

# Glorification: Ultimate Finish

*God's Plan of Redemption*

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## **Faith Church**

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Normally, Saturday mornings around the Curtis household are fairly casual. This Saturday was an exception, today was a bit of an exception. Instead of gradually getting the kids up and having some french toast casserole and having some Saturday morning cartoons and much needed Spiderman and Ninja Turtles with Silas, sometimes the girls as well.

Instead of that, I decided to get up at the crack of dawn and spend the majority of the morning and early afternoon torturing myself along with three other friends, they're closer friends now. The event is called "Tough Mudder" and believer it or not, my friends and I worked hard for months in order to prepare for 10-12 miles of rough terrain infused with 25 military grade obstacles developed by the British Special Forces, designed to establish all-around strength, to test all-around stamina, mental grit and comradery. Can I get an "Oorah!"

We slogged through hundreds of yards of thigh-deep mud. We crawled on our faces under barbed wire. We carried logs. We carried each other. We crawled on our elbows through pitch-black, claustrophobic tunnels, some of which were partially submerged and filled with water. We swam through dumpsters of ice, muddy ice. We climbed rope. We climbed walls. We didn't climb each other as much, but they look like they did there. We ran through trenches filled with smoke and fire. We crawled under and ran through unavoidable cables with electric current flowing through them, some were carrying 10,000 volts of electricity. And in case what you're wondering what that feels like, it is not good.

My friends and I could only liken it to being punched in the face when you're not ready for it. It was really bad, bad. That was a bit of embarrassing, that particular trial right there was a little bit embarrassing for our team. We were yelling a little bit. Don't worry, they made us sign a death waiver. And, yes, they probably call it a death waiver and on purpose.

But we weren't the only ones. In fact, to date, over one million people have participated in Tough Mudder events around the world. And why? Why in the world would we punish ourselves. Yes, it's for a charity, it's for wounded warrior projects. So, they're raising funds. But why wouldn't we just send a check? Why in the world would we train and

plan and sacrifice cheeseburgers and Big Macs and train and plan some more. Simply to be involved in an event which most people would call needlessly insane. Well, I'll tell you why, it's because we know what it feels like to cross the finish line. We know that glorious feeling of accomplishment when everything we've worked for has finally paid off and in one way, shape or form we are victorious. And I'd be willing to bet that each of you know what I'm talking about. Whether or not you're a Tough Mudder, and you would know if you were a Tough Mudder because you would have one of these. So, if you see any of those floating around this morning, those are our Tough Mudders from our church who were involved in that event. But if you don't have one of these, I'm sorry. It's ok.

I know that each one of us knows what it means to pursue and in many cases, cross a finish line of some sort. We know the wait, we know the stakes of failure. Maybe it was your first date. You'd been waiting, trying to build up the courage to talk to that boy or girl and ask them out and finally you did and they said, "Yes." Finish line. Maybe like me you dated your wife for nine years and then you were finally able to get married. The finish line. It's a good finish line your wedding day. Starting your life with your spouse. Maybe for you you finally landed that dream job, maybe you finally saved up enough cash for your first car. The glory of the first car, it's a finish line. Maybe you studied hard, maybe even hard enough to graduate with honors. Here's one, maybe you've been working hard to pay debt that's been following you around for a long time. You've been getting your act together, you've been spending within your means and finally that debt is paid off, you're debt free, you're in the black. What a relief! It's a finish line.

We know what it means to visualize success and pursue a goal with all its trials, its challenges and even at times its monotony. And you know that glorious feeling when you finally reach that destination.

This morning, we're going to be talking about glorification. For the past several weeks we've been talking about God's plan for redemption. And this is the final deal right here. This morning we're talking about glorification. My goal is to help us get a good theological grasp of what God has to say about it. And hopefully put us in a better place to set our eyes on the ultimate finish line. To live our lives in the context of glory.

