

The Golden Chain of Redemption

By Matthew Black, Pastor

Text: Romans 8:28-30

Date: Sunday, February 07, 2010, 5pm

Series: All Things New

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Romans 8:28-30**. Tonight we are looking at what Christians have referred to throughout the ages as "The Golden Chain of Redemption". How does He bring us to maturity in Jesus Christ? It's my desire to grow in Christ. How does God do it from beginning to end? Tonight we are looking at the DNA of every Christian. We are looking at the map of every Christian's life.

We find our text in **Romans 8:28-30**, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

[Prayer for Guidance]

What encouraging verses. Tomorrow I'm getting ready to take a journey from here to Lafayette. I'll have a map and I'll follow it precisely. God has given every Christian a map. Our Guide is the Holy Spirit of God and He uses the Word of God. We know it is God's will for every Christian to mature in the faith.

Maturing in Christ is inevitable, but it is not easy! There are many different rates that Christians grow at, but all Christians grow. We see this in many verses throughout the Scriptures. For instance consider...

- **2 Thessalonians 2:13**, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth". It is through sanctification and belief of the truth. A person can cut out sanctification from salvation as much as he can cut out faith in Christ.
- His promise is that He will do it—He is in us effecting the changes in us: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (**1 Thessalonians 5:24**). The question is: How will he "do it"?
- Paul says to the Corinthians that God "shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (**1 Corinthians 2:8-9**). How will God sanctify us? How does He bring us to maturity in Jesus Christ? How will God confirm us to the end?

What Does a Full Salvation Look Like?

We tend to view our salvation as one dimensional. In Romans 8:28-30, we find that actually, our salvation is a three -imensional work. To be saved is not simply to be forgiven. It is that for sure! When the Bible speaks of salvation it **certainly** encompasses that, but it is so much more than that. The easiest way to look at it is from the vantage point of time: past, present, and future.

Salvation is a threefold work in us. We have been justified. We have been declared righteous before God based on our complete dependence upon the righteousness and work of Christ on the Cross. But we are being sanctified, and one day He will glorify us in a sinlessly perfect body with our natures perfectly conformed to Christ (Romans 8:28-30). In salvation God not only saves us from the *penalty* of our past sin, He is delivering us from the *power* of the present temptation to sin, and one day on the day of redemption, we will be delivered from the very *presence* of sin altogether. God will complete His work in you!

The following chart should help in visualizing exactly what Christ has promised to do with all believers.

PAST (Our Position)	PRESENT (Our Practice)	FUTURE (Our Promise)
<p>Election/Foreknowledge</p> <p>Calling (drawing, conviction)</p> <p>Regeneration - Conversion (faith / repentance)</p> <p>Justification (declared righteous—imputation occurs—my rags for Christ’s righteousness)</p>	<p>Sanctification (being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ)</p> <p>In sanctification the believer continues repenting and believing...</p>	<p>Glorification (Final redemption which will occur at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The present body of each believer will be changed to a new body incapable of sinning.)</p>
<p>Adoption (given all the rights and privileges of a true child)</p>		
<p>In the past, we look to the giving of the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our future (Eph. 1:13-14).</p>	<p>In the present, we have the Spirit of adoption wherby we cry “Abba, Father”.</p>	<p>In the future, we will have the final adoption, which is the redemption of our bodies at the Second Coming.</p>

Christ promises to accomplish all of the above, not only justification but also sanctification and glorification. Let us understand all the above terms so we see the glory of what Christ promises to accomplish.

I. **Salvation** in the Past (Our **Position**)

Our salvation in the past in the Scriptures is often referred to as a past "sanctification". This sanctification is **positional** and refers to the one-time setting apart of believers from sin unto God. Paul wrote "*unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are **sanctified** in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*"; we are "*in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and **sanctification**, and redemption*" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1:30). This occurs at the moment of conversion and refers to the believer's position in Christ. Paul said to the Corinthian church, that at one time their lives exemplified those that would never enter into the kingdom of God, but Paul says to them: "*but ye are washed, but ye are **sanctified**, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

This sanctification is accomplished through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 13:12), results in our eventual perfection in glory (Hebrews 10:14), and is possessed by all believers (Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2). The Bible uses many terms to help us understand what God is doing in saving us.

A. Election- Predestination

Romans 8:28-30, "29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did **predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren**".

Our salvation began, not on the day that we were saved, but in the mind of God in eternity. Long before the world began, before anything was created, God existed (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-2), and God loved us. We read in **Jeremiah 31:3**, "**I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.**"

It was God's desire from the foundation of the world to enact a covenant that would demonstrate His justice and also His great mercy. This could not be accomplished except for sin entering the world through Adam and God mercifully saving a group of people by giving justice to His Son Jesus Christ. This fixed number of people that the Father gave to the Son are called the "**elect**" (John 6:37; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

Election always takes place in Jesus Christ. We cannot be acceptable before God except through His beloved (Ephesians 1:4). We are chosen before the foundation of the world in Christ.

