor, grace and good-will, but rather seek His favor in other things or in themselves, do not keep the [First] Commandment, and practice real idolatry, even if they were to do the works of all the other Commandments, and in addition had all the prayers, fasting, obedience, patience, chastity, and innocence of all the saints combined.”*

**Comment:** Luther says if you look to your moral performance as the basis of your relationship with God, then you are breaking the first of the Ten Commandments: "Have no other gods before me." If you fail to grasp and believe the gospel of free justification through Christ's work you violate the first command. How could this be?

*“If we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious and pleased with us, or if we presumptuously expect to please Him through our works, then all [our compliance with the law] is pure deception, outwardly honoring God, but inwardly setting up self as a false [savior]… Note for yourself, then, how far apart these two are: keeping the First Commandment with outward works only, and keeping it with inward [justifying faith]. For this last makes true, living children of God, the other only makes worse idolatry and the most mischievous hypocrites on earth…”*

**Comment:** Luther says that if we obey God's law without a belief that we are already accepted and loved in Christ, then in all our "doing-good" we are really looking to something more than Jesus to be the real source of our meaning, and happiness. We are trusting in our being a good parent, or being a good spouse, or our moral uprightness, or our spiritual performance, or our service to other people as our real "Saviors." If we aren't sure God already loves us in Christ, we will be looking to something else as our foundational significance and worth. This is why Luther says that we are committing idolatry (breaking the First commandment) if we don't thoroughly trust in Christ for our acceptability, even if we are otherwise totally moral and obedient to God.

*"And as this Commandment is the very first, highest and best, from which all the others proceed, in which they exist, and by which they are directed and measured, so also its work, that is, the faith or confidence in God's favor at all times, is the very first, highest and best, from which all others must proceed, exist, remain, be directed and measured…"*

**Comment:** All people sin in general because we are sinners, but why do we sin in any particular instance? Luther indicates the First Commandment is foundational to all the others. Why? Because we will not break Commandments 2-10 unless we are in some way breaking Commandment One and serving some idol. Every sin is rooted in the inordinate lust for something which comes because we are trusting in that thing rather than in Christ for our righteousness or salvation. At the moment we sin it is because we are looking to something to give us what only Jesus can give us. Beneath any particular sin is the general sin of rejecting Christ-salvation and indulging in self-salvation.

# Case study — A Lie

What if you find that you have a habit of lying? What do you do about it?

## Moralistic ways to stop lying:

* Fear: "I must stop doing this because God will punish me, he won't bless me."
* Pride: "I must stop doing this because I'm a good Christian. I don't want to be like the kind of person who lies."

In general, you will find that the more you simply lay Biblical principles on your heart, the more your heart resists it. (Rom.7:21 — Paul says *"When I [most] want to do good evil lies close at hand…"*)

## The gospel way to stop lying:

First, ask the question: "Why am I lying in this particular situation?" The reason we lie (or ever do any sin) is because at that moment there is something we feel that we simply must have and so we lie. One typical reason that we lie (though it is by no means the only one) is because we are deeply fearful of losing face or someone's approval. That means, that the "sin under the sin" of lying is the idolatry of (at that moment) human approval. If we break the commandment against false witness it is because we are breaking the first commandment against idolatry. We are looking more to human approval than to Jesus as a source of worth, meaning and happiness. Under the sin of lying is the failure to rejoice in and believe in our acceptance in Christ. Under the sin of lying is a kind of heart-unbelief in the gospel, whatever we may tell ourselves intellectually. As we will see below, anything you add to Jesus Christ as a requirement for a happy life is a functional salvation, a pseudo-lord, and it is controlling you, whether it be power, approval, comfort or control. The only way to change your habit of lying is to repent of your failure to believe the gospel, that you are not saved and acceptable by pursuing this goal and serving this master, but through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Consider this case study in light of this excerpt from the Belgic Confession (1561):

*Therefore it is so far from being true that his justifying faith makes us remiss in a holy life, that on the contrary without it we would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation.*

**Comment:** Unless we believe the gospel, we will be driven in all we do, whether obeying or disobeying, by pride ("self-love") or fear ("of damnation"). Mere moral effort without the gospel may restrain the heart but cannot truly change the heart. It "jury rigs" the evil of the heart to produce moral behavior out of self-interest. It would be possible to use fear and pride as ways to motivate a person to be honest, but since fear and pride is also the root for lying, it is only a matter of time before such a thin tissue collapses. Luther was right. If you are obeying the law without deep joy in your acceptance in Christ, you are not *loving God with all your heart.* You are not obeying God *for God. You* are being moral so that you can put God in your debt, so he owes you a comfortable life. You are being moral so that you can feel secure in your uprightness. You are being moral in the service of self-salvation, out of the fear and pride that arise without an identity built on Christ in the gospel.

