

The Gospel That Makes A Gospel Community Part 5

a sermon in the series
A Gospel-Oriented, Mission Driven, and Community-Centered Church

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by S. Michael Durham
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Romans 8:16-18

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

For weeks we have examined the Gospel that should form our life's orientation. The church is the result of the power of the Gospel to produce life wherever God so chooses. Every true church is a product of the Gospel and the only way for a local church to grow is through the knowledge and application of the Gospel, one member to another and every member taking this Gospel-orientation and shining it like a flashlight on this dark and lost world.

The text we have been examining is Romans 1:16 through the end of the chapter. Paul says in verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." We understand that salvation saves from something to something, in other words, you are delivered from evil so that you can be free to live holy. Salvation is never just about deliverance from something but must include deliverance to something.

If you were lost in a desert and out of water, salvation would be more than someone with water discovering you. Although he or she may refresh your body with water and save you from dehydration, you still need someone to get you out of the desert and back to safety. If they merely give you a drink of water and leave you, they have only postponed the inevitable—your dying lost in the desert.

Jesus has come to save us. Remember the day Christ saved you; think about it, rejoice over it; you ought to be enthusiastic about it for that was the day Jesus found you depleted of any good thing by which to quench the thirst of your soul and you were parched of any righteousness. On that day He saved you, giving you the water of life, therefore you should be glad about it. However, you are still in a hostile place. You are a stranger in unholy world and you are not yet safe at home. You are still in need of the dear Savior to lead you through this valley of the shadow of death where enemies lie in wait, ready to attack.

We have discussed that we have been saved from the penalty and power of sin. Today, I want to finish and share with you our future deliverance from the very presence of sin when we will stand before our God as pure as the Lamb of God Himself. It's coming. That's what I want to talk about today.

Three weeks ago I told you that sin still remains in us as a principle or a law. That law works through our fleshly desires to rule our will and override the mind that knows the truth. God loves you and refuses to manhandle your will and make you do something you don't want to do. Therefore, when sin entices you through your own desires, you must choose to obey or disobey the Lord. That is why you experience the inner turmoil or battle of sin's assault.

Fortunately, God considered the huge pull of sin that this internal law would exert on our will and He arranged in His plan of salvation a countering force, the Holy Spirit. He has placed the Spirit of Jesus within each of His children so that they do not have to fulfill the lusts of the flesh and can of their own choosing obey Him. You are not left on your own to fight Satanic attacks and temptations. God is within you! You're not alone. He's enough. He is sufficient. And as the Spirit works in us to sanctify us by making the power of sin's appeal look and feel less and less attractive, we over time, become more and more like Jesus.

But that is not the end of our deliverance. We still have a salvation to experience. Salvation has a final chapter to write for us all. The chapter is titled, Complete Salvation! God has promised you not just victory over sin but deliverance from its very presence. Total or complete salvation is the complete eradication of this law of sin that now is in us. This is what I want us to focus on for a few moments this morning.

I. SALVATION MUST BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST-LIKENESS.

The goal in redeeming us is not the removal of our guilt. The ultimate goal is not that we would labor for Him in this world honoring His name and taking His Gospel to the four corners of the earth. That's not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of God is to prepare a bride for His Son. He loves His Son and would have Him be given a prize worthy, befitting of Him, a redeemed people. The ultimate goal of our redemption is that we would be like our Bridegroom, a suitable help-mate, one like Him.

A. Salvation is Not Complete Until All Sin is Removed.

Every last stain, every blemish, every wrinkle, every spot, must be removed from the child of God. He's not finished with you yet. I know you moan and groan and grieve over your present sins. I know there is this constant civil war that goes on inside of you but dear friend, there is coming a day when that war will cease and you're not completely saved until that happens. But it's going to happen. It's as certain as the sunrise, if not more so, for the same God who causes the sun to rise is the same One who will cause us to enter into this complete salvation.

Listen to what Paul says to the Ephesians,

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

That’s salvation complete. That’s God’s ultimate goal for you. If that is not so, then sin must be the eventual victor not God. Why would I say that? Because sin came and entered in a perfect world and took a perfect man and marred the image of God within him. If salvation is to be complete, then God must at least restore man to what he once was before the fall. This is safe to believe otherwise sin has the final word. Even if you make it to heaven there’s still a blemish because there’s not the perfection man once knew. God will not allow sin to have the final word. We were made in His image, His likeness, and in order to have a complete salvation He must restore us to that.

