

# From Grace to Glory

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's come to the end of our series looking at Romans 8. Let's turn to read the last few verses. Romans 8 and verse 28.

We've been following of course this golden chain the last three or four weeks and we come to the end of the chain tonight. Romans 8, I'll read from verse 28.

It's on page 888 just for a little search. Romans 8, 28. 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. So we come to the end of our chain and of course the chain ends in the glorification of God's people.

[ 1 : 12 ] We've come to a topic we've discussed in part in various ways, even in our short time together already. But just as a reminder for us, mindful of course, we know we have a meeting afterwards, but we're dealing with a topic that's so wide, but mindful that we come here to a topic that's so beautiful, that is so glorious.

And we've seen every link of the chain really. We're dealing with topics and realities that are so, at times, hard to grasp. As we said last week, sometimes it's good for us to admit these things are hard to grasp.

It's no different this evening. We come to the glorification of God's people. Our first week together we saw in verse 28 that the promise, that glorious promise, that all things work together for the good of those who love God.

And we can say that sometimes in life for ourselves as Christians, and when we look to the lives of other Christians, we say, we believe God's word is true, we hold to it, we claim it, we love it.

You think, where in my life is this true? Or where in this brother or this sister's life, this brother or this sister's had a hard life of it, a complicated life, where nothing seems to have gone well for them.

[ 2 : 31 ] You think, how can verse 28 be true? How can that suffering Christian, how can that Christian who's had lifelong illness perhaps, or ongoing family tragedy, whatever the situation might be, we all know there's so much pain in this world, and yet that Christian can say and can be said about them that all things will work together for their good.

We covered that verse in detail before, but one thing we touched on, we said we leave it, is this final link of the chain. One of the ways we can know for certain that this verse is true is one way it applies to all Christians equally.

Those of us with perhaps easier lives, those of us with more complicated and painful lives, we could say that the final link of all our chains end in the same place, that our chains all begin in eternity past, but the link of this golden chain for all God's people ends with our final phrase here this evening.

It all ends in glorification. It ends in glory. That's what we read from Revelation. We read just that smallest insight, that one chapter's worth of insight, into what our future is.

Now we know about Revelation, its metaphor, its image. We know that when we see the temple being measured, it's all got deeper meaning. Even the stones being mentioned, and the types of stones, all got deeper meaning.

[ 4 : 03 ] But what is clear, if we had a full-blown study into that chapter this evening, what is clear is that we are headed towards glory. Now we know that. But I think sometimes we think of heaven in such abstract ways, don't we?

We don't let ourselves actually think properly what scripture is saying to us. And scripture gives us, perhaps not too much, but gives us enough. And we might for a short time tonight be jumping around a bit, but it's to give us a wider image, a wider grasp on what does this glorification actually mean for us?

What does it look like? What is the future of the believer? We have three texts, three main texts. I'll just read them myself. And we'll also be referring, thankfully, to the work of our brothers long ago in the confession as they sought to really condense what scripture gives us.

But just three main areas in our short time, three broad areas. First of all, we can see death before the end. What takes place when a Christian dies just now at this very moment in time.

What takes place before the end comes. Death before the end. Then we can see the reality. We can see from ground to glory. What takes place on the final day for Christians.

[ 5 : 26 ] And then finally, as time permits, we can see what our eternal body of time has, our eternal home will look like.

So first of all, death before the end. I'll just read very briefly myself. 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1, where we see, we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Death before the end. What does it mean? What does glorification look like just now for brothers and sisters who have passed away before us?

For brothers and sisters here this evening, for ourselves, if we are to go just now before the end comes, if we were to pass into glory this evening, what does that mean for us as much as we can see and understand from Scripture?

Well, Scripture is clear. It gives us some information. This is one of the verses we can go to. This glorious reminder, this simple passing reminder in 1 Corinthians 5, where one who knew what a tent was, the Apostle Paul, who knew his tents well, he used this glorious image that just now, of course, we are in an earthly tent.

