

God's Unbreakable Chain

The Fifth Link

Romans 8:29-30

February 28th, 2010



The other day on the farm, we took a chain and hooked one end to the loader and the other end to a fence post. We pulled several fence posts out of the ground, and as we were doing that, I was reminded of God's unbreakable chain. We have already discovered that one hook at the beginning of this chain is hooked in eternity past. Now we will discover that the last link of this chain is also hooked in eternity future.

Scripture

“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.”

Glorified

The last link in God's unbreakable chain is the activity of God called glorification. We have learned that God's foreknowledge happened in eternity past. He "foreknew" and "predestined" us. Then, He stepped into

history, or time, and "*called*" and "*justified*" us. As we come to the last link, you will understand that glorification in the life of a believer takes place in eternity future. Please understand that the only people on the earth who have the hope of being "*glorified*" by God are those He has "*justified*."

There are many Christians who do not believe this. There are those who believe that several of these links can be broken, especially this link. The difference in what we believe is based on the context of this chain. Paul is teaching why all things work together for good for the called according to His purpose. Paul is teaching that if you are a believer in Jesus, you are eternally secure. In most Baptist churches, we just call the doctrine "security of a believer" or "once saved, always saved." But the more we study Scripture, we have come to believe that the best terminology for this doctrine is "the eternal security of a believer." We believe the reason he is secure is because his salvation started in eternity past with God's foreknowledge and predestination, not at the moment of belief. Then in real time, through an act of God, God effectually called sinners to salvation. They respond by saving faith and God justifies them at that moment. He makes them right with Himself and they enter into a right relationship with God. According to Scripture, every believer who has been made right by God has the hope and the promise of glorification. Therefore, from the moment you accepted Christ until the time He comes again, you have the promise that nothing will ever happen in your life that will eventually cause your life to turn out badly. Your life must turn out good because God's plan for you is to mold and make you into the image of Jesus Christ. If God's plan is for you to be like Jesus, then you will absolutely be like Jesus one day. Therefore, you are eternally secure.

Let's examine glorification. I define it like this:

Glorification is the act of God whereby He completes our salvation by transforming our bodies into bodies like that of the risen and glorified Savior, Christ Jesus, our elder Brother.

Tenses of Salvation

Throughout the New Testament, the Bible presents our salvation in three tenses: past, present, and future. You have to understand this or you will misunderstand Scripture. The danger of misunderstanding Scripture is that you behave what you believe. If you form a wrong belief, that wrong belief can lead you to wrong behavior. It is important that we believe the truth. The past tense of salvation is justification. The present tense of salvation is sanctification. The future tense of salvation is glorification.

- **Past**

Justification is the act of God whereby He brings a sinner into a right relationship with Himself by dealing with what the sinner has done and who the sinner is. In justification, God deals, once and for all, with the penalty of sin.

- **Future**

Glorification is the future tense of salvation, which we defined above. So, in this unbreakable chain, God jumps from justification to glorification.

- **Present**

Why doesn't Paul mention sanctification? It is because this chain is here to teach us why we are eternally secure in Christ. This chain is not dealing with the human side of salvation; it is dealing with the divine side. Sanctification is a work of God in the life of a believer, but it primarily deals with a believer continually responding to the work of God on a moment by moment basis. I believe the reason Paul doesn't place sanctification here is because it is not a process whereby our salvation is guaranteed. Our salvation is guaranteed by God's foreknowledge, predestination, call, justification and glorification.

Now, it takes Paul a long time to get to behavior because he wants to make sure your behavior is based on the right thing. Behavior cannot be based on how you feel today, it has to always be based on what you know

is right and true. That is why the Bible spends almost 75% of the time dealing with doctrine, and 25% of the time dealing with behavior. It doesn't mean behavior is not important. It means there is a direct correlation between what you believe and how you behave. But from the human side, as we go through life, sanctification is between justification and glorification.