Let's begin by reading Romans, chapter 8, verses 12-30. This will be a chunk here and we're going to start gaining some perspective. I would encourage you to go ahead and turn there in your Bibles and keep a hand in Romans 8 as we're going to be referencing that all morning long.

“So then, brethren, we are under no obligation to the flesh, to live according to the flesh for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are

children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

That’s our apex verse right there, Romans, chapter 8, verse 30.

What Paul is describing here isn’t sugar coated by any means. He was giving the Christians in Rome and us the most realistic picture he could of what to expect in the Christian life. The good, the bad and the ugly. We see words and phrases like suffering, anxious longing, subjection to futility, slavery to corruption, groaning, pains of childbirth, weakness. Did you notice all those phrases in that passage? But we also see words and phrases like spirit of adoption as sons, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, revelation of the Sons of God, glorified with him, freedom of the glory of the children of God, first fruits of the Spirit, adoption as sons, redemption of our bodies. Hope the Spirit helps, hope the Spirit himself intercedes for us, hope he intercedes for the saints. All things worked together for good to those who are called according to his purpose. Those who are foreknown, predestined, conformed, called, justified and glorified. What an encouraging passage.

Paul want us to understand not only the struggle, but that struggle within the context of glorification. And the finish line is where we're going to start this morning because if you're anything like me visualizing the finish line makes all the difference in the world. For believers, that finish line is glorification. So let's dig in and find out just exactly what is glorification.

The Tyndale Bible Dictionary contains a concise definition when it says: glorification is the completion, the consummation, the perfection, the full realization of salvation. We see the finality of the salvation process even in the language of Romans 8. The use of the word "glorified" in its past tense, that's intentional. That kind of language emphasizes specifically that it is as good as done. It will be accomplished. We need a fuller picture if we're really going to set out eyes on the finish line.

Glorification is about victory. We sang a lot about that this morning. We just sang, "God your are my God. You're glorious. You're victorious." We purposefully, as a church, sing a lot about the victory of Christ because it has a lot of implications. It's about the win, it's about who conquers who, it's about who's still standing at the end of the fight when the dust settles.

In Ephesians 1 we see clearly that it's Christ. Christ demonstrated ultimate victory in his glorification. It says,

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

Amen? You cannot paint a more decisive picture of victory and Christ's glorification. I don't know about you, but that sounds like a team that I would like to be on. How about you? Yes? The one thing that the devil thought could crush God's plan, death, simply ensured its achievement. Like pouring gasoline on a fire. Christ was humble even to death, but now he is exalted, he is lifted up. Not only do we see victory through Christ's glorification, but we will share in this victory through our inheritance and glorification with Christ.

Several passages are lifted here. If you have your thumbs still in Romans 8, just glance down through these verse with me that emphasize this aspect.

Verse 11, “He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies.”

Verse 15, “You have received a spirit of adoption as sons.”

Verses 16 and 17, talking about us being children of God, “And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”

Romans 8:29, “So that He would be the firstborn,” and that’s talking about Christ, “so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.” What? You mean there’s an aspect of this where we would be considered brothers and sisters with Christ? That’s a very important truth when we’re talking about inheritance. Glorification is about that kind of victory.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. And this is another passage where you’re going to want to keep your finger. These are the two main passages. You’re going to want to keep a thumb there. We’ll reference these two passages quite a bit as we dig into this. Are you there? Right.

Verse 54, “When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.” Paul is saying, “When we die and when we step out into eternity, then will come about the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory. O death, where is your sting. The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is victory in Christ.

So, glorification is about victory and glorification is about change. And change for the better. Some theologians describe this change as the perfection of sanctification. We just sang beautiful things this morning. What a powerful lyric to describe that ever increasing process of growing towards Christ-likeness. He brought us out of the dust and he’s molding us and shaping us into the image of Christ. Pastor Steve spoke last week about that from Philippians, chapter 2, the responsibility of sanctification as a process. Well, that is a bit different than what we’re talking about this morning. Glorification is an event, it happens at a point in time. Remember our definition? It’s the completion, the full realization of our salvation.

