Grounded in God's Glorifying Grace
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-310

We have finally come to the last and final and culminating element in salvation, and that is the great doctrine of glorification...glorification. And whenever I talk on this subject, and I do occasionally, the last time I did was a Truth and Life Conference out at the college. We had a great time talking about this with the students there. But whenever I talk about this, I am reminded of a trip a few years ago to Kazakhstan and some of you will remember this, I took a rather long journey, it's about a 35-hour flight to get there and changing planes in various locations across the earth. Finally arriving there about seven o'clock in the morning on a Monday and I was met at the airport somewhat bleary-eyed, it's one thing to fly and be able to sleep, but to keep flying and changing planes and keeping yourself awake makes it a rather daunting thing to anticipate any immediate action when you arrive at your destination. But I was greeted in the airport by some gentlemen there in ???? in Kazakhstan who said, "All is ready at the conference and it will begin as soon as we get you to the church." This is pretty typical for over there. And so I exited the airport into a rickety van which is also pretty typical, and off we went to the church and it was packed with 1600 pastors from Central Asia for the first pastors' conference, church leaders conference in the history of Central Asia in the former Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. They had come from many, many places. The church was strong in that part of the world because that's the area where the communists exiled all the pastors and the Christians they wanted to get rid of in Russia. They sent them there and, of course, they went there, preached the gospel, planted churches. And as a result the church was strong. This was a church that seated 1600, I think 1400 and 1600 came, they taxed all their capabilities to feed everybody, but it rained all week and they were cooking soup in the church yard and the more rain, the more soup. That's the way it worked. And the boiling pots, those big ones that you boil a missionary in, you know, those really big ones, they just kept filling up with rain water and they'd throw more salt and pepper and a few more potatoes and we had a great week.

My responsibility was to teach on the doctrine of the church. And I was to teach on the doctrine of the church for six days...Monday through Saturday. And that in itself is a daunting task but a great subject. And I began to teach, of course, through a translator and pour out my heart on Monday and Tuesday and got through Wednesday and I was defining all I knew to define about the church biblically, and the leaders called a special meeting on Wednesday night and they pulled me into the meeting and the translator said they have a great concern. And I said what is it? They said they want to know when you're going to get to the good part. This is not good news. This is three days and I haven't got to the good part yet? That's a little discouraging. I said, "What is the good part, if I

may be so bold as to ask? What is the good part?" They said, "The good part is they want to know about their future. They want to know what God has prepared for them that love Him. They want to know what is to come in the future for the church of Jesus Christ."

I understand that. I was staying with a widow lady along with Roman Detrek Yanko(???) from Slavic Gospel. We were staying in her home. She had only been widowed a few months earlier. Her husband had died and she managed to scrape up an egg for us in the morning and some horsemeat which she stood in line for during the day. And then it was the bread and soup. We saw people make immense sacrifices. There was really nothing attractive about this world, nothing to hold them to this earth. And the good part was yet ahead. And so I said, "I will on Friday from beginning of the day to the end of the day talk about the good part." And we had one explosive and dynamic Friday as I endeavored to unfold the future plan of God for His church. They were exhilarated beyond description to find out that what I taught them from the Bible is exactly what they had believed even though we had never met. They had been reading the same Bible and drawing the same conclusions and it was a great time of thrill for all of us.

There should be a stampede for books on heaven. There should be literally a storming of the gates anyplace where heaven is the subject. People should be buying up the tapes every tape and every CD available that describes the life to come. That's where we're going. That's where we're headed. That's why we were saved.

I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. There are a lot of places in the Bible that relate to this subject, but I want to grasp this wonderful verse 13 in 1 Peter 1 as a starting point and a focus. First Peter 1:13, "Therefore gird your minds for action, pull in all the loose ends in your thinking." Another way of saying get rid of extraneous thoughts, jettison what is trivial, nail down your mind. The language here is metaphoric. People wore tunics and when they went into action they had to put a sash on, pull the tunic tight. When soldiers did it in battle they would pull the four corners of the tunic up through the sash, trying to get in a kind of mini-tunic so it wouldn't encumber them at all. You get in to any kind of battle, any kind of action and you've got your dress blowing in the breeze, you're in serious trouble. It can be used against you. And so you tie down everything tight. That's the language that Peter intends for us to understand. Pull in everything tightly. Start thinking seriously. Keep sober. Simply not in the physical sense, avoiding what inebriates you, but think about the things you ought to be thinking about. Think about the things that matter. Cut everything out of your thinking that isn't important. And it comes down to this. When you've pulled in all the loose ends and you've done away with all the debilitating trivialities and when you begin to think clearly about priorities, you will fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The main verb in this verse is "fix your hope." And it is a command, look to the future. Hope differs from faith only in this sense, that hope extends faith into the future. Hope extends faith into the

