



# Theology Corner

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## “What is Purgatory?”

I have heard some people say that they thought purgatory was a place that we go to where we are weighed by our good things and bad things we’ve done. This is very far from the truth. Purgatory is not a place that we go to for judgement or anything of the sort. Purgatory gets its name from the Latin word “purgare” which means to purify or cleanse. That is exactly what it is, a temporary state of purification. We see in Revelation 21:27 that “nothing unclean shall enter” heaven. This makes perfect sense because we cannot be united with God who is perfect, without ourselves being made perfect. That being said, it is possible that someone would enter heaven without this temporary state of purification if no purification is needed. For example, if we died with no mortal or venial sins on our soul. The only likely way this occurs is if we die in a perfect state of grace, immediately after confession. Recall that mortal sins are the sins that directly separate us from God, which is said to bring death to the soul, while venial sin damages our soul. So, venial sin makes our soul imperfect, and therefore makes it necessary that we have a completely pure soul in order to be united with God in the beatific vision.

A major hang up when it comes to the doctrine of purgatory, is the fact that it is not explicitly discussed in the bible. First, I think it is important to realize that there are other doctrines that are widely accepted that are implicit within scripture such as the doctrine of the trinity, the incarnation, or even the word “bible.” But it would be incorrect to state that purgatory is not alluded to in scripture. A couple passages that come to mind would be in Matthew 12:32 when Christ says, “...but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this age or in the age to come.” This implies that sins *can* be forgiven in the next world. Obviously, once we are in heaven, there is no more sin, and once we are in hell, there is no chance for forgiveness as we covered last week. Another one is in 2 Maccabees 12:44 when it says, “he made atonement for the dead that they might be delivered from their sin.” Why would we pray to the dead if they were either in heaven or in hell? They would not have the ability to receive reparation to their soul because again, they either would not need it in heaven, or could not have it in hell. Thus, purgatory is the only logical conclusion to make in order to reconcile scripture with reality. That, and the fact that it would be philosophically impossible for an imperfect soul to be in heaven without some sort of purification. How long would this be? To us on earth, it could very well be instantaneous. Remember, time cannot be applied to things that are immaterial.