I don’t know what Adam looked like, I don’t know how he functioned or performed, but I can only imagine it was far greater than anything we have ever seen. I daresay if we saw Adam before he fell, we would say of him, “He’s a semi-God, almost Godlike. Look at him—he’s made in the very image of God. The likeness of God is all over him and his capacities to think and do, why, they far exceed ours.” Maybe we would liken him to a superman. But we would consider him abnormal. Why? Because we think this mortal existence of ours is normal. But this isn’t normal. I say again, this is not normal. This is subnormal. We are subhuman. We are less than what God intended. Therefore, for salvation to be complete, there has to be a restoration.

If you purchase an old home or an old car with the purpose of restoring it, you must bring it to its original condition. Man is not in his original condition. I’m not, nor are you.

B. If Salvation Was Not Complete, Then Even in Heaven Sin Would be Possible.

You say, “Oh no, sin could not be in heaven!” My dear friend, if you object, I would like to ask you a question. From whence did sin spring? Where is the fountainhead that this muddy, murky water (which polluted everything) start? It started in the very throne room of God. It came from one who was called the Morning Star, who taught the angels the songs to sing. In his own heart sin sprang up in the very presence of God. Don’t say sin isn’t possible in heaven—it came from there.

You say, “Perhaps the first sin was committed in heaven, but Satan will not be there to tempt us.”

Who was there to tempt Lucifer? There was no one to tempt him when he was the beautiful creature before the throne of God leading the angels in the worship of God. There sin found its way into his heart and there, without temptation by a tempter, he grew in his own estimation and therefore sinned.

Besides, if the sin principle is still in us, you don't need a tempter to sin. The Bible tells us that during the millennial reign of Christ, men will still rebel and sin. Satan, the tempter, will be bound for those thousand years and cast into a bottomless pit where he will be unable to tempt the nations, yet men will still sin. Why? Because the sin principle is still in them. God has to do something to us and for us, if we're going to be suitable for the holy presence of God.

There is this completion of our salvation, culminating in our glorification.

II. SALVATION CULMINATES IN GLORIFICATION

This is what our text is talking about. This is the hope we have, that we will be glorified together.

Listen closely. The hope of heaven is not eternal life in some mansion.

A. The Hope of Heaven is the Eradication of Sin and the Impossibility of Either the Temptation or Transgression of Sin.

That's the hope of heaven. The hope of heaven is that there I will not be able to be tempted or, even if tempted, unable to give in to temptation and transgress.

Paul goes on in the chapter to explain the hope, the prize set before us.

“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Brethren. Listen closely, this is coming later in the message so I'm giving you preparation so you can handle what's coming because some of you are going to have a hard time swallowing the things I'm going to say today, but they're right out of the Scriptures. He calls us brethren. He was made like us and we shall be like Him. Remember that. Brothers show similarity, coming for the same fountain, the same head.)³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:29-30)

There it is, the end of our salvation when we are glorified. This is full glory for the Christian. This leads to the exaltation of Christ—that He and His mercy could take sinners and make them look like Him. You talk about amazing grace, how sweet the sound, there it is! It's more than blind sinners seeing and lost people being found, it's being conformed to the very image of the Almighty. I did not say you would be the Almighty nor will you carry divine capabilities or abilities. No, not hardly. God will remain God and we will remain human but we will be glorified and we will be like Him. That means without sin ever again. We will never again be smeared by it, tempted by it, or wrestle with it. Self will have finally been dealt with and self will love the glory of Jesus as much as its loved its own glory on this earth. The eminent Spurgeon said,

Dost thou think to go to heaven with thine unholiness? God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will He let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it.

God's not going to let us in the way we are. He's going to have to do something to us and He's promised to do it. If you were to go into heaven as you are at this present moment you could not see the blessed Lord for you are still infinitely unlike Him. The longer we're saved the more victories we see, the more we draw closer to Him we mistakenly assume we are closer to Jesus than we are to any sinner on this earth. But the truth is you're closer to the worst rank sinner there is on this earth than you are to Jesus. In fact, can I go one step further? You are more akin to the devil himself than you are to Jesus. What is your righteousness compared to the righteousness of the Savior and what is your righteousness compared to Satan? The distance between you and the devil is so small that you could not hope for heaven on the difference. And the difference between your righteousness and the Lord of glory is so great that you have no hope of heaven. Even in our redeemed state He is infinitely better than we are.

