

Five Gold Links to Glory 2

Romans 8:29-30

We were introduced last week to the golden chain of God's purpose in these two mountain-like verses. God has eternally aimed at having a people for himself to all eternity. And we considered the last links first – being conformed perfectly to the image of God's Son or glorification.

We said these are the leaves and branches and fruit of this one purpose of God.

This future perfection and glory is especially important to keep in view as we come to the middle links today. All those who are glorified were called and justified. Calling and justification form the trunk of the tree, growing out from the roots of our next message, predestination.

So we touch on God's **practical** purpose, His **applied** purpose to save and to glorify. All, and I mean all, those who are foreloved, elected, predestined to glory, to heaven, are sinners, and in need of a great change, a double change.

Justification refers to the change in our relationship to God. He was our enemy because of our sin. The great doctrine of justification by faith alone is revisited here by Paul.

And calling is the change inside ourselves. We are not only enemies to God, but spiritually dead and rebellious in our sins. The great doctrine of regeneration, of being born again in effectual calling is first.

Our first point here is to see that the Lord alone does this for us.

We do not call ourselves, regenerate ourselves, make ourselves righteous in God's sight or forgive ourselves.

The Lord calls and the Lord justifies! Salvation is not in our hands, it is in His! And that is such good news, great news!

Jesus the Last Adam has come to our rescue and sets up his kingdom of grace. Remember what Romans 5 said. Where sin abounded, grace does much more abound. Where death reigned, life now rules in Him!

Salvation is of the Lord! It is not of man. It is not partly of God and partly of man. It is all from above. That is the great difference between the gospel and all man-made religions. Are we saved by ourselves, by our deeds, or does God reach down and save us? Are we saved by grace, or are we saved by works? Does the law become our Savior, or do we have a Savior given to us freely, and we are saved by faith alone? Can the deeds of the flesh ever compare with the fruit of the Spirit?

These two things are the heart and soul of Paul's gospel. These are the two things Paul has centered on in this greatest of all his books, the letter to the Romans.

Recall how the book began. Paul boasting in the gospel of God! The gospel is BOTH the righteousness of God, AND the power of God.

The righteousness of God addresses man's unrighteousness. The power of God addresses man's ungodliness. The gospel is the righteousness of God to forgive all sin in justification. And the gospel

is the power of God to call us out of sin's hold on us and give a new nature.

That is what we have then in Romans 3-5, and Romans 6-8 – justification and calling.

And both of them flow from Christ and His cross.

The two great pillars of the gospel are the righteousness of God by imputation – from Jesus to us – which triumphs over the broken law and the justice of God. And this is always joined with the life-giving Spirit – again, from Jesus to us – which triumphs over the flesh and makes us new. Calling and justification are God's doors in His Son to perfectly bring us to eternal life.

And see how both are absolutely necessary.

Think of a person who has a new heart for God and things above, but still under the wrath and curse of God for unpardoned sin!

Or think of a person who has all of their sins forgiven but in their heart and life, still have the nature of the devil!

The Lord gives in His Son, in the gospel, the good news – a new heart, and a new record!

We will not spend as much time on justification, since that has been so fully developed already. We believe in the double imputation where our sins all of them were laid on Jesus our sacrificial lamb. He paid the debt of all our sins. He buried them in his tomb. God's judgment on our sins was all fulfilled in Jesus on the cross, when He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?' and finished the payment there in that most marvelous spot. So our sins go to Him. But

that is not all. His righteousness comes to us. Jesus the Just was made Unjust for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in Him. Our filthy and guilty robe – nothing more than a rag, really – is put on him, and his robe of righteousness is put on us. Paul testifies of his deepest desires at the finish of his life, in Philippians 3 – ‘to be found with a righteousness not my own!’ Another’s righteousness – not his own works or deeds, but the obedience of another, even the righteousness of Christ Jesus, what is called the righteousness of God!

Now all of that is a gift, freely fulfilled by Jesus, and freely offered from Jesus.

How does one received this gift? By being good enough? We just said there is none righteous except for Him! No, it is by faith, receiving Him and His righteousness as our Savior, and resting in this greatest gift ever!

But all flesh trusts not in the Lord, but in themselves. That is a hallmark of humanity – trust in yourself, believe yourself, live for yourself, and hope in yourself. Look around you – that is humankind’s creed for sure!

So here is where calling precedes justification, since faith comes first to receive the gift of salvation. How do you get dead hands to grasp, dead lips to confess and a dead heart to open to the offer of life?

This is where calling precedes justification. Paul no doubt refers to calling in part because of verse 28 – *called* according to his purpose.

There are two calls in the New Testament. There is the general call found often in the four gospels, where Jesus says that many are called, but few are chosen. In other words, there is a general call that is

broadcast to everyone calling them to believe and repent for the gospel. But not everyone responds to that call. In fact most do not.

