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THE GOLDEN CHAIN OF GOD'S WORK IN REDEMPTION*

By ROBERT RENDALL

In the Epistle of Paul to the Romans salvation is set forth as *a fivefold sequence*, describing the full circle of God's work in redemption. In pursuance of His Divine counsels God *foreknows*, *predestinates*, *calls*, *justifies*, and *glorifies*, those who are the objects of His love (Rom. 8:29, 30). See especially 2 Thess. 2:13, 14 and 1 Peter 1:2-4, but also Deut. 7, Eph. 1, and 2 Timothy 1:9.

Foreknowledge

in Scripture, is more than prescience or foresight, and implies a decision within the mind of God, in which He gives 'personal recognition' to those upon whom His love is set, and who have become His choice. In this sense it is written that we are 'known' of God, that is, acknowledged and dealt with as those who sustain a personal relationship with Himself (cf. Amos 3:2; Gal. 4:9). The contrast is, 'I never knew you' (Matt. 7:23).

The corresponding term in 2 Thess. 2:13, 'beloved of the Lord' further shews its meaning. 'Beloved' has almost a technical usage throughout Scripture, being closely linked with the idea of election. 'Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election' (1 Thess. 1:4). 'Beloved of God, called saints' (Rom. 1:7). The Colossians, too, are spoken of as 'God's elect, holy and beloved' (Col. 3:12). That those beloved of God obtain election is just another way of saying that 'whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate.'

God's foreknowledge first operates in Christ, in Whose sacrificial death is manifested One 'Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world' (1 Peter 1:20, R.V.). In consequence of this God speaks of Him as 'Mine Elect, in Whom My

* [For the sake of younger students of the Scriptures we would draw special attention to this article by the esteemed writer who has already contributed to our pages: and we look forward to more from his pen as opportunity permits. The article is a 'concentration' of a subject which could be enlarged upon with great profit, for it deals with the eternal counsels of the Godhead in reference to man's redemption. We offer the suggestion that it be studied with constant reference to *all* the passages of Scripture mentioned: it will provide 'food' for that lost art—*meditation*—and whet the spiritual appetite for 'the deep things of God' (1 Tim. 4:15).—Ed.]

soul delighteth' (Isa. 42:1), which has its New Testament counterpart in the words, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:17). Christ is pre-eminently the Beloved (Eph. 1:16; Col. 1:13), and it is only in virtue of our being in Him that we are, by Divine grace, likewise 'beloved of God'.

Love has nothing antecedent to itself, but springs direct from the very nature of God. All the worshipping heart can say is, 'God is love.'

God's purpose develops harmoniously. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). God predestinates (foreordains, R.V.) in accordance with His foreknowledge. These, the first two steps of the series, form a single pair, expressing the decision and purpose of Divine love.

Predestination

always points toward a purposed end. It means more than simple choice or singling out for favour; it is always 'to' something (v. 29; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; Eph. 1:4; Deut. 7:6). The purpose of God, grounded in foreknowledge and in predestination, looks on to the final issue, conformity to Christ in glory, which is effected by the intermediate steps of Divine calling and justification.

That unto which God foreordains is 'conformity to the image of His Son,' with this in view, 'that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.' The title 'Firstborn' signifies that He is the Original Whose image is reproduced in His many brethren. Christ is thus both the pattern and grand end of predestination, as He also is, in His own Person, the sphere in which it is realized; for we have been chosen to our high destiny 'in Him'.

Calling

Calling and justification—the second pair of the series—make efficient in the personal history of individuals the eternal decrees of God's will. What hitherto had existed only in the mind of God now enters human experience. For calling means that in our conversion it is God Himself Who takes the initiative. He not only wills, but executes.

We are called in the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6, R.V.), through the Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). When the sinner is united to Christ in the power of faith, election is made evident. Beloved in Christ, and chosen in Christ, it is when the sinner is brought into living

contact with Him that he is made conscious of God's eternal favour. When the moment of meeting comes—as it does through the presentation of Christ in the Gospel—there is immediate and mutual recognition:

‘I looked to Him . . . He looked on me,
And we were one for ever.’

We indeed rejoice in the truth that ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,’ but He in the equally true, ‘All that the Father *giveth* me *shall come to me.*’

Calling effects sanctification. Those at Rome, like all believers elsewhere, became saints by a divine call (Rom. 1:7). Whom God saves, He calls with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9). He thus sets apart to Himself the people of His choice. The parallel expression in 2 Thess. 2:13 and 1 Peter 1:2, ‘sanctification of the Spirit,’ preserves the same thought.

