

Golden Chain of Christ's Co-Heirs: Romans 8

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Walter S. Mallory, a long-time associate of Thomas Edison, reports a conversation with the inventor after he and his team had conducted “over 9000 experiments” over “more than five months”¹ in a still-unsuccessful effort at developing a storage battery. Mallory says,

[Walter Mallory:] “Isn’t it a shame that with the tremendous amount of work you have done you haven’t been able to get any results?” Edison turned on me like a flash, and with a smile replied: “Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results! I know several thousand things that won’t work.”

Mallory estimates that ultimate success (resulting in U.S. Patent 678,722, granted 16 July 1901) required “pretty near to fifty thousand [experiments], for they fill more than one hundred and fifty of the notebooks, to say nothing of some thousands of tests in curve sheets.”²

Martin A. Rosanoff, a lab assistant for Edison, famously quotes him, “Genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration.”³ Almost two years of work were necessary to produce the first successful electric light-bulb.

From September 1877–January 1878 (five months) and from July 1878 until October 1879 (sixteen months), twelve plus hours per day, seven days a week, he devoted himself to creating an incandescent light,⁴ leading to his first patent application on preliminary electric-light related issues (14 October 1878).⁵ He on 22 October 1879 (after many unsuccessful attempts) he found a working filament, yielding the first successful electric light bulb. Two weeks later he applied for a patent, the heart of which was its carbonized-paper filament. Edison knew he was on the right track, but needed a better filament. That first light bulb burned out after only 13½ hours.

His first public demonstration (New Year’s eve 1879) led in the first commercial installation of electric lights—onto a nearly complete 309-foot steamship: the U.S.S. Columbia. On 2 May 1880, all of its 115 incandescent lights were lit simultaneously, but these were short-lived carbonized-paper filaments. It left New York for California via Cape Horn in June 1880. Upon reaching San Francisco in August, a full complement of long-lasting light bulbs with carbonized bamboo replaced the originals.

We rightly laud Edison’s invention of electric light-bulbs and creating a marketable product. What about Sándor Just (SHAN-dor Yoost) and Franjo Hanaman (FRAN-yo HA-naman)? They invented the tungsten filament which dominated the market ever since. Their invention made Edison’s filaments obsolete, but gave Edison’s larger-idea (the incandescent light-bulb) longevity—which only the power of Uncle Sam’s executive decree could hit the kill-switch. Yet, Just and Hanaman are virtual unknowns; everyone associates incandescent light bulbs with Edison. Why? Edison pioneered; they only refined. His name is famous; theirs are not.

¹ Frank L. Dyer and Thomas C. Martin, *Edison: His Life and Inventions* (New York: Harper, 1910), 2:615, cite Walter Mallory as saying that the

² Dyer and Martin, *Edison*, 2:616.

³ Martin A. Rosanoff, “Edison in His Laboratory,” *Harper’s Magazine* 165 (September 1932): 406. Edison stated this in various ways, but this is the most familiar form.

⁴ Dyer and Martin, *Edison*, 1:246.

⁵ Dyer and Martin, *Edison*, 1:248.

Zane Hodges: A Pioneer who Studied Diligently and Tirelessly

Zane Hodges shared some excellent qualities with Thomas Edison. Diligent study of the Greek text allowed him to pioneer. He also let God's word refine his views.

When it comes to Romans 8, Zane Hodges truly pioneered. A few others saw Romans 8:17 distinguishing two heirships: *co-heirs of Christ* and *heirs of God*.⁶ Zane Hodges saw crucial implications and developed them. Then he worked for decades honing the interpretation of Romans 8, gradually refining his understanding here and there. Consider his early (1981) statement about Romans 8:29:

Everyone who has ever accepted God's gracious salvation will one day be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29) and will enter the eternal world totally free from the least trace of sin. No doubt not all of them will have attained to 'co-heirship' with Jesus Christ. But all of them will be among history's immortals [underlining mine].⁷

Three pertinent interpretive features emerge from his interpretation of the phrase: *proōrisen summorphois tēs eikonos tou huiou autou*, which the NKJB: NT (1979) renders *predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son*.⁸

A. he viewed all believers as coming under this predestination,

B. he regarded this predestination as a guarantee,

C. he saw *conformity to the image of His Son* focusing on sinlessness and having everlasting life, not upon co-heirship with Christ.

These same three points (A-C) are reflected in another early statement by Hodges (1985):

Of course, this immortality consists in a sinless and glorious likeness to Christ. Thus Paul declared:

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. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified (Rom 8:29-30).

These are impressive words and, as often stated, there is no break in this chain. Those who are predestined to conformity to Christ are not only called and justified, but ultimately glorified as well. This is the child of God's inalienable inheritance.⁹

Hodges said the preceding words in *Gospel Under Siege* and *Grace in Eclipse*, knowing that Romans 8:17 speaks of two heirships. He related Rom 8:29f to the general heirship of 8:17a.

⁶ Cf. predecessor works: James Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *EGT*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (1897–1910; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, N.D.), 2:648; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 229; William R. Newell, *Romans: Verse by Verse* (Chicago: Moody, 1938), 317f; Eric Sauer, *In the Arena of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 163; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 3rd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1898), 204; Wilbur Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven* (Chicago: Moody, 1968), 193; and possibly Henry Barclay Sweet, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (N.P.: Macmillan, 1910; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1964), 219. Only a few evidence a clear understanding of what they saw.