But then there is a special and effectual call. This is the powerful life-giving voice of God calling of the dead out of their sins. Paul speaks of this pointedly in Ephesians 2. Those who were dead in trespasses, God quickened or gave life to them. The believer has been called out of the kingdom of darkness, even though they had been blind and deaf to God. Or take the vivid illustration of Jesus calling Lazarus! How could Lazarus hear Jesus command to rise up and come forth? It is because the Spirit accompanies that life-giving command, right? Without that power, Lazarus doesn't move.

So our passage says that everyone who is going to heaven, and only these, are called and justified. They alone are raised by immortal power and resurrection life in Christ. All Christians have by His power been raised from the tomb of their sins, and are pardoned of all their iniquities by faith, and are made the righteousness of Christ that none can charge them.

This is applied in time, yet here it is found in the purpose of God, in his mind, his purpose. There must be a salvation from the flesh by the Spirit, and from the broken law by faith. And God purposed this to take place in all who are predestined and foreknown.

God must work this miracle of calling, of giving a new heart to sinners, to turn them from darkness to light, from the ways of sin and death to the ways of grace and life.

Three very powerful portraits are used to describe the change God works in you if you are called.

The first is that are made a new creation, a new creature. Ephesians 2 again: “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...” Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that we become new creatures in Christ. He who at the beginning commanded, ‘Let there be light’ has so spoken and shined in our dead, dark lost hearts. In Ezekiel 36, a new heart is transplanted and the old, hard stone heart is removed.

So think of it – the power of God creating this world out of nothing, this tremendous, incredible power, is what changed you from being a an old creation to a new. Without anyone’s aid, God does what all angels and men can never do – create you again in the image of His Son.

That is the first illustration. The second is similar. You have been born again. John 3 finds Jesus startling a Jewish teacher that unless we are born again, we are not going to heaven. Are you born again? What does that mean? It means a new beginning; a second birth of a spiritual and gracious sort. A new life appears. Peter uses the same language of being born again of incorruptible seed. A great and eternal new seed is planted!

Again, as with natural birth, so with the supernatural. How much involvement did you have in your first birth? Did you birth yourself? Dr. Hong, is that how babies are made? They make themselves? So God by His Spirit gives this new life, a new creation, a new birth!

Very powerful these two illustrations. The last is no less so – you have been raised from the dead in your calling. The power at work in Jesus’ resurrection and ascension into heaven, is at work in those who are rescued from the hold of sin and the world and the devil, and are lifted

up and out of the cemetery of their sins, into life with God! Paul says you died with Christ and rose again with him, spiritually. One day you will have a body just like His – 1 John 3:2. But now, you are to seek those things above where Christ is seated, setting your mind on things above and not things on the earth, for you have died and your life, your new life is hid with Christ in God!

What great news is all of this! God is able to change the worse lives for new created, new born, new resurrected lives, heavenly lives, eternal life! Jesus said he has come that we might have life, true life, and life more abundant.

Do you hear that? You who say you cannot change. God can change you. Ask him to do so! How do you know you are born again? You trust in Jesus! You turn from your ways and come and receive Him as your Savior!

Whitefield said it well to those in his day who believed religion was just a matter of education and professing certain trues. He said to his colleagues, ‘there is a difference between us – you believe in a Jesus outside of you; we believe in a Jesus who is both inside and outside of us!’

Is Jesus in you? Has He come and taken up his place in your heart? Have you welcomed him into your soul fully, to be your Savior and King? Governor Newsom says you can only have a few guests over at Thanksgiving. Well, the first guest on your list must be Jesus.

Oh let his new life be yours! Be comforted today that not only has God provided full salvation in His Son – all your sins carried by him upon the cross; a new nature, a new life, of immortality and heaven,

planned and purposed for you before you received it? Before you recognized your need for it? Before you even existed, your heavenly Father made such rich provision for you?

This is at the center of the building block of sure and assured life, of your eternal security, here in this best of all chapters in the Bible!

Think of it as we close! In my old Thompson Chain Reference Bible – there is seven-fold diagram of our eternal assurance here in Romans 8. Believer walk in the steadfastness of this salvation, as called and justified unto heaven!

1. Number one, there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus – 1-4
2. Number two, the Spirit regenerates, sanctifies, and will raises you from the dead – 5-11
3. Then right now you are called the children of God and joint-heirs with Jesus – 12-17
4. Fourth, all believers are sustained through their afflictions by hope and help of the Spirit – 18-28
5. Fifth, you have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son – 29-30
6. Sixth, God is for you. He gave His Son for you, who can be against you? What will He not give to you? 31-34
7. Seventh and last, nothing can separate you from the infinite and unchangeable love of God in Christ; no matter how hard they try – 35-39

Live as His chosen, called and faithful people. Amen.