[ 6 : 53 ] If our earthly tent, our home is destroyed, the tent is destroyed if we die. Now, I think sometimes, perhaps, we in the West, and we in our minds, in our culture, we think of tents as flimsy things, and tents which don't have that much importance to us, that much, in fact, they mean nothing to us, really.

We see them, we buy them, perhaps we use them, we shove them in a loft, or in the garage, in the shed. But, of course, in the culture, in the time, which Paul wrote this, and Paul himself, be a tent maker, tents weren't just small, throwaway things, they were serious business.

The body does not just mean nothing. Paul doesn't use the illustration of a tent to say the body means nothing. In fact, quite the opposite. Tents were used, we know, by those travelling in the desert for years, as tents are still used in that part of the world, but by many.

The body doesn't mean nothing. We perhaps think of our body as being useless, as being fragile. We think of our bodies as being just vessels to carry us through this life, but we know that that's not how the Lord use our bodies.

Why? Because we are his creation. We're not just soul. In fact, the belief we have in our culture, and sometimes in the Christian church, and to ourselves, to our shame, we think that the soul is the important part and the body, that's secondary.

[ 8 : 25 ] Well, the truth is, that's almost heretical. That's actually Gnostic thinking. We've been covering the Gnostics in our evening services. That's Gnostic thinking. That flesh, the maid stuff, the body, is less important.

What really matters is our soul. And we'll see at the end, that's just not how God, it's not how Scripture paints it for us. Yes, our body is damaged easily.

Yes, our body is destroyed easily, like a tent, we could say. But it doesn't mean our body isn't important. Why, in our culture, still, rightfully so, we do treat the remains of those who have passed away with respect as much as we can.

It's why it's important that we do. It's not ceremonial. We know that the person is no longer there in one sense, their soul is gone, it is just flesh and bones, we know that. But yeah, we treat them with respect, we treat the remains of respect, because the remains are important.

Why? Well, again, we'll see that more in a second. But the death of a Christian, yes, we leave behind this earthly tent, but as Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth, we know that if our earthly tent is destroyed, our home, we have a building from God, a house not made of hands, eternal in the heavens.

[ 9 : 49 ] Of course, he contrasts the fragility of our earthly tent, which can be torn so easily. A strong enough wind and our tents are gone, we could say.

Our bodies are so easily damaged and destroyed, we know that ourselves. Paul contrasts that with the fact that when we leave this earthly tent, when we leave this side of creation, what awaits us is not something flimsy or small, what awaits us is a building made by God.

Of course, Paul is using imagery here. He's saying, we are like the tent flimsy in the wind. We're like the tent, perhaps beautiful at times, but will one day be torn and shredded and will be gone.

But that is not the future we have. The Christians right now, we ourselves can know for certainly that those who have gone before us who have left their earthly tents, their earthly tabernacles, they've gone to dwell in a building from God, made by God, kept by God.

Turning first to the catechism. Again, the glorious words and why rewarded myself when brothers have used such time and space to write down and to ponder these questions before.

[ 11 : 09 ] Question 37, that catechism, I'm sure we all know so well and it's one we treasure. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? The souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ importance to rest in their graves to have a resurrection.

The souls of believers of the death, of course, are made perfect and pass into glory. Yes, the body remains behind for a while but the souls go to God.

The souls go to glory. Now, we know that in glory that our souls are not just there in some, as Stephen Lawson says, some ethereal soup.

We are there in glory. We are there. We understand things. We see things. We know things. We see that revelation. The saints of revelation aren't just floating around. The saints of revelation are conscious.

They know what's taking place. They're asking questions. We see the saints of revelation asking the Lord, how much longer till the end? We see the saints of revelation praising God. Yes, there's no bodies but it does not mean we lose our personality.

[ 12 : 38 ] We still exist as we are in some form. Our souls are there in God's presence. Our souls are with the Lord. At this moment, and we use that term very loosely when I say moment because we're taking a bit of glory here, but at this moment, brothers and sisters, we have the sure hope that those have gone before us, that their souls are at this very present time before the God who made them and who loved them, that their souls are made perfect in glory just now.