**EQUIPPING**

In other Village Group studies, we have looked at Bob Flayhart's “Gospel Waltz,” the three-step dance of: 1) Repent, 2) Believe, and 3) Fight. This can also be used as a practical way to approach mortification. Pick a sin that you struggle with and answer the following questions to consider how you might begin or continue to mortify that sin.

**Repent**

1. What's the sin you want to combat?
2. What is the "sin under the sin?" What are the reasons you are attracted to that sin? What do you hope to gain by it? (If that question stumps you, remember that people are often most attracted to comfort, approval, control, or power. Is it one of those?)

**Believe**

1. Having identified the sin under the sin, what's a truth about God, what He has done in Christ, or what He will do that combats that lie?
2. What is true of you in the Gospel? How does the Good News of God's grace help you fight the sin under the sin at a heart level?

**Fight**

1. That being true, when and where will you need to trust that truth and what would the resulting actions look like?

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. What sins have you struggled with the most this week? Why?
2. What about God have you failed to appreciate the most this week? How has that impacted your relationships and decisions?
3. How have you been repenting, believing, and fighting about sins you've confessed in the past to your group?

**MISSION**

1. What sins do you need to put to death to better engage in God's mission? What are the sins beneath those sins? What truth do you need to trust to put them to death?
2. What next step can you take to serve the physical needs of the lost people God has placed in your life? Ask your group to pray for you and hold you accountable for doing it.

1. What next question can you ask a lost person in your life to point them to God? How can you expose them to God’s grace? Ask your group to pray for you and hold you accountable for doing it.

**SUPPLICATION**

It's important that your group spend time praying together regularly. Below are some suggestions to get you started.

1. What burdens or concerns can your group pray about for you? What are the requests of the others?
2. Spend time praying for the lost people in your lives.
3. Spend time praising God for who He is and thanking Him for His grace so that He becomes more attractive while sin becomes less attractive.

**Theology**

**Week 3—Perseverance of the Saints**

Memory Verse:

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:6).

**TRUTH**

*If our religion be of our own getting or making, it will perish; and the sooner it goes, the better; but if our religion is a matter of God's giving, we know that He shall never take back what He gives, and that, if He has commenced to work in us by His grace, He will never leave it unfinished."*—Charles Spurgeon

We've been considering the different parts of our salvation and how, all together, they make up a glorious whole. This week we want to look at a doctrine that is commonly called the "Perseverance of the Saints," or the “Eternal Security of the Saints." In practical terms, this doctrine answers the question of whether we can lose our salvation.

1. Have you ever considered this question? What do you think? Can a Christian lose his or her salvation? Why or why not? Write your thoughts below.

Read Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23 and answer the following questions:

1. Describe each type of soil and the people they represent

* Path:

* Rocky ground:

* Thorns:

* Good soil:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the last three? How does this help us understand the people we have known who "left the faith?"

1. Read the article on the following 2 pages by the late theologian R.C. Sproul, which explains the role of grace not only in saving us, but also in *keeping* us.

# Perseverance of the Saints[[3]](#footnote-3)

By R.C. Sproul

Writing to the Philippians, Paul says, "He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it to the end" ([Phil. 1:6](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil.%201.6)). Therein is the promise of God that what He starts in our souls, He intends to finish. So the old axiom in Reformed theology about the perseverance of the saints is this: If you have it—that is, if you have genuine faith and are in a state of saving grace—you will never lose it. If you lose it, you never had it.