We're closer to the Devil than Jesus. It is only by the grace of God through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that you have hope of salvation. God must save you and God alone. The Bible says He saves and He saves to the uttermost. The "uttermost," what is that? Does it mean to the farthest regions of the universe? No, farther than that. He saves you to the point that you will one day stand as pure as the Lamb of God before the throne. You will be like your Lord in His sinless perfection. That's what that means. He will make you like Jesus; that is what the words, "He also glorified" mean. You can have hope that the difference between your righteousness and Jesus' righteousness will be removed. The gap will be bridged, the distance dissolved, and you will be "conformed to the image of His Son," this is the Gospel's culmination; a perfect end to a perfect redemption. Just like Jesus.

B. We Must Remember What We Shall Be.

We have to constantly remind ourselves of what we shall be like, if we are to survive the war with sin within. The Bible over and over says one of the secret weapons of the saints against sin is the hope of their future condition. For example, in Romans five, Paul says this ought to be a motivating factor for our joy. How can we have joy when we still wrestle with sin? Because you know there's coming an hour and a day when the war will cease for you and you will have won because God is going to save you completely.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

"...we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." That does not mean rejoicing that God is going to be glorified one day, although we do rejoice that God is going to be glorified over all His enemies. But Paul says we're rejoicing in the hope that we will be there to share in that glory.

This is why, my friend, if you're not a Christian this should matter to you. This God that you've despised and treated so wrongly loves you and has bestowed upon you the possibility of giving you something far greater than just the removal of your sin's penalty and guilt. He is asking you to join Him in His ruling and reigning on His throne itself. Go back to our text, if you don't believe this is the case.

"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God"

Every good father, who has anything to bestow as an inheritance to his children will do so. This text says you are the heir of God and the Father will bestow to you His possessions. Wait a minute, for an inheritance to become a reality, a death has to take place—the father has to die. But listen, the Father has a mediator as well, His name is Jesus, and God in Christ died for us. The will is already in effect and there is coming a day where the will is going to be read and all will be ours in reality not in hope alone. You are an heir of God! All that God possesses He will bequeath to His children but not just to you.

"and joint heirs with Christ,"

Jesus and I are co-heirs! You say, "But wasn't it so in the Bible days that when there was more than one son that the eldest son got two-thirds of the inheritance and the remaining sons divided the remaining third?" That's not a bad deal, if you stop and think about it. One-third of all God owns? I'll take it and I don't mind sharing it with you. I think there's plenty in that one-third that I can be set for all eternity. It's a good retirement plan, if you please. It will beat your deal on earth any day. But that's not what the fine print says here. It says I'm a joint heir with Christ. Christ, in His amazing, marvelous, grace and love for you, will take everything the Father gives Him, that He has earned rightfully, and He will disperse it and share it with all of us. That's what this verse says. I don't get a third of it, I get all of it and so do you. That's how great our Father is in His love in Jesus Christ is toward us.

*if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with (with what? Read this carefully and be astonished) **the glory which shall be revealed in us.**" (Romans 8:17-18)*

In other words, Paul is moved by the Holy Spirit to see something that is so marvelous and incredible that He is saying that the glory of Jesus is going to be revealed in His people. The very glory of Christ is going to be revealed in us. We will have that glory. At this moment people seem to balk and say, "No, doesn't Isaiah 42 say that God will share His glory with no one else?" It said that, but that "no one else" referred to false idols. It doesn't say God can't take His glory and share it with His children, and, in the case of Jesus, with His bride. Would you think about that for a minute? Jesus will share it with His bride.

Paul says two things about this glory.

