

Five Gold Links to Glory

Romans 8:29-30

I imagine that you feel as though we have been so long in this great book and in this best chapter, that the Elders are thinking of renaming the congregation, Romans Orthodox Presbyterian Church!

But what a rich book this is! And to explore the riches of grace here is like exploring the greatest of all mountains!

Speaking then of deep and rich things, what unfolds for us in these two verses – 8:29-30 – is nothing less than a golden chain from eternity past to eternity future!

And we are beginning with these profound words – predestination, foreknowledge, or election!

This teaching, I must warn you, has caused untold harm when it has been misunderstood.

And it has done unmeasured harm when we just want to ignore it because it is a deep truth.

These are deep waters. These are not grade school things but university teachings.

Those who have grasped this have said the same – handle with care!

And if you find yourself struggling with election, put it aside for now. Deal with God's everlasting love and glorious grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which saves and sanctifies and brings you home. Deal with the fact that God has a purpose for you as all things work together for

your good. And as we will see on the other side, God is for you, and nothing can be against you.

Don't be surprised at high and mysterious things about God that are above reach. This is to be expected in a God who made the heavens and the earth and all for His own highest glory. A God we can completely understand, and can fit inside our heads, is a pretty small god indeed! That is a no-god!

So as we come to this passage, this is going to be a two-part message, where we will find good things for every Christian, new and old, young and mature.

Our first point is to explore the geography of this mountain of a verse – to get a sense generally what is being said.

These verses are all about the will and purpose of God. You see the will of God at the end of 27, and the purpose of God at the end of 28. God's will and purpose is that all things work together for your good. And why that is is because God is for you, and nothing can ultimately be against you – verse 31. The theme is to give us something of the nuts and bolts of God's keeping of His people to all eternity. He is and has and always will be purposing this for you. And the fruit of it should be a sense of the perfect invincibility of God's great grace and salvation in verse 31.

See too that the text is linked together closely. In grammar, the predicate of each clause becomes the subject of the next clause. This is an ancient Greek construction of heaping up words unto a desired conclusion. What is that conclusion? That all who come to heaven, to be glorified with Jesus, are the same who were justified; and the same

who were called; and the same who were predestined; and the same who were foreknown. The number does not grow from one clause to the next. It does not decrease or increase. Think of five buckets and each hold the exact same water being passed from one to the other!

Now one more observation. Notice how the links are all of them set in a unique way. All of them, including the future glorification, are spoken of as completed, past, fulfilled! The first two are from eternity, the next two happen in time (calling and justification), and the fifth and final one speaks of the future. This is why we insist this speaks from God's purpose and perspective. We are not following them in their historical unfolding. They all are set as sure and certain in stone because they are God's determinations.

And God Himself is at the center of His purpose. God is central, not Man! Robert Haldane makes this very powerful observation:

“In looking back on this passage, we should observe that, in all that is stated, man acts no part, but is passive, and all is done by God. Men are elected and predestinated and called and justified and glorified by God. The apostle was here concluding all he had said before enumerating topics of consolation to believers, and is now going to show that God is “for us.” Could anything, then, be more consolatory to those who love God than to be assured that the great concern of their salvation is not left in their own keeping? God, even their covenant God, has taken the whole upon himself. He has undertaken for them. There is no room then for chance or change. He will perfect that which concerns them.” Haldane

What I want us to do then is to see these things as a tree.

The roots of the tree are God's foreknowledge and predestination; the trunk of the tree springing from the roots is that of calling and justification. But the branches upward filled with leaves and fruit heavenward, is the great end of the tree – glorification.

In fact, we are going work backwards and find our way back down to the roots.

So we can see here, instead of predestination, God's Post-destination, or the ultimate purpose of His purpose. That ultimate purpose, or post-destination, is out of this world! It is not found in this world but in the world to come; in the new heavens and the new earth.

That last word in verse 30 – 'glorified' refers to the completion of God's saving purpose in Christ. From eternity past, God willed to have a great host which no man can number to dwell with him, along with the holy angels, in glory. They must be fitted for such a high, holy, and awesome purpose.

So glorification is the great change upon our souls as well as our bodies, to perfect us and fit us for a place at the very table of God and His Son – as we saw last week!

But see how Paul places another full description of this glorification earlier in verse 29.

The end game is that all these who are predestined will be conformed to the image of His Son! All God's people will be like Jesus, who is the firstborn from the dead! He is the centerpiece! And all are not only made alive, risen and perfect like him, but they are said to be his brothers and sisters! His great and redeemed family!