We know that many people make professions of faith, then turn away and repudiate or recant those professions. The Apostle John notes that there were those who left the company of the disciples, and he says of them, "Those who went out from us were never really with us" ([1 John 2:19](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%202.19)). Of course, they were with the disciples in terms of outward appearances before they departed. They had made an outward profession of faith, and Jesus makes it clear that it is possible for a person to do this even when he doesn't possess what he's professing. Jesus says, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me" ([Matt. 15:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt.%2015.8)). Jesus even warns at the end of the Sermon on the Mount that at the last day, many will come to Him, saying: "Lord, Lord, didn't we do this in your name? Didn't we do that in your name?" He will send them away, saying: "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you" ([Matthew 7:23](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%207.23)). He will not say: "I knew you for a season and then you went sour and betrayed Me. No, you never were part of My invisible church." The whole purpose of God's election is to bring His people safely to heaven; therefore, what He starts He promises to finish. He not only initiates the Christian life, but the Holy Spirit is with us as the sanctifier, the convictor, and the helper to ensure our preservation.

I want to stress that this endurance in the faith does not rest on our strength. Even after we're regenerated, we still lapse into sin, even serious sin. We say that it is possible for a Christian to experience a very serious fall, we talk about backsliding, we talk about moral lapses, and so on. I can't think of any sin, other than blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that a truly converted Christian is not capable of committing.

We look, for example, at the model of David in the Old Testament. David was surely a man after God's own heart. He was certainly a regenerate man. He had the Spirit of God in Him. He had a profound and passionate love for the things of God. Yet this man not only committed adultery but also was involved in a conspiracy to have his lover's husband killed in war—which was really conspiracy to murder. That's serious business. Even though we see the serious level of repentance to which David was brought as a result of the words of the prophet Nathan to him, the point is that David fell, and he fell seriously.

The apostle Paul warns us against having a puffed-up view of our own spiritual strength. He says, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" ([1 Cor. 10:12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%2010.12)). We do fall into very serious activities. The Apostle Peter, even after being forewarned, rejected Christ, swearing that he never knew Him—a public betrayal of Jesus. He committed treason against His Lord. When he was being warned of this eventuality, Peter said it would never happen. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, Satan would have you and sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, so that when you turn, strengthen the brothers" ([Luke 22:31-32](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2022.31-32)).Peter fell, but he returned. He was restored. His fall was for a season. That's why we say that true Christians can have radical and serious falls but never total and final falls from grace.

I think this little catchphrase, perseverance of the saints, is dangerously misleading. It suggests that the perseverance is something that we do, perhaps in and of ourselves. I believe that saints do persevere in faith, and that those who have been effectually called by God and have been reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit endure to the end.

However, they persevere not because they are so diligent in making use of the mercies of God. The only reason we can give why any of us continue on in the faith is because we have been preserved. So I prefer the term the preservation of the saints, because the process by which we are kept in a state of grace is something that is accomplished by God. My confidence in my preservation is not in my ability to persevere. My confidence rests in the power of Christ to sustain me with His grace and by the power of His intercession. He is going to bring us safely home.

**EQUIPPING**

What difference does this truth make in our life? Consider the following quotes:

“*[For non-reformed theologies], at the end of the day, the security of the believer finally rests with the believer. For those in the opposite camp [Reformed], the security of the believer finally rests with God -- and that, I suggest, rightly taught, draws the believer back to God himself, to trust in God, to a renewed faith that is of a piece with trusting him in the first place.*"—DA Carson

"*If you do not believe in the security of your soul in Christ, tomorrow should hold little but fear and misery and perhaps despair for you. For it may well be the day you commit that sin that will forever sever you from the Savior's love. I can face tomorrow and the day after and the day after that with confidence because I know he will never leave me or for sake me (Hebrews 13:5)*."—Sam Storms

1. In your own words, what are these quotes saying?
2. What difference does it make to you if you are not only saved by grace but also kept by grace?
3. What would a walk with God look like if it were up to us to keep our salvation?

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. What sins have you struggled with the most this week? Why?
2. What about God have you failed to appreciate the most? How has that impacted your relationships and decisions this week?
3. How have you been repenting, believing, and fighting about sins you've confessed in the past to your group?

**MISSION**

1. What next step can you take to serve the physical needs of the lost people God has placed in your life? Ask your group to pray for you and hold you accountable for doing it.

1. What next question can you ask a lost person in your life to point them to God? What can you invite them to expose them to God's grace? Ask your group to pray for you and to hold you accountable for doing it.

**SUPPLICATION**

It's important that your group spend time praying together regularly. Below are some suggestions to get you started.

1. What burdens or concerns can your group pray about for you? What are the requests of the others?
2. Spend time praying for the lost people in your lives.
3. Spend time praising God for His grace that keeps you.