First, he calls it an inheritance, receiving an inheritance with Christ. Secondly, it is called the glory of Jesus shared with us. This glory, which Jesus has—unimaginable glory—is going to be revealed and shared with us. Let me say this is not just the Apostle Paul's position, nor is it me taking the Apostle Paul and twisting his words to say something he's not. This is the confirmed record and testimony of other apostles, namely John.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

The moment you lay your eyes on Jesus, something will happen to you. A transformation will occur and the final stage of your salvation will be made complete. You will be made like Him. Again, you will not be made Godlike, but restored to the image and likeness of God so that when you are looked upon by angels and men, they will see the same Shekinah glory that Jesus possesses.

Let me give you a little biblical illustration of what I'm talking about. In the first chapter of Revelation, John is praying and suddenly the Lord appears to him. This is the same John that said, "I handled Jesus, I ate with Him, I reclined on His chest at the Last Supper. I was very familiar with Jesus and felt freedom to be able to do that." But Jesus in His glorified state appears to John and what does John do? He falls at His feet like a dead man. The glory of Jesus' beauty and power are so magnificent and overwhelming that John felt the life leave his body.

John begins to describe the Lord, but do not take your cues from John's description to think you will look something like his description of Jesus. Do not think you're going to have white hair and a long beard and a golden sash and that your feet will look like brass and you'll have a sword coming out of your mouth. John uses symbolic language to describe certain attributes of Jesus because none of us could understand what John saw if he put them into words. Thus he uses symbolic imagery to convey what he saw. The sword out of Jesus' mouth doesn't mean Jesus has a tongue that looks like a sword. It represents the power and authority of His words. His speech is like the power and authority of a sword, it cuts, it divides, "it's living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." But what I want you to gather from this vision of Jesus and His glory is that the effect on John was it left him so weak that he was not sure life wasn't leaving his body. That's how beautiful and powerful Jesus was in His glory. Our text is saying that is going to be your experience also. You're going to be glorified to that degree that if any human being saw you they would fall at your feet and worship you.

Follow this through the Scriptures. There's a reason I'm taking the time to do this. It will come in the conclusion so bear with me.

"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust (Adam after the fall, after he lost the unadulterated pure image and likeness of God. Now it's marred with sin), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man." (1 Corinthians 15:49)

You're going to look like Christ! You're going to bear His image.

*“to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(2 Thessalonians 2:14)*

You’ve been called to obtain the very glory the Father bestowed on Jesus. We have a problem with that, don’t we? Let’s be honest. We have a problem with that because it sounds like we’re robbing Jesus of something we don’t rightfully have a title to. I understand that. But this has nothing to do with you deserving it. This is about salvation, a salvation by *grace*. This is the final, culminating work of that saving grace. Do you deserve to have your sins forgiven? Do you deserve to escape hell as the penalty for your sins? Do you deserve the glory of Jesus Christ given to you? No. But it doesn’t stop God giving it to you as it’s not stopped Him from saving you from your sins and its penalty and giving you a place reserved in heaven forever.

In Revelation 19, John is bringing the apocalyptic book to its conclusion. The visions are wrapping up to an end. His tour guide through this visionary apocalypse says something to him. It’s an angel, this person who is talking to him, telling him what to write and what not to write is an angelic being not a man. Not a man but an angel. That’s very important.

“Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

He says that with such authority and power that verse ten is John’s response. He speaks with such authority that John was sure this had to be more than an angel.

¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Revelation 19:9-10)

This is the Apostle John, one of our leaders, one of the foundational stones of the church, and yet he’s getting ready to worship an angel. I’ve read all this to you and brought you to this point to say to you that the glory of our salvation is yet to be experienced. You think this salvation is good? What you have experienced is nothing compared to what you’re going to experience one day when Jesus transforms and glorifies you. If you could see what you will be like then, you would be tempted to fall down and worship you also. The Bible says you will judge all the angels. Did you hear me? We—who have been helped by these guardians, will judge the centurions of heaven who have been sent to help us, often unawares. They will stand before us and receive their eternal rewards and judgments. I’m amazed by that, aren’t you? They will receive it gladly because we will be clothed with a glory that is not our own—the glory of the Son of God! They will treat you with the respect that only a queen would receive married to the king.

When a poor woman marries a wealthy mogul, she becomes the co-possessor of all that man’s wealth and industry. It is not her work that has earned this wealth. Not even her acceptance has produced this great sum of riches. It is hers, not because of anything she has done or ever will do, but because of what her husband has done. This is how faith works. It does not save; Christ saves.

