

God's Golden Chain of Salvation

Text: Romans 8:29–30

Theme: Our salvation is entirely of God's grace in every phase of redemption

Introduction — text under consideration this morning is Romans 8:30

- We've moved quite slowly in v. 28 & 29 due to the weight each carries
- v. 30 is no different, as we will see God's glorious golden chain of salvation

Let's pray:

God of mercy, you promised never to break your covenant with us. Amid all the changing words of our generation, speak your eternal Word that does not change. Then may we respond to your gracious promises with faithful and obedient lives; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Now, let's hear God's Word:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:28-30

How does God carry out His plan to conform us to the image of Christ?

- He shows us through Paul's words in this unbreakable chain of redemption
- you & I struggle with sin while striving to live a holy life
- we face hardships, heartbreaks, troubles of various sorts
- we may, even in days to come, suffer persecution at hands of those who hate God
- so Paul uses an ancient speaking device to show how solid is our salvation
- the device was called a chain & each link builds upon the previous
- when complete the chain is viewed as unbreakable

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

Romans 5:3-5

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”

Romans 10:14-15

Here we see same pattern:

- foreknew...predestined...called...justified...glorified
- we've seen two links already, last Lord's Day
- we'll quickly review them so we can see how other three keep building golden chain
- by doing so we'll see how our salvation is entirely of God's grace in every phase of redemption

The first link appears in phrase...

I. HE FOREKNEW

- we saw this word isn't about knowing things but people
- Adam knew his wife, Eve meaning he loved her
- God knew His people Israel, meaning He loved His people
- when did God set His love in this covenantal relationship upon you?
- in eternity past
- this means God took the initiative, He was proactive in loving you
- He didn't sit back hoping things might work out for the best
- this knowledge & loving means God saw a big valley full of dead, dry bones
- He saw dead sinners at enmity against Him
- what God saw was people screaming, "We'll not have this man ruling over us"
- and He loved His people anyway

1. We also sought to address the objection that this seems unfair

- why did God choose, know, love anybody?
- possible answers might be...

1) Because of their good works

- anyone who knows Scripture well will cry out
- That's impossible; we don't please God by good works because we're not good to begin with
- salvation is all of God's grace

2) Because He saw who would believe

- those who answer this way claim it is according to their free will that they choose God
- problem here is twofold:
- it puts God in position of obligation to save us based upon something we do
- or it means God didn't know you would do this until you did
- which means there was a time when God did not know all things
- both of these are against Scriptural teaching

3) Because of His good pleasure

- what we saw last week is God saved us for no other reason than His good pleasure
- He loved us because He did

“...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...”

2 Timothy 1:9

Second link occurs in phrase...

II. HE PREDESTINED

- ordered our life so we would reach certain destination: conformed to image of Christ
- be clear on this: He did this with a clear end goal in mind
- that's the word: pre – before; and destination – an end, a goal, a clear purpose
- that end, that purpose is that each one He redeems will most surely be like Christ
- conformed to the image of Christ
- remember this on those days when your faith seems small
- call this to mind when so discouraged can barely hang on
- preach this to self when you've botched your holiness once again
- God's purpose is that you be conformed to image of His dear Son

- and He will do it; His covenant promises grounded in His oath, His covenant, His Son
- give thanks for this and remember something Spurgeon once said
- I am so glad He chose me before He saw me. If He'd waited until He saw me, He might not have wanted me!

Moving now to the third link in this chain...

III. HE CALLED

- God's call is His summons by His all-powerful & all-conquering word to faith in Christ
- He makes an offer to all men & women
- if they will turn from their sins and embrace Christ as Savior, He will pardon for eternity
- two parts to this link:

1) External & general

- **Matt. 11:28 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**
- this is our Lord's great invitation
- He preached often to Jerusalem, yet wept that they would reject His sweet call
- thru Ezekiel, He calls out, “Why will you die? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone...”
- invitation goes out to all, but too many reject and do not answer that call

2. Internal & effective

- but there is a call of God that will absolutely & irresistibly be received
- in every instance in NT but one, this is what is meant by “calling”
- it is God's effectual calling to salvation & the calling creates the response
- illustrated well by Jesus' calling to Lazarus
- He did not generally call all dead to come to life
- He called, effectively and effectually, Lazarus alone
- Lazarus could no more have disobeyed than Jesus when God thru Spirit said Come forth!
- this isn't some weak kind of wooing
- this isn't preaching with emotional manipulation and begging
- no, remember: Lazarus dead & buried for four days
- no ability to come back, cannot raise himself
- Mary & Martha couldn't raise him; you & I can't raise the dead either
- but here is Christ, Son of God, come with power to call forth
- words might be same: Lazarus, come out
- but Jesus' call creates the ability to respond for it goes with power to transform
- when Paul preached outside Philippi by the river to group of women
- he called all there to repent & believe
- only Lydia responded and believed the gospel
- why only her? Because God called her
- above Paul's voice & pleas, she heard God and was constrained to believe
- **“...and from there to Philippi.... We remained in this city some days. And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we ...sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia.... The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.” Acts 16:12-14**