And when it happens in a point in time, there is change. There are spiritual and physical changes. The first of which is entrance spiritually into the presence of the Lord at death. 2 Corinthians 5:8 makes a strong case when Paul makes the distinction that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Latch onto that truth, hold onto that, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. From a spiritual standpoint, that’s really good news. It’s at that point that a believer no longer has to deal with the effects of sin. Temptation, trial and suffering, the groaning is over. And the eagerly anticipated finish line is crossed.

The other part of this is our entrance physically into the presence of the Lord at his return. That's the qualifier here, at his return. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 13-18 says, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who sleep," that's those who are dead, "so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." Joel Blake is down here waiting for me to say something about zombies, I just know it. This isn't zombies, people. This is going to be glorious. This is glorious!

"Then we who are alive and remain." When Christ returns, "we will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

And that's exactly my goal this morning, to encourage you with these words. Now, I may have opened up a whole other can of worms with that passage. I hope that you didn't get lost in some of those details. But, really, for the purposes of this study this morning, here's what we can glean from that. First, for those who die before Christ's return, glorification is going to happen in two phases. The first at death. Remember, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And then the second phase act Christ's return. The dead in Christ will rise first. The second thing that we can glean from that passage is for those alive at Christ's return, our spiritual and physical entrance into God's presence happens all at once. Aren't you praying for that? It will happen all at once. I want to be alive when Christ returns, that would be awesome.

Now, here's the really cool stuff. Let's look at some details of the physical change. And we're going to be back in 1 Corinthians quite a bit for this as well. There's a bunch that we don't know and you'll see Paul chiding us in a moment for even asking these sorts of questions, but here's what we do know. Upon Christ's return, our bodies will be changed. If you're in 1 Corinthians, look at 15, look at verse 51-53, "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." Some of you remember Pastor Good used to reference this as the nursery worker's theme verse. "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." Beautiful. Not exactly what's being said here. We know what he was talking about though. We can still relate. But get what's happening here, we're not all going to die, we already established that. When Christ returns, some of us are still going to be alive. But we will all be changed, we do know that. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Then secondly, what we know, is that our bodies will be like Christ's. We see this referenced in verse 20 and 49 of 1 Corinthians 15. And this is a powerful argument, here referenced in verse 20, "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep." Alright, the first fruits implies there's more fruit to come. So that's

referencing the redeemed. And then in verse 49, “Just as we have borne the image of the earthy.” I love that word, I experienced some earth yesterday. That’s talking about Adam, God molded from the dust of the earth. “Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.” That’s speaking of Christ.

And then this last thing that we do know, our bodies will go from lame to awesome. Can you say that with me? Lame to awesome. Ok, that’s really all we need to know. And we’re going to see that here in this very intriguing portion of 1 Corinthians 15, starting in verse 35. Follow along with me. And this is where Paul is chiding us, “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’ You fool!” How do you like that? “You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh.” Don’t get lost in the metaphor here. “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.” This is for us. “It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”

If there’s a natural body, there’s also a spiritual body. Wow. What good news. Right? We don’t know exactly what our glorified bodies are going to look like but we know that they’re going to be way more awesome than the ones we have now. Amen? Amen.

Now, one last quick aspect of glorification of what glorification is all about, in case you’re wondering where all of this is going. Glorification is about the new. It’s about the new.

If you’ve got your thumb in Romans 8, look at verses 19-22 with me. Remember, it says

“The anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”

Creation is waiting for its turn to be glorified. And guess what? It’s waiting because it knows what you’ve got and it wants it too. In fact, it wants, it says specifically the freedom of the glory of the children of God. Well, it will get its turn and it will be glorious.

This is the last passage that I'll have you turn to, Revelation 21. I want you to see it for yourself. I've got it on the screen but I think it's healthy for us to see that right there in our Bibles. Starting in verse 1, this is John speaking here,

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.’ And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’”

Amen! And listen, this is where this is going.