What's more glorious, we'll see this in a second, is that those that have gone before us, yes, they're in glory and yes, they are there and they're in their full happiness and their full joy, but there's a waiting, isn't there?

The souls in glory are waiting. It's not done yet. There's further glory for them to see, to experience.

We'll see that in a second. Just to help us again understand the confession of faith, chapter 32. The bodies of men after death return to dust, we know that, and see corruption, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having a mortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.

The souls of the righteous being made perfect in holiness are received into the highest heavens where they behold the face of God in light and glory waiting for the redemption of their bodies.

[ 14 : 23 ] It's a strange thought but it's a comforting thought. It's a glorious thought that those who have gone before us and we know this but perhaps we forget it. Those who have gone before us are just in heaven.

They're in heaven beholding the face of God. But more than that, they're in heaven and they are waiting. They're expectantly waiting. Not in an uncomfortable way. Of course, there's no comfort in heaven.

They're waiting in an expectant, jubilant way. Waiting and waiting for the final day. What are we waiting for? Of course, we're waiting for what we see here from ground to glory.

Again, I'll read myself just briefly for us. 1 Thessalonians verses 15 to 17. 1 Thessalonians verses 15 to 17. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with a voice with an archangel and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

[ 15 : 30 ] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.

So that's those of us we've covered who have, who pass away now. And the question then is, well what about those of us who are alive at the end? If the end comes tomorrow, what happens to us?

Well Paul of course again deals with that. We see that in verse 15 of 1 Thessalonians that Paul is clear that at the end when the Lord returns that we will know what he has come for.

that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord will not precede those of Paul in a sleep. The dead of course will rise. We'll see that more at the end.

Brothers and sisters, we say this carefully but we say it because Scripture compels us to say it. The end may well come soon. We know that there are certain people who say certain things must take place first and there's arguments for that.

[ 16 : 38 ] But we must be very careful in predicting. We know that there are many who have made a fool out of themselves and who have mocked and made a mockery of the cause of Christ by predicting when the end will come and they've been wrong every time.

Clearly. And there are still people who predict the end will come in this date and this way at this certain time and they're wrong every time. Of course they are. At the same time we are right in saying and Scripture says and we see in 1 John the reality is that we can say that the end is coming soon.

We are in the final days. We've been in the final days since Christ ascended again to the Father. We are in the final days. By definition we are in the final days.

We can say that and we read that in Thessalonians we think this isn't for our lifetime this is for our future perhaps. We'll never see this. we shouldn't think that way.

In fact we should be expectant that this could happen in our lifetime. It may not. It may not happen for another century or ten centuries we don't know. But we should be expectant that this could happen.

[ 17 : 47 ] This may well happen in our days. That we will see as it were and we will hear the voice of the archangel we will hear the trumpet and we will see the Lord descend in his glory.

This is not just something that might just happen in the future. This is something that could happen just now, tomorrow. We've heard that often but I wonder if we lose sight of that reality.

That because we are living in last days that a day could be the last day. And as Christians we have to live our lives that way. That should compel us as scripture tells us that should compel us to then be more zealous in our works.

Not for our salvation but more zealous in our works in terms of sharing the good news and sharing the gospel of getting as much done as we can as it were before the end comes.

But when the voice of the archangel shouts when the trumpet is heard we see that the Lord himself will descend from heaven. And the two glorious things here take place.

[ 18 : 56 ] Those of us who are the Lord's that we will be met face to face with him. But whilst that happens or before that happens we say the dead in Christ will rise.

The expectant waiting is over. The souls in heaven have been waiting expectantly and at this moment are waiting expectantly for this day. And on this day the dead in Christ will rise.

And that happened first and I love the detail there. The Lord is so gracious and he's so just merciful and he cares about the detail. And his mercy the dead in Christ rise first.

They've been waiting for centuries for centuries. They've been waiting for decades and for hundreds if not thousands of years. Again, not a long wait for them in glory but they've been waiting nonetheless expectantly joyfully waiting for the end or for the beginning we could say.