Our faith simply unites us to Him. And we shall be forever wedded to Him, sharing His glory, so that angels will give us reference. They won't worship us, but will give us respect entitled to the Son of God Himself.

I've taken quite a bit of time to establish my case. Here's the whole point of it. Right now it's hard to understand and believe all of this. It just seems so much like a fairy tale, something you read in a children's book where "they all lived happily ever after. The End." One of the reasons it's so difficult to get your mind to believe and receive this is because of current conditions. This principle of sin is still there working feverishly night and day seemingly not giving us rest. We always have to be on guard against the sin that lurks within. We must always be on guard because when we least expect it we will fall into its trap and believe its lie. How do you fight that?

C. The Duel Realities About the Christian.

The first of that reality is that the Christian is still a sinner who needs the grace of God found in the cross of Jesus Christ. I still need that. You see, dear sinner friend, I'm not saying I'm beyond and better than you. I'm confessing to you that my righteousness compared with the Devil's is not much different. The difference between us is that I know I need grace. I understand I am not good and that there is no good thing in me, I've got that, He's convinced me of that. And if that wasn't enough, I've proven it to myself a hundred times over, nay, a thousand times over! I am not better than anyone in this room. The only difference between the nonbeliever and me is that I know my wretched state and I need grace. I never want to get what I deserve. I want to get what I don't deserve—the grace of God. I need to always remember that.

Christian, if you don't remember that, you'll begin to look down your nose upon the sinner and look upon him or her as if they are some filthy being that you cannot relate to. In other words, you become self-righteous. It's a good thing that God lets this sin principle work in us. If He's not going to take us to heaven immediately, it's good that it's still there; otherwise He wouldn't have done it. It's good that it's still there to remind us we need a salvation that's by grace not by works! If it's based on what I did, I'm telling you what I do would damn me.

Our brother gave us a perfect example this morning. Even when you pray and fast, when you preach, there is still enough self in it that you would want people to look at you and not Jesus. I'm hellish at best in myself. I need to remember that.

But then, I also equally need to remember that I'm a child of God with all the privileges of sonship. You must remember both of these equally. We must hold them both in balance.

When we sin we cannot say, "Oh Lord, how could You love me?!" I must say, "There is a Savior who has made me His co-heir! His inheritance is mine. I'm a son of God with all the privileges of sonship because of The Son of God who died and rose again! He's bequeathed to me all that the Father has given Him." I must hold those two things in balance. Because if I don't remember this I'm going to be so down that I'm even going to doubt that God loves me and wonder if I'm still

possibly lost in my sins. I'm not going to walk by faith in what God has said, I'm going to walk by my performance or lack thereof.

But if I only remember that I'm a son of God with all the privileges of sonship and don't remember that I'm a sinner who remains in need of a Savior, I'm not going to be able to love the sinner with any compassion because I will not see myself in them. It takes both.

We need to take this three-staged Gospel, in its past work of saving us from sin, its present work of saving us from the power of sin, and its future work of saving us from the presence of sin and remind one another all the more as we see the day approaching. This is how the Gospel builds up the church and we minister and edify one another. We say to that erring brother and sister, "This is not befitting a child of God. God's better than this and He's in you. If you're down and discouraged and don't believe that God loves you, let me tell you how much He loves you. He is going to do something one day that will make you look like Him. You will shine like the noontday sun with the glory He shares with you. All that Christ has received from the Father He will grant to us. We must "comfort one another with these words." Aren't they comforting?

Isn't it comforting to know that this year, when you fail miserably, when your heart grows cold and you don't feel like praying and you shun the prayer closet, when the Bible begins to gather dust on the cover and you feel so unworthy, you need to remember that one day the battle with sin will end. You won't have to wrestle with this thing any longer because one day you will stand perfected in His presence. Salvation will bring restoration and it will be even better than what Adam had in the Garden before the fall. Joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

When I remember what's awaiting me, I can endure the suffering, the pain, and the disappointment of this life. There is nothing that helps me to endure the moment like knowing what's ahead of me. So I pray you take these words and learn them so you can comfort one another with them. Remember them for yourself and remember so you can encourage others with what will happen one day when the final chapter will have been written and it will be said of you and me, "Conformed to the image of the Son." Amen.