

The Golden Chain

It may be that the days we're living in with the distractions of politics and the COVID19, are more challenging to the Christian than the truths we find in the word of God. When men and a pandemic dictate how we're to live and act rather than the word of God, the church must sit up and take notice and resist the pull away from faith and toward a man-centered way of life by immersing itself in the written word of God and submission to the voice of God in its inner man. ¹² *So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;*

¹³ *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13 NAU)* That still, small voice in your head that is constantly whispering to you to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, is your anchor in the storm. The Holy Spirit has given every believer in Christ the resurrection power that is greater than he that is in the world. The temptation to live in fear and doubt is powerful but can be defeated by knowing the truth of the gospel. ³¹ *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*

³² *and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* (Jn. 8:31-32 NAU) It was freedom from slavery to sin for those living under the law Jesus was addressing, but the truth also sets us free from the lies the world and our governments and politicians and scientists and are setting up to be the answers we need.

We are the body of Christ, baptized by the Spirit into that body and empowered by the Spirit to do God's will and to preach God's truth.

Let's take our Bibles and turn to that passage from the word of God that we should have memorized by now, Romans 8:28-30, the heavenly bling known as "The Golden Chain." "Bling." What does that even mean? "flashy jewelry worn especially as an indication of wealth or status broadly : expensive and ostentatious possessions." It seems to have come from a rapper named Baby Gangsta who wanted a word that

sounded like the sound that would come from the sun hitting a diamond. Bling fit the bill. Do you remember what a word is called that mimics the sound of light hitting a diamond like bling? It's called onomatopoeia.

Let me remind you very briefly that, in my humble opinion, this passage running all the way from v.26 to v.39 is without a doubt the most comforting passage in the entirety of the word of God for those who are in Christ. The outline for this passage has been around for years and sums it up so well. "No condemnation; no defeat; no separation." I know no one will remember, but I added another negative to that outline, it is "no rejection." Now we have, **no condemnation, no rejection, no defeat and no separation.**

This passage is comforting to all who are in Christ because it so clearly puts our justification solely in the hands of God and reinforces the fact that once we are in Christ we will always be in Christ. And since it follows Paul's testimony of his assurance of his salvation even though he continues to sin, we can add sin to his list of things that cannot separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

God put us here and God keeps us here.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3-5 NAU)

Our text:

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

*²⁹ **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;***

The Bible, the gospel, is all about Jesus but it involves us as individuals who are by God's grace in Christ, that's why the word calls Jesus "*the firstborn among many brethren.*"

You realize, don't you, that Jesus was an only child.

¹⁶ *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (Jn. 3:16 NAU).* He isn't anymore; we are His siblings. And regardless how we may look and act in this present life, we are members of God's family by adoption. That is one of the purposes behind our being predestined.

²⁹ ***For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined (to what?) To become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;***

If we were predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, and we were, then it cannot be any other way than that God is doing what otherwise could not be done. He must, and only He can, conform sinners to the image of His Son.

The process of conforming us to the image of Jesus is called "sanctification." Sanctification means that we are in the process of being made holy. But in the word of God we have already been sanctified and therefore God has declared us holy. That's what the word "saints" mean. We are holy ones even now.

¹¹ *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11 NAU)*

The work of our being conformed to the image of His Son is happening in each of us even as we speak. We were sanctified at the moment we were saved and we are being sanctified by the Spirit every day.

So it was to His Son's advantage (and ours) that God work it out so that millions and millions of sinners, the ungodly, would be adopted into His family. God gave Jesus many brethren, with Him being the firstborn of them.

³⁰ *and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30 NAU)*

He foreknew; He predestined; He called; He justified; He glorified. It's all there. And He's still doing it, by the way.

And just whom did God foreknow and predestine and call and justify and glorify? The ungodly, that's who. He did not call many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; He chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the base things of the world and the despised. God has chosen the things that are not, so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor. 1:26-29 NAU) That's who God chose to save. And in the lives of each of those whom He has chosen, He worked all things together for their good in order that His purpose for them might come to fruition. We are being conformed to the image of His Son even as we speak.

I'm going to close with a series of questions designed for us to meditate on. Here they are:

What is the opposite of foreknowing?

What is the opposite of predestination?

What is the opposite of election?

What is the opposite of calling?

What is the opposite of justification?

What is the opposite of glorification?

The opposite of each of those links in the golden chain is darkness and judgment and hopelessness.

¹² *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

¹³ *But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:11-13 NAU)*

Now I want you to meditate on this, and this is a rewording of my series of questions. Ask yourself:

“What would the absence of predestination look like?

What would the absence of election look like?

What would the absence of the calling look like?

What would the absence of justification by faith alone look like?

And what would the absence of glorification look like?

It would look like an episode of The Twilight Zone. It would look like the scariest nightmare ever. It would look like the riots in Portland and Seattle. “But by the grace of God, there go I.”

It would mean we would be trapped inside the world of the dead with no way out.

My church, embrace the sovereignty of God. Had God left us to our own devices we would never have come to know His salvation. The dead left to their own devices will choose death every time. They cannot do otherwise.

We should worship our God and Father and our Lord and Savior now as we have never worshiped Him before.

In Jesus’ name. Amen