future. It is believing what is to come as promised. Faith accepts what God has done, hope acknowledges what He will do. And you notice the word "completely" there, unreservedly, fully, perfectly, consummately. Clear your mind of anything that encumbers clear thinking and fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is a life focus. This is a life focus. It has implications in verse 14, "Even to your obedience and not being conformed to the lusts which were yours in your ignorance before you were saved." It shows up in your desire to be holy in your behavior, as verse 15 says. Or as verse 17 says, "In conducting yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." You largely live your life in view of this hope. And when you set your affections on things above and set your affections on things to come, it dramatically impacts how you live your life and we'll look at that as we come to the conclusion of our study tonight.

The Bible is clear on this subject that this is where we are to have our focus. We have a hope, says Hebrews 6:19, that is an anchor to the soul. This is a profoundly important statement. Your soul is anchored by your hope. That is to say what you know to be true about your future because God has promised it is what anchors your soul. It is this hope that gives you security. It is this hope that gives you steadfastness. You're anchored by this hope. You're secured by this hope. You're held tightly by this hope. It prevents you from floating around in a milieu of doubt and questioning cause you know what God has promised and you've fixed your hope completely on that promise for a glorious future.

If you back up a little bit in 1 Peter chapter 1, you have that hope described starting in verse 3. In verse 3 it is called a living hope, it is that a living hope in the sense that it is a hope for life to come, it is a hope that we will have eternal life. "Blessed be...verse 3...the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." As Christ died and is alive, so shall we though dead be alive, our hope is a living hope. And what is the character of that hope? It involves verse 4, an inheritance which is imperishable, it cannot ever be destroyed. It is undefiled, it can never be scarred or marred or stained. It will not fade away, that is no amount of time or circumstance can ever diminish it in the least. And it will never be taken from us and given to someone else because it is reserved in heaven for you. God has prepared for those that love Him a future and it involves life, resurrection life, life after death. It involves an inheritance, an inheritance that is so vast we are said to be joint-heirs with Jesus Christ and He is the inheritor of everything that God possesses. It is an inheritance which cannot be destroyed. It cannot be defiled. It cannot be diminished. And it cannot be directed to someone else. It is for you and you are protected by the power of God through faith. You can never lose this hope because you are being continually protected by the power of God through the faith that He has given you which does not die and you are headed toward a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. You are headed for a salvation in its fullness which will be revealed in the end. The language here is staggering. Verse 9 says it again. "You will obtain as the outcome of your faith the final salvation of your souls."

In the meantime there are some sufferings. He says in verse 6, "For a little while if necessary you're distressed by various trials." All this does is vindicate your faith. All this does is verify your faith. All this does is prove your faith. And I've said that and it's so important for us to understand. One of the reasons that it is so good to have trials is because when you survive them, that is proof of your saving faith. I don't know about you but I want a faith that's proven and tested. I want a faith that I have a confidence in that it is a true and saving faith. And so, trials prove faith. When you go through the trial and you survive the trial, you then know the faith was real and then that faith which survives every test becomes more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire. It's more precious than anything to have a tested faith because it secures your confidence in the salvation that God has given you being an eternal salvation through the gift of a lasting and permanent faith so that you know...look at the end of verse 7...that you will be found in the end at the revelation of Jesus Christ offering praise and glory and honor to Him.

Even though you don't see Him, verse 8, you love Him. Though you don't see Him now, you believe in Him. You're already rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory and some day, as verse 9 says, you will receive obtaining the outcome of that faith the final salvation of your souls. You will receive what the end of verse 11 calls the glories to follow.

So Peter starts out this wonderful epistle celebrating glorification, the great truth of the fulfillment of a living hope. Now with that as a background, I want you to understand that this is the culmination of everything in the gospel.. It does concern me that there is an immense amount of emphasis on the doctrine of justification. There is an immense amount of interest in the doctrine of regeneration. There is an immense amount of interest in the doctrine of effectual calling. There is an immense amount of interest in the doctrine of particular redemption. There is an immense amount of interest even in what I call human inability, or the doctrine of depravity. But there seems to be so little definitive interest in the great reason for all of that which is the final and most glorious of all doctrines, the doctrine of glorification. We can get so worried about taking a view of the future that we avoid it all together just for the sake of being irenic. I recently met with a handful of the finest theological minds in this nation. No two of the six of us had the same view of eschatology. We all have the same view of every other doctrine I've mentioned tonight. And out of that difference, out of that sort of contentment to sort of let everybody sort of devise his own scheme of the end, we have diminished our interest in this great reality of glorification. And it's very rarely preached on, taught on, or written on. In fact, you can almost guarantee that if you write a novel on the future, it will sell like crazy. But if you tell the truth about the future, nobody is going to buy it.