And they rise first. It's quite impactful when you're preaching down in Graver especially we're using the hall now in Graver I said before but from the church hall you can look out the window and you can see the graveyard.

[ 20 : 20 ] You can see it it's right it takes up both windows it takes up all four windows and you can see the graveyard and you can see where it's pointing even of course the graveyard in Tolstoy here when you go down to it and you look up and you see what it's pointing towards you see the beauty even the beauty of the trye you see the sea and of course you're there for sad reasons but it does catch your eye just how beautiful the view actually is.

I can't help but think last time I was down there I had a few minutes to myself and you start to think one day one day these graves will be opened up and the dead in Christ will rise and they'll be facing and they will see their Lord as he is and they've seen him for years and centuries and decades they've beheld the face of the Lord but something is different what is different they now behold him in their bodies they are now in their bodies but then in Christ will rise first when we who are alive who are left will be caught up together with them not one person left behind those that have gone before us and ourselves all together to meet the Lord in glory in the air and so we will always be with the Lord again just to summarise for us again chapter 32 of the confession at the last day such as are found alive shall not die but be changed and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies and none other although of different qualities which shall be united again to their souls forever forever and what do these bodies look like what are they like what will we be like in our final home new heavens and new earth and we saw revelation that they become one don't they the glorious images of heaven and Jerusalem coming down to earth

God now dwells with man fully for all time new heavens and new earth in the new heavens and new earth we have our new bodies again 1 Corinthians 15 just very briefly 1 Corinthians 15 we have the glorious almost description of our new bodies 1 Corinthians 15 verse 42 I'll read a few verses for us so is it with the resurrection so is it with the resurrection of the dead what is sown is perishable what is raised is imperishable it is sown in dishonour it is raised in glory it is sown in weakness it is raised in power it is sown in natural body it is raised a spiritual body if it is a natural body there is also a spiritual body just briefly as we come to a conclusion of our short time in these verses what are our bodies like now well we know ourselves as a description here our bodies are perishable it doesn't take any theological understanding to know that our bodies are perishable day by day illness by illness even as we fight off colds and flus and coughs just now as a congregation it's a small maybe silly but it's a small reminder our bodies are perishable but bit by bit year by year second by second our cells are dying and yes we're being remade but soon enough more cells will die and slowly we lose our functions we lose our abilities we know about ourselves our bodies are prone to falling apart slowly our bodies are often dishonourable as Paul reminds us we are those who involve ourselves in sin and our thoughts and actions at times quite willingly our bodies are bodies of weakness again we feel that we know that mentally physically spiritually we are just so weak at times and quite simply our bodies are natural made from the dust made to return back to the dust but compare that to our eternal bodies ones in which we will live in as we see and experience and live in the new heavens and the new earth for all glory and all eternity these bodies are imperishable they are imperishable no more decay no more degradation there is no more sadness there is no more pain of illness and disease our bodies don't perish they are perfect our bodies are glorious no more dishonour it is now raised in glory there is no more sin there is no more shame or guilt of sin there is no more anger at falling once more into sin our bodies will never again experience the reality of being tempted to sin will never again experience the reality of falling and failing in that temptation we are and will be eternally glorious in our bodies also no more weakness it is interesting this sown in weakness as is raised in power what that means truly it is debated but out of the way no more weakness no more spiritual weakness no more mental weakness no more physical weakness it is power glorious power that comes straight of course from source and finally our bodies yes they'll be natural in the sense that they'll still be us they'll be physical bodies but also they are spiritual they are spiritual they will last for all of time time without end