From its metaphorical use in 2 Timothy 2:21 the word sanctify may well have been, in its natural sense, a common domestic term. A cup or other vessel, kept strictly for use by the master of the household, would be looked on as ‘sanctified for the master’s use’. Applied to Divine things the term fitly described that which had been consecrated to God, and was reserved exclusively for His service. This explains how in Romans 8 calling precedes justification, and why in 2 Thess. 3, and 1 Peter, sanctification precedes the faith and obedience by which justification is conditioned.

But while the word primarily denotes ‘sainthood,’ it also has a secondary or derived meaning, namely, holiness of character, or saintliness; what has been sanctified must be kept clean and fit for daily use. The Christian endeavour is to live up to a position already given us in Christ (Eph. 4:1). ‘Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion . . .’ (Col. 3:12, R.V.). Noble rank calls for noble conduct: the rank itself is sovereignly bestowed.

We have been called unto His eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10). What boundless horizons of spiritual blessing stretch out here! Well might Paul pray that the saints should know what is the hope of such a calling (Eph. 1:18). This high and heavenly vocation is given us ‘in Christ Jesus.’ It takes its pattern from Him Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, and Who is the Holy One of God.

Justification

Whom God calls, He also justifies. Other Scriptures present justification from the standpoint of faith (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:22): this sets it forth as consequent upon a Divine call, and therefore as something absolute. 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is GOD that justifieth.' But though expressed in terms of sovereignty it is also associated with the redemptive work of Christ (v. 34). Our security against condemnation is found in Him.

Thus the glorious Person of the Saviour, Whom we have seen behind the earlier steps of the sequence as God's elect, we now behold in His incarnation triumphantly fulfilling these gracious and holy counsels. How exalted beyond our finite comprehension must He be in Whom such matters find fulfilment! God calls Him 'My righteous Servant' (Isa. 53:11), and proclaims that it is as such that 'He shall justify (make righteous) many,' adding, 'for He shall bear their iniquities.' Christ Himself has been justified, in that His work on our behalf as the Saviour has been declared perfect and righteous; and we are justified in Him (Gal. 2:17, R.V.).

Glorification

'And whom He justified, them He also glorified' crowns the series. Paul here reaches the climax of his argument, that which all along had been in his mind since the leading statement of verse 17, and reaches it in such a way as to show that no intervening circumstances of earthly suffering, or of human infirmity, can frustrate God's purpose to 'glorify together with Christ' those whom He has justified. What God begins, He completes. His work is one; and the several acts by which He brings it to pass are inseparable, one succeeding the other as by a law of spiritual consequence. Therefore our glorification, which in its final aspect is still future, is here expressed in the tense of completed action.

In the Person of Christ, moreover, this last link in the chain is actual accomplished fact. For He is already glorified; and the glory of the Head includes that of the members. We have already received the first fruits of the Spirit (v. 23); and though we still await the redemption of the body (v. 23-25), and our manifestation as the sons of God (v. 19), the pledge of glory is ours even now.

What shall we then say to these things? A plan of salvation so comprehensive and far-reaching, and of such incomparable blessing for those who are its subjects, cannot but elevate the mind above the vicissitudes of life, and inspire hope and confidence in God. Paul himself is moved by its vast scope. See how he now breaks off in triumph, and, facing all possibilities, calls out in noble challenge, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' 'Nothing . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' For these great blessings, which move from eternity into eternity, are summed up in verse 39 as the love of God in Christ. They present a panorama of grace, in which we see the Son of God coming forth to accomplish the Father's will, dying, rising again, seated at the right hand of God, and, in due season, being revealed in glory as the Firstborn of many brethren.

AN EXPOSITORY STUDY OF ST JOHN'S GOSPEL*

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

Introduction

For the first thirty years or so after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the need of a written record of His ministry and saving acts was not acutely felt. So long as eyewitnesses of the great evangelic events remained alive to tell what they had seen and heard, their testimony was sufficient. But as the first Christian generation drew to its close, the number of those who had been companions of Christ in the days of His flesh grew smaller. If their personal testimony was not to be lost, or left to the uncertain chances of oral tradition, it must be preserved in some more permanent form than the spoken word. And so, round about the

* We are greatly indebted to Mr Bruce for this new series of expository studies on the Gospel of John, of which this is the introductory one. In form they will be somewhat similar to those on the Epistle to the Hebrews by the late Mr Vine (which are now drawing to a conclusion), but the writer will have full scope to work along his own particular lines in developing his subject.

Help others to enjoy these studies by introducing them to the *B.S.*