

Sunday, May 22nd sermon: "Not Purgatory, but Resurrection! False Roman Catholic Teachings (Pt 3)"

A sermon delivered at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church, Greenwood, MS by John Pittman Hey

1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Previously, we have shown that there is no scriptural basis for the false Roman Catholic teaching of Purgatory.

Not only that, but Jesus' and Paul's teachings about the timeline of the death of believers leaves no room to insert a stint in Purgatory. We are absent from the body, and instantly present with the Lord!

In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul encourages believers to understand what will occur when Jesus returns to claim His people. Those who are asleep in Jesus, God will bring their souls with Christ, to be united with their resurrection bodies.

But those believers who are still alive at Christ's return, will be caught up together with those resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air!

Paul then exclaims, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord!"

These are great words of comfort for all of God's people, but again, there is no room at all to insert any detours into the flames of torment called Purgatory.

Roman Catholic apologists raise what seems like a "reasonable argument," that believers must be "purged" of their sins, and receive temporal punishment, before they will be fit to appear in the presence of a Holy God.

But that argument collapses in view of their contradictory teachings of Indulgences, for it soon transpires that there is no essential need for such "purification," since it can be bypassed completely based upon the merits and sufferings of other people!

Which leaves the question: how do the scriptures teach that believers are made fit to appear in glory?

First, we must never minimize the great truth, that our Lord Jesus has the power to forgive sins! By the declaration of His Word, He forgave the poor paralyzed man of His sins.

We must not scoff at, or be incredulous of, Christ's mighty power to forgive our sin. He has won that right by satisfying justice for us - all the demands of God's justice for our sin.

So that, there is for us no debt to be paid to justice and to God for our crimes.

Jesus proclaimed that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. We have passed from death unto life already!

There is, to be sure, a change in believers that is required for our bodies - but it is not wrought by the torment of flames of Purgatory.

Rather, that change is by the power of God, the resurrection power of our Lord Jesus.

In Romans 8, Paul teaches that believers have been "predestinated" to be conformed to the image of His Dear Son. And because of that, all who are so chosen will one day be justified, and then glorified.

That is, the working of Christ for us on the cross results in all those who trust in Him being declared completely perfect in God's sight, that is, justified. We are "without fault" by the propitiation of our sins by the blood shedding of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

But then, the promise is, we will be glorified - that is, made in the image of Christ, perfected like Jesus, and placed in great splendor, freed from all evil, and given the enjoyment of all that is good forever.

Indeed, already, we are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

One method God uses to change us into the image of Christ, is that the Holy Ghost stamps the very glory of Jesus upon us as we gaze upon His glory.

We gaze upon Christ's glory by reading His Word, meditating upon the beauties of the Savior, through worship, by celebrating His dying for us at the Lord's Table.

We behold, and are confronted continually by, the glory of Jesus, and the Spirit uses that confrontation to glorify us in this life as well as the next.

The Apostle John declares the truth of this transformation by the view of Christ: when we shall see Him one day with our own eyes, we shall be made like Him, because we finally get a full look at Him as He is in His majestic glory.

Not just our souls and persons, but our mortal bodies will be changed like unto Christ's glorious resurrection body. This is done, Paul informs us, by that power by which Jesus conforms all things unto Himself. We must not forget that Jesus created all things, and upholds all things by the word of His power, so He is able and in fact will change our bodies like unto His body one day.

This is resurrection power exercised by the Lord Jesus, and Paul expands upon it in his great preaching in 1 Corinthians 15.

He describes how Christ will raise up His beloved ones from the grave unto spiritual bodies, with incorruption, immortality, power, and glory, where our natural bodies have all the opposite defects.

Not only so, but even those believers that are alive when Jesus comes back in resurrection power will be changed. Our bodies will be changed, and glorified, and exalted, whether we still live, or whether we have already died.

Paul declares that this change is instantaneous, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet!"

Note well, there is no time to insert any stint in Purgatory. Our change is immediate, and wonderful, and wrought by the resurrection power of Christ upon His people.

This is the changing out of our mortal bodies, living or dead, with our new glorified bodies like Christ's resurrection body, whereby corruption and death are taken away from our bodies, and immortality and perfection are clothed upon us by Jesus Christ.

This will take place, just like Jesus promised in John 5.

So contrary to the Roman Catholic "reasonableness" argument, that we must be purified by torments, we have the true answer: we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and by His resurrection power, not torments, we are changed, our bodies are changed out, sin and mortality and corruption are stripped away from us, and we are clothed with perfect, glorified, spiritual bodies like the body of Jesus.

Jesus works the change we require instantly at the resurrection, for all His people, living and dead.

Already, God sees us as without fault at all for Jesus' sake, clothed in the imputed righteousness of Jesus, and the garments of salvation.

But as for our bodies, we don't need Purgatory to purify us, what we need is resurrection!

We love to sing those precious words of the hymn writer:

"Clothed in garments of salvation,
at Thy table is our place!
We rejoice, and Thou rejoicest,
in the riches of Thy Grace!"