Sanctification is the present tense of salvation. Not only can I say I have been saved, I can also say I am being saved. In other words, there is a present work of God's Holy Spirit in me that I am responding to that is moving me further away from the image of Adam, and more into the image of Jesus Christ. When you were reborn, at that moment, you still looked like who you were before, which is Adam. But you are now right with God and have the Holy Spirit within you. You are dead to sin and alive to God. Therefore, from the moment you were justified until the moment you get glorified, there is going to be continual growth into the image of Jesus. The more you grow, the less you look like Adam.

Physical examples never completely convey spiritual truth, but I want to give you a prime example. On December 30th, 2008, we experienced the miracle of miracles; a grandson was born. Kory and Katie named him Crider Wayne Cunningham. Wayne came from the Cunningham tree and Crider came from the Stout/Crider tree. Everyone knows that if you have descended from the male Cunningham's, there are traits that are passed on to all of the offspring and you look like a Cunningham. So when Crider was born, everyone expected him to look like us. But when he came out and I looked at him for the first time, he didn't look like a Cunningham. He was Alan Stout made over...that is Katie's dad. I was tickled to death to have a grandson but inside I am thinking, oh no! He is a Stout...black hair and beautiful blue eyes. I didn't say a word; I kept all of it in. I didn't say a word because here is what I knew...he is a Cunningham. I knew inside that boy, because he had the Cunningham genes too, there was great potential. For the first few months, everywhere we went people would say, "Boy I hate to tell you this but he doesn't look anything like you!" It was ok, I

knew in my heart of hearts that he had great potential. As he has grown over time, some of you have said that he is starting to look like his dad. Ha! Everyone tells me that Kory looks like me, and if Crider is looking more like his dad, then that means he is beginning to look like me! One day I know that boy is going to grow up into full glorification and physically look just like his Papaw!! He has that potential!

There are times when you look into the mirror and you look and feel and sense that you are still like Adam, but in all reality, you have the Holy Spirit of God inside you. God is working in you and He is moving you further and further away from the image of Adam. One day you are going to be just like Jesus Christ! The reason is because God has promised that everyone He "*justified*", He has also "*glorified*." Glorification is the future tense. It is that day when, in an instant, by the power of God, we are transformed into the image of Jesus Christ once and for all. It's not something that we do; it is fully accomplished by an act of God.

Eternal Security

If you are an astute reader of the Bible, you see a problem with what I am saying. The reason is because in Romans 8:30, "*glorified*" is not in the future tense. It does not say He will one day glorify, it says He "*glorified*", past tense. Do you see the problem? All five of these actions of God are in the same Greek tense; aorist tense verbs, meaning punctiliar action. They are indicative active verbs. Aorist tense does not refer to the time of action, but to the kind of action. All five of these actions are not ongoing, they are instantaneous. They happen and they are completed, they are done. English versions put it in the past tense because it is in the indicative mood, referring to an assertion of fact. In other words, the verb is used to express a fact. So when the Greek translators translated it, they understood that Paul is writing about an action that has already been done.

Glorification

How can glorification already be done when it hasn't happened yet? It is because this is dealing with the divine side of salvation. Think about Isaiah 53. It is a prophesy about Jesus Christ. Seven hundred years before Christ, God showed Isaiah a vision, to the tee, of a Suffering Servant dying on a cross. When Isaiah wrote that, he wrote it in past tense. How could he speak of Jesus in the past tense when He was going to die until seven hundred years after this was written? The prophets had what was called a prophetic past tense. A prophet of God could speak about something in the future that was so certain because God said it was going to happen. He could write of it in the past tense to show its certainty. This would remove all doubt about whether it was going to happen or not. Paul could write in the past tense because God, who is holy, holy, holy, who is both in time and beyond time, decided your salvation in eternity past, even though it will not end until eternity future. When He spoke of it as happening, it decreed that it was going to happen. Therefore, Paul could write it with such certainty that he put it in the past tense.