and because that's true we have the great joy the great hope of knowing that we will spend all eternity in our imperishable bodies now of course there are a thousand questions a thousand questions as to what these bodies look like how they function what it means for us what qualities do they have as we see the confession here just simply saying in brackets the bodies are the same of all different qualities well what does that mean really how far does that go we don't know we'll find out one day soon we'll find out together one day soon that's a glorious thing that's a thought isn't it no matter when we pass away we will all receive our new bodies almost at the exact same time the dead in Christ rise first we receive our bodies we receive ours just after them if we're still alive but pretty much at the same time we all receive our new bodies eternal bodies unfailing unsinning and in these new perfect bodies we read in Revelation chapter 21 we will live all eternity live all eternity without tears no pain no sadness living in his presence in his brightness living through his power kept by him kept for him as we expand as we learn as we grow as we do whatever we'll be doing for all eternity and I know there's various opinions but as we've covered in the garden series and I'll say this and let you think yourself just a passing thought if there was work and if there was hard work if there was growing work if there was gardening work in the first creation before sin then I think it's wrong perhaps to jump to the conclusion that there's none of that in the new creation but there's also no sin new heavens yes but also new earth the earth will still exist new fresh no sin no more fall but there's still earth there's still creation there's still places to be seen things to be explored we don't know what it means what it looks like we don't know but I think if we think we just do one thing for all eternity no it's a very small definition we say well of course we're in heaven praising God forever new heavens and new earth how do you praise God right now as Christians do you praise God just now only in a prayer meeting do we praise God only on Sundays do we praise God only when we do our devotion time well I hope not if you are then we're failing in our praising God we seek to praise God in our work in our family time in our personal lives we seek to praise God at all times in the new heavens in the new earth whatever we're doing we'll do it all perfectly all for his glory in our imperishable glorious power filled spiritual bodies that's the hope we have again just a summary for us the final section of chapter 32 of course the bodies of the unjust not just Christians everyone is given again this new body but of course the bodies of the unjust shall by the power of Christ be raised to dishonour the bodies of the just by his spirit unto honour and be made conformable to his own glorious body we are made like he is his glorious body his resurrection resurrection body in that new body we will spend all eternity with our saviour that is the final link of the golden chain that is the the ultimate good end that God

has created us for he's with us now every step of the way he knew us from before time and just think from before time we said before he knew us but also think from before time itself in the eternal plan of our eternal God he knew he would spend not just time with you in glory not time on earth but also all time in glory he chose to spend all eternity with his beloved people such as the love of God for us God we come before you we thank you once more for the glorious gift of your word that in it we find such encouragement as we come Lord deal of topics like we heard through your word this evening the reality of our future glory the reality of heaven of eternity spent with you Lord we know there are many questions we perhaps have and many unanswered questions and questions which we won't have answers to until we experience it first hand for ourselves in that glory but until that day comes help us to wait for expectantly to know that you promise it to us and you're a God who is good to his people you're a God who promises and who has promised to go before us and to prepare a place for us to receive us to yourself in that place until that day comes until you call us home just now or until you come to collect us until the final day when we see the dead in you be raised up in their eternal imperishable glorious bodies until that day help us to serve you well in this place help us to serve you well as your people help us look forward to that final day with zeal in our hearts knowing that the day is soon knowing that the time is short knowing that each day we have is a gift from you a gift we should use wisely to serve you well in the time remaining we ask

[ 32 : 26 ] Lord we would see in that final day not just those here but also our friends and our family those in this village around us those who we love and care for we ask we would see them also on that final day raised up beside us joining us in eternal glory we ask Lord we see transforming power in their lives we see transformation in their experiences help us Lord we ask we also help you now we ask for the meeting afterwards give us wisdom as we seek to serve you well in this congregation as we seek to lead well and as we seek to humble ourselves under the leading of our great and glorious saviour the one who has ascended into glory who is this very moment interceding for us who will one day come and take us home to himself ask all these things in and through and for his precious name's sake amen let's conclude by singing to God's praise in the Psalter in Psalm 36 Psalter in

Psalm 36 we can sing verses 5 to verse 9 Psalm 36 verses 5 to verse 9 thy mercy Lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains great thy judgments deep as floods Psalm 36 verses 5 to 9 to God's grace thy mercy Lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains with thy judgments give us love

Lord love is service man and peace of gracious is thy peace therefore pet clot of thy knowing andisión let us child bless that of thy heart shall be well Well satisfied from rivers of thy pleasures, that wealth in true employs, because of life that thou tender, remains alone with thee, and in the purest light of thine, we clear thee, I shall see.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.