Peter also says, if you look at 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 10, after you've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish. You see that little phrase, "Who called you to His eternal glory in Christ." That's the effectual calling, that's the calling that regenerated you, that justified you, that ransomed

you, that redeemed you, that converted you, that saving work of God was a work of God intended to produce eternal glory for you in Christ. That is your glorification. No one was saved just to be justified, or only to be justified and sanctified. All who are saved are saved to be justified, sanctified, and finally glorified. And I'm not going to belabor the issue, you find all throughout the teaching of the New Testament emphasis on the wonderful future that God has prepared for us, the hope that He has given us of glory. In fact, Paul says in Romans 5:2, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

I wonder sometimes whether Christians really do rejoice in that. Everybody seems to think that the Christian life is about tweaking our experience here, to sort of manipulate it into the max comfort level, instead of being lost in the wonder of what is to come and content to suffer whatever needs to be suffered here in order to have our faith proven because it endures the trial so that we can live confident in a true and saving faith, having been granted to us by the grace and power of God and rejoice in a clear and unwavering hope for an inheritance that is promised to us. The benefit of trials then is they allow you to live in maximum confidence that your faith is the real thing and your hope, the true hope.

Now when we talk about the future and glorification, we can talk about it from a practical standpoint, the effect that it has on us. And if we have time, we will. In fact, this will probably be a two part message anyway, or three or who knows how many? And that's okay because this is a subject worthy of our careful thought. But I want to talk about it from a different angle, if I might. I want to talk about it in a way that I think is really at the very foundation of understanding our glorification. Look back at verse 13. "Gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit." Now notice this, "Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Now what strikes you about that sentence? He doesn't say, "Fix your hope on heaven." He doesn't say, "Fix your hope on Jesus Christ." He says, "Fix your hope on grace." "Fix your hope on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Now that is just a great truth.

We have a promise of an eternal inheritance that cannot be destroyed, that cannot be diminished, that cannot be marred or scarred, that cannot be redirected. We have the promise of an imperishable, glorious future in the presence of God. We have been given a true and enduring and proven faith so that we know that one day all that God has promised will come to us. That hope becomes the anchor of our souls through all the issues of life. It has massive implications to how we conduct our lives, how we view things in this world. But Peter says, "Don't look at it at least for this moment as what it's going to bring you without understanding this...that it is as much a gift of grace as every other aspect of your salvation." Your justification is certainly by grace, you didn't deserve it. Your sanctification, that is the goodness of God and the work of the Spirit in you to conform you into the image of Jesus Christ and overpower and overrule your sin is a work of mighty prevailing, enabling, purifying grace. But when we think about heaven, for some reason we don't necessarily

think of it as the greatest and the culminating element of grace.

When people discuss heaven, as they do on rare occasions, you often hear people say, "I don't know, I think we're going to be surprised who's not there." Ever heard people say that? I think we're going to be surprised who's not there. I don't think that will enter into anybody's mind. Other people say, "I think we're going to be surprised who is there." I don't think that's going to be the big shock. I don't even think the big shock is going to be the glory of God. I don't think the big shock is going to be the splendor of Christ. I don't think the big jolt when you arrive at heaven is going to be the beauty of eternal perfection. I think the big shock is going to be that I'm there. That is going to be the shock of all shocks. We will be eternally overwhelmed with ever-increasing wonder at the reality of the kind of grace that would allow us to be there. Here I rejoice in the unmerited sovereign grace of my election. I rejoice in the unmerited, unearned sovereign kindness of God in my effectual calling. I rejoice in the grace that justifies me and the grace that regenerates and ransoms and converts me. I rejoice in the grace gift of faith to believe the gospel.. I rejoice in the ongoing grace that sanctifies and gifts me and enables me to serve. But I don't think my rejoicing in those things even comes anywhere remotely close to the rejoicing that I will experience when I see what glorifying grace gives me...and it will be grace. And I think the stunning reality of heaven will definitely be that I'm there. And I don't know how I am going to think in my glorified condition but if there's any vestiges of John MacArthur from here, the first thing is going to be shock and staggering, overwhelming wonder and the immediate thought, "How in the world did someone like me ever end up here?" Fix your hope completely on that grace. It is grace...listen...that chose you, it is grace that called you, it is grace that justified you, it is grace that sanctified you, it is grace that will glorify you. It is all grace, grace, nothing but grace from eternity past in the sovereign counsel of God to eternity future in the sovereign and glorious presence of God. It is grace.