3) Always preach & let God do the calling

- this tells us to never stop holding out the gospel of Jesus Christ

- tell all who will listen that God is willing to save them
- this is how God will use His divine call, based upon His foreknowledge & predestining grace

Now, we come to fourth link, which is...

IV. HE JUSTIFIED

- spent a great deal of time with this link when we went thru Galatians
- we saw there: when judge justifies an accused man, he declares that he is righteous

1. Declared, not made

- this is declaration that person's status in God's eyes has changed: justified, righteous
- nothing about past changes; still yours in the past
- you can still call to mind so many wrongs, so many sins, so few even decent deeds
- but salvation—justification—not based on that but on God's declaration
- because of what Christ has done, you now have His righteousness
- He obeyed perfectly; that's righteousness complete—obedience to God's law
- He died & took the penalty of all that sin of yours upon Himself
- this is why it is such a wonder that we can cry out: No condemnation!
- Judge declares, "You may go free. Case dismissed."
- is this not why we sing, "Tis mercy all immense and free, and O my God it found out me"

2. Quick example: Luke 18

- v. 10: **"Two men went up to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."**
 - Pharisee is respectable, man of the people, fine example of holy living, surely, right?
 - other: tax collector, despised as Jew who helps Rome take Jews money for taxes
 - you see imperfect man
 - but hear their prayers
- **Luke 18:11-12 "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'**
 - and he got what he went there for: experience and feeling good about himself
 - but other man: Luke 18:13 "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"
 - contrite, humble, repentant, bringing nothing but only trusting God to save him
 - Jesus' assessment:
- **Luke 18:14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."**
 - he was declared just, righteous, by faith alone
 - that is how it works for any one of us
 - we only find justification at foot of Golgotha's cross on which Prince of glory died
 - there, Lamb of God took away sin of world
 - only way we find grace is that God gives it to whom He will
 - natural, sinful man is man of pride
 - thought of another's righteousness saving him is repugnant; he rebels against it
 - only one who is humbled, recognizes he brings nothing but his sin
 - one who hears that call of God upon him and comes to Christ alone will be justified

These links lead to this fifth link...

V. HE GLORIFIED

- some have wondered: where is sanctification?
- is that not a necessary part of this, that we be made holy?
- yes, and it is right here before you in this word: glorification
- sanctification is glory begun
- glory is sanctification consummated
- no other link is needed

1. Past tense verb: absolute certainty

- isn't this a future event? Yes, indeed it is
- but so certain is it for each believer, it is spoken of as if already in the past
- fitting, since all other words in each link also in past tense of the action done by God
- done, completed, finished, certain, nothing anywhere can keep this from happening

2. glory shall be revealed in each of us

- remember: God's purpose
- conformed to image of Christ—oh, that will be glory for me, glory for me
- and Christ will be glorified all the more: preeminently reflected in all of us together

Conclusion – What a glorious Savior, what a wonderful salvation

- our final destination is absolutely certain
- we WILL be conformed to Christ's image—we will be glorified
- this sequence, this chain is indeed unbreakable
- if you remove one link, whole chain disappears
- salvation is dependent upon us at that point; what a hopeless tragedy that would be!
- but each is secure because it is all based upon God's grace in Christ Jesus
- therefore, this salvation is irrevocable

All this should make your heart swell with hope, assurance, and faith

- matters not your experience, your feelings, your circumstances
- Christ holds you securely in His divine hand
- when you think all is dark around you, run here and preach this to your heart
- breathe in heaven's air, inhale deeply and it will sustain you in all things
- fix your eyes upon Jesus
- set your minds on things above
- and rejoice that your salvation is all of God's grace and not your best efforts

Take this golden chain and wear it gladly

- no weak links, no poor metals here
- entire chain, every connecting point forged by God's all-powerful love & grace

You wouldn't have thought of walking here to church this morning with no coat, hat, gloves

- would have proved fatal—foolishly so
- yet some of you are on dangerous journey
- you don't know Christ, love Him, trust Him
- path you're on leads to dead, judgment, standing before righteous God
- but God has provided His Son for salvation, freedom, and eternal life: take this chain today!