**Theology**

**Week 4—Glorification**

Memory Verse:

*And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified* (Romans 8:30).

**TRUTH**

Over the past few weeks, we've studied how salvation includes not only deliverance from the *penalty* of sin, but also from the *power* of sin. This week we'll look at the salvation doctrine of *glorification*, or the glorious moment when God finally delivers us from even the *presence* of sin.

This is good news indeed, because even as Christians who have been delivered from the power of sin, we see that deliverance only progressively in this life. Even the Apostle Paul exclaimed, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). Those who are in Christ will continue to struggle and fail and long for something greater.

The thing we long for is *glorification*. To understand what it is and why it's so good, we need to step back and see the big picture of mankind. We know from the account in Genesis that God made Adam and Eve in righteousness and holiness. They were able to obey Him perfectly. But they also had the ability to sin. Tragically, that's the path they chose, and they died both spiritually and, eventually, physically.

From the moment of their sin against God, every one of their descendants (except One, who was born of a virgin) was spiritually dead even at conception (Psalm 51:5). Since mankind is spiritually dead by nature, it is not possible for us not to sin.

But those who come to Christ experience rebirth, or regeneration, and become spiritually alive by God’s grace. In Christ, we now can say “no” to sin, but we also retain the ability to sin. That is the state we are now in, but we long for more, don't we?

The *inability* to sin will come when we are glorified. When that happens, we will no longer be able to sin. Forever. The presence of sin in our lives will be eradicated for all eternity.

Theologians explain these truths with the following chart:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pre-Fall Man** | **Post-Fall Man** | **Reborn Man** | **Glorified Man** |
| Able to sin | Able to sin | Able to sin | Able to not sin |
| Able to not sin | Unable to not sin | Able to not sin | Unable to sin |

"*Glorification is the final step in the application of redemption. It will happen when Christ returns and raises from the dead the bodies of 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[[4]](#footnote-4)

When Christians die, their spirits are made perfect and they are immediately in the presence of Christ. This is what Jesus meant when he said to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). It is also what Paul meant when he wrote of his desire to depart to be with Christ (Philippians 1:23).

But humans were never meant to be disembodied spirits. That's why when Christ returns, the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thessalonians 4:16). That is, their bodies will be resurrected. And those resurrection bodies will be better than ever! They will no longer be subject to decay.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 and note how it describes our glorified bodies:

**EQUIPPING**

1. According to Romans 8:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:17, how does this doctrine about the future help us in the present?
2. Is there something you are going through now to which you need to bring the truth of glorification to bear? Or is there a trial you've already been through where you had to rely on this truth?

*"The gospel preached during every television show is 'You only go around once in life, so get all the gusto you can.' It is a statement about theology; it is a statement about beer. It's lousy beer and even worse theology."—*John Silber, president of Boston University, quoted in *Time*, May 25, 1987.

1. What lies do we be believe that we need to combat with the truth of glorification? (There are many. One is alluded to in the preceding quote.)

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

1. What sins have you struggled with the most this week? Why?
2. What about God have you failed to appreciate the most this week? How has that impacted your relationships and decisions?
3. How have you been repenting, believing, and fighting about sins you've confessed in the past to your group?

**MISSION**

1. Does the truth of glorification motivate you to reach out in word and deed to your lost neighbors? How?
2. What next step can to you take to serve the physical needs of the lost people God has placed in your life? Ask your group to pray for you and to hold you accountable for doing it.

1. What next question can you ask a lost person in your life to point them to God? What can you invite them to expose them to God's grace? Ask your group to pray for you and to hold you accountable for doing it.

**SUPPLICATION**

It's important that your group spend time praying together regularly. Below are some suggestions to get you started.

1. What burdens or concerns can your group pray about for you? What are the requests of the others?
2. Spend time praying for the lost people in your lives.
3. Spend time praising God for the future hope you have and praying that it would sustain you in present trials.

1. As quoted in Redeemer's small group study on 1 John, lesson 3, pages 4 and 5. (Emphasis added). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5315f2e5e4b04a00bc148f24/t/55e0c99ee4b0f4b11e1cf5c0/1440795038107/Preaching+the+Gospel+to+the+Heart.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This article is used by permission and can be found at https://www.ligonier.org/blog/tulip-and-reformed-theology-perseverance-saints/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)