I look forward to what eternal grace will do for me. I look forward to future grace. I have had grace in the past. I enjoy grace in the present. I look forward to grace in the future. My hope looks to that next great explosion, that final culminating grace that will never be improved upon because it is perfection. That will be brought to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ, at the unveiling of Christ, the *apokalupsis*, His appearing, when I see Him. It could refer to the Second Coming, it will for some the Rapture of the church, but it is at whatever moment that Christ is unveiled to me, in that moment, that final massive gift of grace will bring it all into complete culmination.

Paul in writing to Titus, chapter 2, says, verse 11, "The grace of God has appeared bringing salvation." And that salvation instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly and righteously and godly in this present age, that's sanctifying grace. But also looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Christ Jesus because that's glorifying grace. He came that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. And the ultimate realization of that is the final purification when we are forever made perfect. Paul in Romans 8 calls this the redemption of

our bodies, our inner man, as we've learned, already having been redeemed, our inner man already having been sanctified and cleansed, we are awaiting that remaining flesh that clings so powerfully to us to be eliminated.

And so Peter says, "Look, don't fix your thought on the event as wonderful as the event is of your death, the *apokalupsis*, the unveiling of Christ, your meeting face-to-face with Him, don't even fix your hope on Christ alone as wonderful as that is, but fix your hope on the reality that this is all by grace. You couldn't do anything to earn your justification. You don't earn by your own merit your sanctification. And you certainly don't earn your glorification. That is, as all other elements of salvation, a gift of grace. I love the way it expresses it in verse 13, "Fix your hope completely on the grace...listen to this...to be brought to you." It's gift language, to be brought to you.Wow...that is such a staggering reality.

A benediction in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 helps us to see this in another way."Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace." Eternal life is a gift of grace. Glorification is the final act of grace. It is the grace upon grace that finally ends the grace. It is the final grace in grace upon grace. You will no more deserve the redemption of your body, your sinful body so polluted by sin then you deserve the redemption of your polluted soul. We will no more deserve a home in heaven then we deserve right now, a place among the redeemed. We will no more deserve an eternal weight of glory then we deserve the indwelling Spirit of glory now. We will no more deserve sinless perfection of body and soul forever then we deserve forgiveness for every sin of body and soul now. We will no more deserve unhindered, unbroken intimacy and communion with the living Lord then we deserve to worship and to pray and to serve Him now. We will never deserve it. It will be grace then. It is grace now. It has always been grace. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot keep ourselves saved. We cannot make ourselves worthy of eternal glory. And so when the Bible says, "For by grace are you saved," it is speaking of it in the full and complete sense. Live in anticipation of heaven and know this...it doesn't depend on you. Is that a great word?

Look at Romans 8. Our hope is secured in the language of Romans 8 in powerful expressions. Verse 28, a good place to start, "God causes all things to work together for good to those that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, predetermined to love, He predestined." And what did He predestine us to? "To become conformed to the image of His Son." Is that going to happen here? No. We were predestined not just to be justified and not just to be justified and sanctified, that is saved and kept saved. But we were predestined to ultimately be conformed to the very image of His Son who would then be the premier one, the *prototokos*among many who are like Him. And whom He predestined He called and whom He calls He justified and whom He justified these He also...what?...glorified.