God's election of sinners occurred in eternity past and is based on absolutely nothing in any person. It was **not** that there was a day when God decided to elect sinners to salvation. Actually, He has always loved them and known them. God's decrees are from everlasting. Election is God from eternity past, setting His everlasting love on a group of undeserving sinners.

Election has more to do with God than it does with man. It demonstrates that God is the only absolute sovereign. God is not obligated to save any. We are

touched with the same depravity as the devils. We deserve the same condemnation. It is not amazing that God sends sinners to hell. It is amazing that He forgives sinners and invites them into heaven.

Both the hell bound sinners and forgiven sinners are equally worthy of hell. The only difference between the saved and the lost is the sovereign love, mercy, and grace of God that He bestows on the elect "according to the good pleasure of his will...which he hath purposed in himself" (**Ephesians 1:5, 9**).

God has chosen to freely bestow His love on sinners who are equally deserving of hell as everyone else, but has chosen them as vessels of His mercy. Others he leaves to their sin as vessels fit for destruction. Paul framed it in **Romans 9:22-24**:

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Application: In case you want to boast about your election, read **1 Corinthians 1:26-30**, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence."

B. Foreknowledge

Romans 8:28-30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son".

Peter tells us that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (**1 Peter 1:2**). Paul tells us "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate..." (**Romans 8:29**). What is God's foreknowledge? Some believe that God looked down the corridors of time and saw who would choose Him, and He chose those who would choose Him. There is really a lot wrong with that theory.

- First, if that is true, God did not make a choice. He simply confirmed your choice.
- Secondly, if this theory of foreknowledge is true, then it contradicts what God actually saw when He did look down the corridors of time. He did not see any softness of heart or willingness in any one of us. In fact God looked down upon us, and it was not pretty.

"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (**Psalms 14:2-3**).

The idea of foreknowledge is that God "to know intimately" and could be translated "whom he foreloved."¹

The clearest understanding of foreknowledge is found in the Old Testament in **Jeremiah 1:5**, where God tells Jeremiah personally, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." God's foreknowledge is an intimate love that has lasted from eternity that includes God's entire purpose for that person, including complete conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. He says it another way in **Jeremiah 31:3**, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." All those God loved and knew intimately from eternity past he predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**).

C. Calling

Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

God may have elected us before time, but He calls us in time, in our life time. Calling refers to the divine drawing of a person unto God for salvation in the span of human history. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (**John 6:44**).

1. The word's main use is to drag people by force before a magistrate, or to draw a sword by force out of its sheath. Essentially it is to exercise great influence over someone or something. In two places, John 12:31 and John 6:44, it refers to God exercising an omnipotent influence over people.
2. The calling is illustrated in John 11, where Jesus calls Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus came when Christ called.

The Bible says every person Christ calls he justifies (**Romans 8:30**). Of course, all men everywhere are called to repent, yet only those who are effectually called actually come and are declared righteous before God. "Many are called, but few are chosen" (**Matthew 22:14**). Christ revealed exactly who are chosen to come in John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out". In short, no human being knows exactly who is called, and so we are to be the mouthpiece of God's calling and "preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). God is calling a people for Himself out of the masses.

Calling is the voice of God confirming the Scriptures in the heart of man. The Spirit of God is sent to convict the heart of man, "and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). When Paul went to Corinth, the Lord confirmed to Paul, "I have much people in this city" (**Acts 18:8**). So the call goes forth into the hearts of God's elect and draws them to the Father. And all who are called are justified (**Romans 8:30**).

¹ John Murray. *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 317.

D. Regeneration/Conversion

Regeneration is literally the “new genesis” in the heart of man. We look back to the moment of regeneration/conversion as the moment of our salvation. It is the creation of a new heart and a new nature (**2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10**). We are “new creatures”; we are God’s “workmanship”, His masterpiece. Regeneration is entirely the work of God in which the Holy Spirit births or creates a new heart in a totally depraved human being to bring them to Christ.

1. Regeneration is solely the Work of God

The terms employed in Scripture prove this: “creating anew” (Eph. 4:24), “quicken” (John 5:21; Eph. 2:5), “calling out of darkness into light” (1 Pet. 2:9), “commanding the light to shine out of darkness” (2 Cor. 4:6), “alive from the dead” (Rom. 6:13), “new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17), “born again” (John 3:3–7), “God’s workmanship” (Eph. 2:10). These terms denote a work of omnipotent power. The origination of life is impossible to the creature. He can receive life; he can nurture life; and he can use and exert life. But he cannot create life.²

2. Regeneration takes Place through the Word of God

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). Regeneration is always produced through a force outside of man, namely, through the Word of God by which man can be “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (**1 Peter 1:23**; cf. Romans 10:17; John 6:63). Regeneration is always accompanied by the human response of faith and repentance (**Acts 20:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9**).