Wow! I get excited about this, because if this is not true, then we do not have the hope of eternal security. If we do not have the hope of eternal security, then the truth is that all things cannot work together for good. Those who labor the most against election, predestination, effectual call and eternal security of a believer, without realizing it, rip Romans 8:28 right out of our Bibles. The reason for eternal security is not so a believer can be saved and think he can sin and stay saved. It is for you to know that in the midst of whatever suffering you find yourself in, God has a plan for that suffering. God either caused it or is allowing it, but it is not to defeat you. It is to make you more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. I cannot imagine being a Christian and not having this truth to sleep on at night and stand on in the daytime. It changes my whole perspective of everything that happens in my life.

Now be careful. There is wrong teaching in the world that views glorification as already taking place. They teach that it has already started in our spirit/soul and our body will catch up later. They place the spirit/soul in the glorified position and say it cannot sin and that is why you are eternally secure. 2 Corinthians 7:1 says that cannot be true. Paul tells us to cleanse ourselves from all filth of the body and spirit. Romans 8:18-30 tells us that we have been called to suffer with Christ. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him. He begins to tell us why we are suffering and tells us we have the hope of one day looking forward to a redeemed body.

In justification, God deals with the penalty of sin. In sanctification, God deals with the power of sin. But in glorification, God will deal with the presence of sin. At the second coming of Jesus Christ, a believer will be rid of the presence of sin once and for all. When the presence of sin has been dealt with, Jesus will have put down His last enemy, which is death. He will defeat death at the second coming because history, as we know it, is over. When He steps out on that cloud and comes back to the earth, there will be a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. Those who have done evil, who have not trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, will spend eternity in a lake of fire forever and ever. Those who have done well, who have believed in Jesus, will spend eternity with God forever and ever.

- **The Resurrected Body**

But you cannot spend eternity with God in a body like you have now. The Bible says no man can look at God and live. Therefore, God has to complete our salvation by giving us a body that can live with God and stand in His presence. Unlike the Seraphim, we will not have to cover our eyes and feet, but can enjoy Him throughout eternity. Wow! I cannot wait until I get that body!

Now, please hear me. So many times when I go to a funeral of a believer, I hear the preacher say that believer is in Heaven in a glorified body. No...I mean yes, you are with God, but a believer does not get his glorified body the moment he dies. Death does not give a believer an advantage in

receiving his glorified body. You get your glorified body at the same time every other believer gets their glorified body and that is at the second coming of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Philippians 3:20-21, 1 John 3:2, over and over through Scripture, Christ died as the first fruit of the resurrection. Everyone else gets raised at His second coming.

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, the Bible gives us a hint as to what our resurrected bodies will be like. Basically, all of the Bible writers tell us it will be like the glorified body of Jesus. But in their humanity, even though the early apostles saw the resurrected body of Jesus in its glorified state, they still did not understand it. They didn't understand how He could just show up in a room, yet still have the scars of His previous body; a body that could walk through walls and ascend from Earth to Heaven, and yet could still take food into it and eat. It absolutely blew their mind!

- **Buried/Raised**

Paul uses a metaphor from agriculture in 1 Corinthians. He talks about how different plants have different kinds of glories, and different manifestations. He talks about taking a seed and planting it in the ground. When you put it in the ground and cover it up, one day it begins to burst forth. But when it bursts forth, it doesn't look anything like what went in the ground. In other words, a corn plant doesn't look like a corn seed. Paul is saying that when a believer dies, we put the body back into the ground because we are sowing the seed of the resurrection. When we go to the cemetery of a loved one who is a believer, we go there in hope as someone who sows seeds in the ground. We never go to the grave of a believer and let that grave get victory over us. We know we are planting their seed and one day, when Jesus comes back, that body is coming back up out of the ground.