In John 6 Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and I will lose none of them but raise him up on the last day." Whoever has been chosen is effectually called to salvation. Whoever is called is justified and whoever is justified is glorified. And no one falls through the cracks and no one is lost in the process. And what shall we say to these things? "If God is for us, who is against us?" If this is God's purpose and God's plan, who can successfully overrule it? And if God didn't spare His own Son to accomplish it but delivered Him up for us all, that is to bring us from predestination to glorification, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? If this is the plan from beginning to end, then how will God not give us what we need to make sure the plan is completed? No one can successfully bring any charge against God's elect. God has already justified us. No one can successfully condemn us. Christ already having paid in full the price for our sins and being raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God now intercedes on our behalf. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword...now in verse 38, death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, none of these things can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It's about God loving us. It's about God choosing us. It's about God calling us, regenerating us, justifying us, keeping us. And by grace all of that and by grace glorifying us. Peter says, "Fix your hope completely on final grace, future grace, the grace of glorification that will be brought to you as a gift, grace is always a gift, when Jesus comes or when you see Him because you've gone into His presence." All present grace, in fact, is but a taste of future grace. All present grace is but a taste of future grace. Every little gift of grace that we receive day by day, hour by hour, year by year as we live our lives, all the outpouring of grace upon grace upon grace, collectively all of it can't be compared to future grace. The glory of justification cannot even be fully comprehended by us now. The glory of our being kept in sanctification cannot compare with the overwhelming expression of grace that we will see and experience in eternal glory. And the same God who graced us savingly and graced us sanctifyingly will grace us in the glory of a future that can't even be conceived of. And so we will spend forever, I think, in wonder, every moment...and there's no sleep there and the reason I think there's no sleep in heaven is because you don't even want to blink because you'll miss something staggering. Some people say, "Well, heaven sounds boring." Oh my, how could you even have such a thought? You need to be awake forever to suck in all the glory and to live in staggering wonder that you're even there. That's what it means to be lost in wonder as the hymn writer put it. You are coming, Hebrews 12 says, to heaven and there are the spirits of righteous men made perfect. Heaven is perfection of spirit.

But it's not just perfection of spirit because in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 20, "Our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory." So it's not just perfection of spirit, it's perfection of body. And in 2 Corinthians, that very familiar fifth chapter, the Apostle Paul says, "It is for us a house, a building from God...verse 1...a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Spirits made perfect and an eternal body, not made with hands. That is not produced humanly, an eternal body, a building made by God and we long for that wonderful reality. That's why

Paul says, "It's far better to depart and be with Christ," as he told the Philippians. Or as he told the Corinthians, "He preferred to be absent from this world to be at home with the Lord." There will be in that day nothing to defile us, nothing unclean, nothing imperfect. No sin, no suffering, no sorrow, no pain, no doubts, no fear of God's displeasure, no temptation from Satan, the world, the flesh, no persecution, no abuse, no division, no hate, no quarrels, no disappointment, no anger and no effort. No effort? No effort. No more prayer, no more fasting, no more repentance, no confession of sin, no weeping, no watchfulness, no more teaching, no more preaching., no more learning, no more struggles.

You say, "Well, that's all pretty negative." Yeah, because it's so...we can only conceive of not experiencing what we experience. We can't conceive of experiencing what we've never experienced. So we address it in negative terms and so does the book of Revelation. No more tears and crying and dying and it will be a life of perfect pleasure, perfect knowledge, perfect comfort, perfect joy, perfect satisfaction, perfect adventure in the sense that every split second will be the explosion of wonder...never a second a boredom or weariness. All that we know in this life about being weary and hungry and tempted and scorned and hated and all those kinds of things, all the disappointments...never. Pure, unmixed, everlasting joy, an unending newness of everything. That's why in Matthew chapter 25 our Lord said when He gave the little parables about the servants, "Enter into the joy of your Lord." That is the dominant feature of heaven...joy, exhilarating, exuberant satisfaction and joy.That's a good place to stop, I think, and not next week because of the Shepherds' Conference, but the week after, I want to dig a little deeper into that idea of joy. And then I want to talk about what we do know the Bible says our glorification will be like.

Lord, it's such a privilege for us to have this insight into what You have prepared for those that love You. There's so much to say about this and we've just barely touched on it. But even the little that we've drawn our own thoughts toward tonight has filled us with, I trust, a new and fresh anticipation. May we be only loosely interested in this world and only insofar as it advances Your Kingdom. Help us to know that all that is around us is perishing and passing away and isn't worthy of our love, but only that which is eternal matters. Help us to pull in all the loose ends of our distracted lives with all kinds of things flying around in the breeze and to start to think about priorities and that will press us into that one great fixed reality of what is coming for us as the final expression of Your grace...our future glory, undeserved and yet waiting for us. May we fix our hope on that future grace and live in anticipation of it and never be drawn away into this world, never be caught up in what disappoints us because even the things that trouble us profoundly are simply ways to prove that our hope is the real thing because our faith endures the trouble. We thank You for the trials that increase our confidence in a gift that is a true and saving faith so that our heart burns even brighter with hope, having endured suffering. May we live in the light of our future, eagerly waiting to see You face to face which is far, far better than anything here. We long for that final grace and we thank You for the promise of that grace to come through Christ. Amen.

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