

CHAPTER TEN

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN CHOICES IN ETERNAL GLORIFICATION

Theological Truth #7 That Favors Calvinism: In the age-to-come redeemed mankind will be fully restored as those who glorify God completely. This future glorification of the Christian is not only the result of God's saving work, it results in ethical perfection for all eternity future.

Few people would dispute the basics of this book's seventh theological truth that we will set forth in this chapter: The glorification of the Christian. The reason is that the biblical material is so clear—at least on the fact that in the age to come believers will be perfected both in spirit and body, with the result they will never sin again. This is why there is no need to state a Molinist alternative view in this chapter. No doubt, the manner in which glorification is reached would be different for Molinists and Calvinists. However, it is the effect of this future and ultimate application of redemption to Christians that will be our focus.

The Effect Of Glorification

This doctrine is so named because in Romans 8:28-30 Paul writes:

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 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.** (emphasis added)*

In that last clause Paul affirms that the certain outcome of God's saving work in the redeemed is that they will be "glorified." I have argued elsewhere that the reason Paul uses this terminology (see also Rom. 3:23: "For all...fall short of the glory of God") is because mankind, made in the image of God, was crowned with glory and honor as God's vice-regents (Ps. 8:5-6)

and thus was to resemble and reflect God and his glory in all things.¹ As a result, one of the ways to look at this divine redemptive work revealed throughout Scripture is through the lens of this restoration of God's glory in man.

The effect of glorification is that for all eternity redeemed mankind will live without sin, always choosing to do that which God wants, in the ways God wants, and for the purposes God intends. Because I have written on this extensively, there is no need to spend a great deal of time proving the point.² Yet consider basic biblical affirmations of this truth:

- In Hebrews 12:22-24 we discover that New Covenant believers are said to be enrolled in heaven with all saints there whose spirits have been perfected: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to **the spirits of the righteous made perfect,**²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”³ (emphasis added)
- In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 we discover the future resurrected body of the Christian will not only be raised in glory, but it also will be completely directed by the Holy Spirit (and so without sin): “So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; **it is raised in glory.** It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; **it is raised a spiritual body.** If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”⁴ (emphasis added)
- Of the future new heaven and new earth, the eternal abode of the redeemed, we read the following from Revelation 21-22 (all of which demonstrate no sin will be there): “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and **death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away**” (Rev. 21:4); “The **one who conquers will have this heritage,** and I will be his God and he will be my son.⁸ **But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur,** which is the second death” (21:7-8); “**But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life**” (21:27); and “No

¹ Tom Barnes, *Living In The Hope Of Future Glory: The Glorification Of The Christian* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2006). We also discussed this in Chapter Two of this book.

² Barnes, *Living In The Hope*.

³ See Barnes, *Living In The Hope*, 153-155.

⁴ See Barnes, *Living In The Hope*, 192-198.

longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him” (22:3). (emphasis added)

We could also cite other passages, but the point is clear enough: The redeemed in the age-to-come will live in perfect holiness and without sin. And one of the implications of this is that they will love the Lord [their] God with all [their] heart and with all [their] soul and with all [their] mind” (Mt. 22:37). After all, this is the “great and first commandment” (Mt. 22:38) and since the glorified saints will keep God’s will perfectly, certainly they will love God with all their being.

The final point we can make about the effect of glorification is that it will result in eternal, never-ending, and ever-increasing joy and pleasure for the redeemed. In Psalm 16:11 we read: “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” In fact, the future state of being with our Savior is so glorious and pleasurable that the Apostle Paul is able to affirm it “is gain” and “is far better” than this life (Phil. 1:21, 23).

So, the glorified Christian will live forever in a state of ever-growing-and-increasing pleasure and joy in the presence of the Savior, where all that brings pain and suffering is gone (sin and death). They will love God fully and find this to be a state that is unsurpassed by any other experience in this present age.

Yet, what motivates God toward this glorification? Let’s see.

God’s Penultimate Motivation Behind Glorification

As we discovered in Chapter Two, God’s ultimate motivation for the accomplishment and application of redemption, as well as all he does, is his own glory. Yet, a penultimate motivation is his love for the redeemed. Consider just three biblical statements:

- “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” Jeremiah 31:3)
- “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
- “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-7)

So, what we discover is that a result of God’s love for the elect is God will perfect them in the future in such a manner that they will love God fully and will experience pleasure that far surpasses anything ever experienced in this age. They will, therefore, also submit to God in faith-fueled-obedience perfectly: “Every soul belongs to God and exists by His pleasure. God being Who and What He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on His part and complete submission on ours....”⁵ This will be fully realized in the new heaven and new earth.

And yet, based on these clear facts and based upon how God will carry this out (through his causative, decisive, free, gracious governance—if we have been accurate in our assessment throughout this book), the Molinist has serious problems because of the doctrine of glorification. Let’s look at these.

The Molinist’s Problems In Light Of Glorification

To begin, the Molinist argues that genuine human freedom possesses alternativity. In other words, whatever choice the person makes, they could have made another choice or not made that choice at all. Yet, this is gone in the coming age. Of course, it could be argued that the glorified

⁵ A. W. Tozer, cited in Randy Alcorn, “God’s Sovereignty And Meaningful Human Choice: Why Is This Tough And Controversial Issue Worth Studying And Discussing?” *Eternal Perspectives* (Fall/Winter 2014): 9.

saint could still choose between multiple good and righteous choices. Yet, it still stands that there will no longer be any moral ability to sin. And if this is the case, then why did God not ordain this kind of situation in this age? The Molinist cannot argue that for God to do so would not have resulted in genuine human freedom. After all, glorified humans in the age-to-come will live the ultimate pleasurable life and yet will always choose to do what is right. I would take this to imply strongly that they are not being coerced against their will, but the general and particular moral ability to do right always and the lack of general and particular moral ability to do what is evil both flow from entire beings (spiritual and physical) that have been fully and decisively transformed by God and, as a result, always choose freely to do what is right.