Christians begin their conformity to Jesus in this life. When we are born again and as we increase in sanctification, we are being change by His glory more and more, to be like him. But this phrase should be taken as the final change, the final and full conformity to Christ. John spoke of this in his big letter, chapter 3 – “now we are the children of God but it does not yet appear what we will be; but when He appears, when we see Him, WE WILL BE LIKE HIM, because we will see Him as He is!”

So glorification is the full redemption from all evil, all sin, all darkness, all impurity, all of the devil’s dominion, all of this fallen world. And this is not first about us! It is not about us individually, and our own little individual destinies. No, it is about Jesus, the Son of God and being in full, complete, perfect, holy, entire and wonderful bond and friendship with Him, before his throne, with nothing between!

God’s purpose for His creation is that all things will be summed up, not in the believer’s glorification – as great as that is – but in God’s Son coming into His inheritance, and sharing that with me – and you!

The classic passage that so parallels this is in Colossians 1.

There we learn of the cosmic dimensions of what Jesus came to accomplish.

¹³ For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--

all things have been created through Him and for Him.¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,²² yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach-
- (Col 1:13-22)

He will sum all things up in Himself. He who was given all the Father's chosen or elect ones from before the foundation of the world, He is, He will, He must be the head over all things; He must have many brethren by adoption.

Those who are being conformed now to Him, being changed from darkness to light, are hid in him already, are new creatures in Christ, are sanctified and being sanctified in preparation for that marked horizon, based on God's purpose and predestination.

So there are two passages here on glorification. There are two words on eternity past – the roots = foreknowledge and predestination. There are two on God's application in time – the trunk = calling and justification. And there are two on God's ultimate or postdestined purpose to eternity – glorification and this great family conformed perfectly to Jesus the firstborn, the Son of God.

This brings us then to what God does for us in this life on our way to glory. He calls and He justifies. But we will await next week to come to these two parts of the trunk of the tree.

Let us close with five questions.

First of all, do you know you are going to heaven? heaven is not a great hope-so, or a great maybe. We are to know that our names are written there, that heaven is a place I call my home. We should not have doubts about this in any significant way. John wrote five whole chapters in his first epistle so that we may KNOW we have eternal life! Talk to us, to your pastor or your elders, if you have questions about your salvation, and the way to heaven. God has shown that way clearly in a book. And that book is the Bible! We want to give you, not our answers, but God's answers! How he desires all people to be saved!

Second, do you know something of what heaven is to be like? Heaven is where God dwells supremely, a place of great glory, great light, great and holy beauty – a place to be prized above everything else, because God is there! Jesus asked, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul? To lose heaven? But how do we get there? How is heaven ours? Our next question points us in the right direction.

Third, do you see that heaven is a place where Jesus is central? All are conformed to him! Jesus is the door to heaven, he is the way, the truth and the life, sent by the Father to bring us to glory. And He is the center! Heaven is not heaven without Jesus! The Puritans used to put it in this striking way – given me hell and Jesus over heaven without

him! Do you know Him? Christianity is not so much a religion as it is a Person, and a personal relationship, that has religious benefits! Can you answer me clearly, Who is Jesus the Christ? What was he doing on the cross? Why must we have faith in him apart from works to be saved?

Fourth, do you recognize, do you feel there must be a great change in us if we are to come to heaven and not to hell. Jesus did not lie to us when he said wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to eternal destruction – and many there are who enter it. But few come into the small gate of the gospel and the narrow way of life everlasting! Do you know what it means to be born again? Jesus said you cannot see God's kingdom unless you be born again. Do you know what it means to be converted? Jesus said unless you become as a little child and are converted, you will not see life. Do you know what it means to be pardoned of all of your sins in the great message of justification by faith alone? Do you know what it means to be a true Christian?

Fifth, do you see that heaven is a brotherly place – a place of great and perfect love? Paul said very sharply – all are accursed who do not love the Lord! No Love? No Life! And our love to God is a lie if we do not love our neighbor as ourselves, and especially fellow believers! Why, you are even supposed to love your enemies! See that unless heaven's love begins to enter you here, you will not enter heaven's lover hereafter! Are you a loving man, woman, young person? Husbands, do you love your wives with a Christlike love? Wives, do you love your husbands so much that you will live for them? Husbands, do you die for your wives? Is this a loving church? Or just a polite body of nice people? Be Christians! We believe in Christianity, not "Nice-ianity"!