Thomas Boston said, “Regeneration is not so much the curing of a sick man, as the quickening of a dead man”.³

E. Justification

Romans 8:30, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

To be justified is to be “declared righteous” before God a just and holy God. It is utterly based on Christ’s satisfaction of God’s wrath on the Cross plus nothing else (i.e. propitiation—Romans 3:25; cf. Ephesians 2:8). Justification is imputed to your account when you by faith appropriate the work of Christ. Justification in Christ allows God who is utterly holy and righteous to remain so by meting out justice upon Christ in in the guilty sinner’s place. God remains “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). This justification is appropriated by faith alone. It is clear that “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ...for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (**Galatians 2:16**).

F. Adoption

²William Greenough Thayer Shedd. *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed. (Phillipsburg, N.J: Puritan and Reformed Publications, 2003), 764.

³Thomas Boston. *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Philadelphia: Towar and J. & D. M. Hogan, 1830), 170.

- In the **past**, we look to the giving of the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our future (Eph. 1:13-14).
 - In the **present**, we have the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry “Abba, Father”
 - In the **future**, we will have the final adoption, which is the redemption of our bodies at the Second Coming.
1. The word adoption is literally “sonship”, and it means to be freed from slavery and brought into the family with all the rights and privileges of a natural born child. We are sons and daughters of God. Christ came “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (**Galatians 4:5**).

In adoption, God gives us the assurance that we are sons, and that we will inherit the universe with Christ, as he says in Galatians 4:6-7, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

2. Adoption also confirms the promise of our future salvation, and makes us desire our final redemption, as Paul explains in Romans 8:23, “*Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*”.

II. Salvation in the **Present** (Our Practice)

Romans 8:28-30, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”.

A. **Definition.** Sanctification is to be progressively conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). Jesus did not come simply to gain forgiveness from the **penalty** of our sins, but to save us from the **power** of sin. When Christ comes again, the very **presence** of sin will be entirely eradicated from the believer. God has promised and predestined sanctification for every one who is justified (Romans 8:29-30, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6).

B. **New Hunger**

What does this progressive sanctification look like? Because of the radical change of nature that the child of God experience at conversion (i.e. regeneration, the new birth), he now “hungers and thirsts after the righteousness” revealed in God’s Word (Matthew 5:6; Psalm 1:2). These new desires which are given by the Holy Spirit’s presence lead the believer to a progressive sanctification through a desire to apply the Word of God to his life (Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 17:17; Galatians 5:16). “Walk in the Spirit”, “Abide in Christ”—this is our sole focus now!

Spurgeon said:

Surely, the very holiness of God that puts into us a desire to be holy is a guarantee to us that he will help us to be holy. He that makes us long for purity will work it in us.⁴

⁴ Charles Spurgeon. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 26*, Sermon 2118, “The Planter of the Ear Must Hear” (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1880), 669.

C. **Replacement principle.** If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: **Ephesians 4:22-24**, "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

By application of the Word, the Christian is able to "put off" the habits of the old life and "put on" spiritual disciplines and godly habits (Romans 6:19, 22; Ephesians 4:22-24; Psalm 1:1-3). In this process, the believer is responsible for obedience to the Word of God but is actually **given the ability to obey by God (Philippians 2:12-13)**. This process results in a progressively holy life of victory over sinful lusts (Galatians 5:16) and usefulness for God (2 Timothy 2:21).

D. The **Amputation** principle.

Matthew 5:29-30, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell."

E. Where's the **Power**? Our progressive sanctification begins at and flows out of regeneration where we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) in which the very desires of God are put within the believer's heart. As

This progressive holiness is possible due to our nature being united with the nature of the Holy Spirit. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (**1 Corinthians 6:17**). Our present holiness comes out of our union with Christ so that we can "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This holiness is progressive, and though the Christian may falter and fall into deep valleys of sin, the process of sanctification is in no way halted until the day of death or the Second Coming. The Christian should have great assurance that God is going to complete what He started.

III. Salvation in the Future (Our Promise)

A. Glorification

Glorification refers to our final redemption when God gives us a new body that has no sinful desires. He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (**Philippians 3:21**). God will bring us finally into His presence, and He shall be our God and we shall be His people (Revelation 21:3).

There will come a day when we no longer say with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24).

This last day refers to the consummation of history when Christ appears in the clouds to bring home His bride and destroy the sin-cursed world to create new heavens and a new earth (**2 Peter 3:9-13**).

At that moment, Christians everywhere will put off this sinful corpse of flesh that we have inherited from our father Adam, and we will put on a glorified body like our risen Saviour. In that day sin will have no more power over us. The power and the presence of sin will be completely eradicated! God will join our soul with a perfect glorified body on that Last Day "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians

Paul said the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? 56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ".

One day Christ will come and redeem this sinful body of ours and give us a new body, and we will sin no more! It could happen any moment. Look to the sky—"lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Conclusion: Salvation is not just **justification**, but it is also **sanctification** and **glorification**. Our surety and guarantee is Christ Himself. Look over at Hebrews 7:25 which says that Christ is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them".

I think of the hymn that we sang this morning--

*Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great high Priest whose Name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.⁵*

Christ is pleading not simply for our justification, but also for our sanctification and glorification. He is able to "save us to the uttermost".

⁵ Before the Throne of God Above. Words: Charitie L. Bancroft, 1863.