This freedom possessed by glorified Christians in the age-to-come is the ultimate freedom: “Likewise, in our glorified state in heaven we will be unable to sin because all desire for sin and all remnants of original sin will be removed from us. We will still be free to choose what we want, but we will choose only the good because this is the only thing we will desire. This is the freedom Augustine referred to as liberty in the ultimate degree.”⁶ “In heaven the ultimate ‘freedom’ will not be ‘freedom to choose evil or good as we may desire’ but ‘freedom from the presence of, and inclination toward evil.’”⁷

The next problem this leads to is the defense of indeterministic or contra-causal freedom. Clearly, in the age-to-come, the glorified saints will have been causatively determined such that all movements and antecedent movements of the heart—leading to choices and actions—will bring about holy and righteous thoughts, desires, decisions, and actions. And, this will be what the glorified saint takes perfect pleasure in and so wants to do. So, if this is the case in the age-to-

⁶ R. C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 137.

⁷ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amittyville, NY: Calvary Press, 2000), 78.

come, why must free choices in this age be different? If genuinely free choices in the age-to-come can be caused and determined by God and by the person's character and antecedent movements, upon what rationale must it be different now? I posit there is no rationale for defining human freedom differently in this age.

The next problem the Molinist has is the suggestion that divine determination cannot involve genuine love on the part of God. After all, true love does not “force” or “coerce” anyone against their will. Yet, as we have seen throughout the book and certainly see now with the Christian's glorification, God can so work in the person's heart and entire being that the outcome does truly come from the person freely and yet it is determined decisively by God. Glorification is the ultimate example of this and it is the ultimate expression of God's love—i.e. to give to his redeemed this “inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [those] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5)! If God can work in a causative and decisive manner in the future that is an expression of his divine perfect love, then upon what rationale can we say he cannot do that in this age? I posit there is none.

This leads also to another problem for the Molinist. Some suggest that for God to work in a determined and decisive manner in a person—i.e. as some may word it, to force and coerc—does not lead to genuine love on the part of the recipient of God's saving work. And yet, as we have seen above, such a work in the age-to-come leads to saints who love God with a full, rich, and perfect love. If that is the case then, upon what rationale can we argue that in this age such a determined and decisive work on the part of God cannot result in genuine love on the part of the saved? I posit that there is none.

At this point the Molinist may argue something like this: “Tom, you don't understand...

...in the moment logically prior to creation, God, via His middle knowledge, knew who would freely receive Christ as Savior and what sorts of [circumstances, motivations, and movements toward them] would be extrinsically efficacious in keeping them from [sinning and would move them toward perfect obedience in the age-to-come]. Therefore, He decreed to create only those persons to be saved who He knew would freely respond to [such circumstances, motives, and movements in the age-to-come after responding to His salvation offer in this age], and He simultaneously decreed to provide such circumstances, motives, and movements in the age-to-come]. On this account the [future] believer will [certainly always do what is right] and yet he does so freely [and contra-causally]....”⁸

Such a response would be consistent with Molinism’s model. However, it fails to answer the question, “Why was a future perfectly righteous world possible and a present perfectly righteous world not?” The Molinist might answer, “We don’t know. That is just the way it is. No actualized world could include presently perfect righteousness, but it just so happens that in the future it can.” O.k., but in light of the previous six theological truths in favor of Calvinism and in light, especially of demonstrating that humans can be genuinely free at the same time God exercises his absolute and free sovereignty through his meticulous providence, it appears that this problematic approach is simply not needed. I have demonstrated throughout the book that soft deterministic Calvinism not only better fits the biblical material, but, properly understood, it also better fits with the phenomena we experience in our own lives and those of others. So, why would we want to opt for the Molinist model, which appears to be very problematic when it comes to the Christian’s future glorification?

Something else Molinism also fails to do is to account for the reality that the saving work of God is attributed to him as his work from beginning to end (he is the ultimate cause behind it and in a way he is not dependent upon or limited by human choice). Not only have we demonstrated

⁸ This is an adaptation of a quote so its pattern of meaning is applied to glorification, rather than perseverance. The quote is from Bill Craig, “Lest Anyone Should Fall: A Middle Knowledge Perspective On Perseverance And Apostolic Warnings,” *International Journal For Philosophy Of Religion*, 29 (1991 Found at reasonablefaith.org/lest-anyone-should-fall-a-middle-knowledge-perspective-on-perseverance. Accessed Feb. 10, 2017.), n.a.

this extensively throughout this book, but consider Revelation 5:9-10: “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’” Consider also Rev. 7:9: “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

I believe that this seventh and final theological truth is a problem for all models of divine sovereignty and human freedom (including Molinism) that argue for indeterministic human freedom and that argue for a view of God’s sovereignty and providence that sees them as limited by or dependent upon human choices.

The seven theological truths set forth in this book prepare us for the book’s conclusion. We turn to that now.