- **Perishable/Imperishable**

The body is perishable when it goes into the ground, but when it gets up, it will be imperishable. We know the body will not last because it is

perishable. In the supermarket, there is a perishable and non-perishable section. If you want to buy something and use it a year later, you shouldn't go to the perishable section. The perishable section means you had better use it quickly because it will not last very long. This is why some of you need to quit wasting your life. This body will not last forever, it is perishable. But when our body is resurrected, it will be non-perishable! You will not get another one halfway through eternity. You will not ever have to get your tires rotated! You will not have to change the oil; it will be fit for eternity! It will be maintenance free because the presence of sin is gone, once for all!

- **Dishonorable/Glorious**

Then the Bible says when we put the body in the ground, it is dishonorable, but when it is raised, it will be glorious. I do not want to burst anyone's bubble, but you can take someone with the best body in the world, and it is really not very honorable. I have never walked into a room and have someone say, "Wow, look at his body!" It just doesn't happen! But on resurrection morning, when I get up with a glorious body, it will have such a glow and shine, that you will know I am there! It is like the glory of the sun. When the sun comes up, we have to hide our faces. When the noon sun shines, we have to put on sunglasses or sunscreen. That is the way it is going to be throughout all of eternity. You will not be able to stand in the presence of my glorified body unless you have a glorified body like me. My light will be so great because it will be a body just like that of Jesus! The Bible says there will be no need for a moon and a sun in the new Heaven and new Earth because of the brightness and glory of Christ. And I am going to have a body just like His!

Now, I will not be divine, but I will be glorified. Do not ever forget that when Jesus went back to Heaven, He did not quit being human and become divine again. Just like when He left Heaven and became human, He never quit being divine. He will be the God-man throughout all of eternity. I will only be like Him on the human side.

- **Weak/Powerful**

When the body goes down in the ground, it goes down weak, but it will come back powerful. I realize more and more how weak this body is. I need a younger version of me around to do some of the things I used to do. But even at my best, there were still things I couldn't do in this body because it was weak. When that resurrection body comes up out of that grave, I will have a body that is finally fit for my spirit/soul that has been redeemed from the penalty and power of sin. Throughout all of eternity, I will be able to do every assignment my God assigns me! I will have a body fit for the task. There will be no jogging or running or no pumping iron for health reasons in eternity because of the glorious body I will have!

- **Natural/Spiritual**

Paul says that the body is sown as a natural body, but it is raised as a spiritual body. Let me clear up something. When the Bible says we will have a spiritual body, in no way does that mean we will be a ghost. We will not be little Caspers running around throughout eternity! This led to some wrong teaching in the New Testament days. It led people to believe that the physicalness of a believer is sinful; therefore, salvation is just getting rid of the body. No, the Bible never makes a separation between your body and soul/spirit. Salvation starts on the inside by God redeeming you spiritually and it will one day transform you until you have a spiritual body. Right now, you have a natural, earthly body. In your glorified state, you will have a body that will be material, but it will not follow the dictates and impulses of an unredeemed flesh. Your body will be fit for the presence of God and you will follow His leadership throughout all of eternity. Your spiritual existence will fit you to live with God, who is holy, holy, holy, forever, and ever.

Spiritual people were able to come to the Earth, but earthly, natural people are never able to go to Heaven. The Bible says that when eternity begins, we will not live in Heaven. We will live on a new earth, but it will be a spiritual one. It will be an earth that is controlled by the holiness of our

God, without the presence of sin. The curse will be removed and we will enjoy Him forever.

A Trophy of His Grace

Please do not think your salvation started when you believed. It started in eternity past. God's purpose for saving you was to make you like Jesus, so that throughout all of eternity, He will be the elder Brother. He will be the preeminent Person of the universe. We will be in Heaven, glorified, as a trophy of God's grace that was revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We should live the rest of our lives understanding that!

We award trophies to display so they can remind someone of their accomplishment. When God saved you, He placed you on the mantle of the world so that people would look at you and see what He has done for you in Christ Jesus. How dare we have behaviors in our lives that distract from the glory of a salvation that started in eternity past and will continue through eternity future? When you look back, and then look forward, you have to look at where you are today. Do you sense and see God working in your life to make you more like Christ?