“And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’ Then He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.’”

I think we would be remiss this morning if we did not remind ourselves of the stakes. The stakes are high. If you thought today was just going to be Candy Land for everyone, you'd be wrong. If you thought it was just going to be coming up roses for everyone, you'd be wrong. Glorification is for the redeemed. So make sure you know which side of this you're on. Today, get it settled. Where's your inheritance? Is it secured in Christ? Because there is a heaven to be gained, yes, there is glory. But there is also a hell to be shunned. We're looking forward to that victory, that change, that newness.

Now that we have a fairly good grasp of what glorification is, let's get a better understanding what that means for us today in the here and now. Let's see what God has to say about preparing for glory.

I want to sensitively to this, because I know that there is suffering even new and recent suffering for many in our congregation who have experienced the death of loved ones. But we know that there will be suffering. It's implied all over scripture, all over Romans 8. Remember, suffering, anxious longing, subjection to futility, slavery to corruption, groaning, pains of childbirth, weakness. Plus, if we look just a few verses later in Romans 8:35 we see, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword. It's expected. We're being killed all day long as we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

That kind of suffering is implied, it's expected. But now, we have a context. We know what the finish line looks like. Amen? And that makes all the difference.

Paul so aptly states in Romans 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us." So, if we're going to prepare for glory in the future we need to prepare for suffering right now. And in order to do that, we need to cultivate endurance.

Hebrews 12:1-3, "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Run with endurance. We're just supposed to do that? How are we supposed to do that? Look at the rest of the passage here, it says, "by fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." We know what perfection of faith is, now don't we? That is a reference right there to glorification. "The perfecter of faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Christ had his eyes on the finish line. In fact, he had his eyes on you having your eyes on the finish line. He was setting the example for us in how he endured the cross.

We need to cultivate endurance and we need to cultivate anticipation. 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 says, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air." Our prize is not temporary. It's everlasting, it's never ending. We need to keep that before us especially when the going gets tough. And if you're wondering what that suffering is for you this morning, maybe you need to ask yourself what is the one circumstance or the one thing that I wish God would change, or I wish he would remove from my life. Have you considered that might be your cross? That might be your cross. And you need to endure and you need to anticipate even through that. Make sure you're dwelling on and building an anticipation for the finish line.

You've heard the phrase "they are so heavenly minded that they're no earthly good." Have you heard that phrase? That's a lie from the devil! That is not true. If you have your focus on heaven and glory, your race that you've run is going to be focused. You're not just going to be running willy nilly. When you fight, you're going to land those punches, you're not going to swing and miss. You're going to land those punches, you're not just going to be beating the air as Paul described.

We're going to conclude with this, this morning just briefly, the hope. I want us to really understand the hope of glory. Go back to Romans 8. Now, we're going to take the verses that are past. Our Romans 8:31 verse. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" The inheritance of the

redeemed is inevitable. God spared no expense in demonstrating the security and certainty of our inheritance.

Continuing on, “Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.” The advocate of the redeemed is undefeatable. We will be accused but our accuser is no match for Christ. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For your sake we are being put to death all day we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” Amen?

You know at Tough Mudder, at the beginning of the race they give us all the safety information. This is the universal sign if you see somebody face down in the mud, you need to call the EMTs over on their ATVs to come help us out. And for good reason. People get dehydrated, their muscles start cramping up, they just are over-exhausted. The sun is too hot, etc. etc. Not everybody makes it to the end. Not everybody makes it, it’s just the reality of it. But that is completely different from what we have as the redeemed.

The good news is that the suffering we endure will never have the power to keep us from the finish line. We cannot fail in the end. But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us. The victory of the redeemed is inescapable against seemingly insurmountable odds, the redeemed will cross the finish line. For I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. Stay your eyes on the finish line.

Let’s stand together and pray.