A few wrote after Hodges' earlier writings: James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 1:456; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 502.

⁷ Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1992), 145. The first edition has the same words: Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: A Study of Faith and Works* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1981), 122f.

⁸ *New King James Bible: New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1979) was default for Hodges, *Siege*.

⁹ Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1985), 72. The thought is the same with a few wording changes in the third edition Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards*, 3rd ed. (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 2007), 78f.

However, Hodges continued studying through the years (1981 until his 2008 death). Preparation for the Romans commentary became his front-burner project late in 2003. He devoted voluminous hours to reading and rereading the Greek text of Romans before reading far-and-wide in the scholarly literature. Finally, he began writing, typing his final comments (on Romans 14:15) before dying (November 23, 2008)—a five-year project.

It is not clear just when his view of Rom 8:29f shifted from what he wrote in the early 1980s (in the first editions of *Gospel Under Siege* and *Grace in Eclipse*). However, it would appear to be after the second edition of *Gospel Under Siege* (1992), since the second edition added thirty-one endnote-pages. Adding notes to an existing work requires determining which discussions need further analysis or proof. Generally, those are controversial points or ones likely to attract critique. Thus, Hodges studied the entire manuscript, including remarks on Rom 8:29f. If his view of these verses had changed by 1992, the second edition would say so. It did not.

The best guess is that it was during the Romans-commentary years (2005-2008) that Hodges began to see Rom 8:29f differently. Rather than linking it *solely* to general inheritance (Romans 8:17a), he also related it with 8:17b's co-heirship.

Our destiny, that **God has predetermined for us, is to share the likeness of this Firstborn Heir** [cf. Rom 8:17]. But as we noted under v 17, in the OY the firstborn son inherited twice as much as the rest of the sons. Since all the children of God are “heirs of God” (see v 17), they have heirship as a facet of this future likeness [of His Son—in the words of Rom 8:29]. But as v 17 also declares, *co-heirship* is also a possibility since if we *co-suffer* with him we shall also be *co-glorified with Him* (see discussion under v 17).

In Romans 8 **to share the likeness of His Son is not simply to be morally and spiritually like Him** [i.e., sinless and possessing everlasting life], marvelous beyond words though that is. But in this passage (8:17-30), **the preeminent emphasis lies on our sharing His destiny as the Heir of all things** (*panta*) which are headed toward full deliverance from all corruption (cf. Heb 1:2: “whom God has appointed heir of all things”). The real role of vv 29-30 in Paul's larger discussion is only properly perceived if we understand the centrality of Jesus Christ in God's eternal purpose for creation.

. . . *Called*. It is precisely this middle term [*called*] in Paul's series of divine actions [known in advance, predetermined, called, justified, glorified]¹⁰ that **connects directly with v 28. According to v 28, those with whom “all things” are cooperating toward eternal “good” are those who have been “called in harmony with His purpose.”** It is now clear, by means of v 29, that this “calling” was preceded by God's pre-knowledge of us and by **His pre-determination of our destiny to share in the likeness of Jesus Christ** [by becoming co-heirs of the Firstborn—the Preeminent Heir].¹¹

The following pulls the bold words from the above quote. He moved from seeing predetermination as general-heirship focused to co-heirship focused:

God has predetermined for us. . . to share the likeness of this Firstborn Heir. . . *To share the likeness of His Son* is not simply to be morally and spiritually like Him. . . The preeminent emphasis lies on our sharing His *destiny* as the Heir of all things. . . [*Called*] connects directly with v 28. According to v 28, those with whom “all things” are cooperating toward eternal “good” are those who have been “*called in harmony with His purpose*. His pre-determination of our destiny [is for us] to share in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin, Introduction and Selected Notes by John H. Niemelä (Corinth, TX: GES, 2013), 238.

¹¹ Hodges, *Romans*, 240, emphasis in original. Bold is mine.

What Does Hodges, *Romans*, Say about *Predetermined to Share the Likeness of His Son*?

The commentary seems to offer a *both-and* view. Putting this into my own words (since Zane Hodges cannot clarify), he appears to argue:

- A. All believers have a predetermined (guaranteed) destiny to be conformed to the image of Christ in terms of His sinlessness and everlasting life, but
- B. Some believers attain a predetermined (potential) destiny to full conformity to the image of Christ in terms of becoming co-heirs with Him.

As it stands, it is hard to reconcile a both-and position, because 8:29's golden chain (*known in advance, predetermined, called, justified, glorified*) seems to portray the idea of *guarantee*. Yet, at the same time, Hodges seems correct to link *conformity to the image of His Son* with co-heirship.

1. 8:29 refers to Him as the Firstborn (recalling the co-heirs of 8:17).¹²
2. Called links to those believers who can be described as loving God—the ones called in harmony with His purpose (8:28).¹³
3. The question, *Who will separate us from the love of Christ?* is followed by *we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*. Both of these in context speak of those believers whose love for Christ was not crushed, as they served Him faithfully through terrible trials. See also Rom 8:38-39.¹⁴

In other words, despite the tension between A and B, I sense what seems to have pulled, as Hodges toward both-and. At the same time, I hesitate to take it as both-and. Despite the difficulties Zane Hodges' words pose for me, my years of interacting with him suggest a proper course of action here.

Excursus: Puzzles Resulting from How Zane Hodges Approached Writing

Zane Hodges always produced a complete first (or second draft) before subjecting his writing to editorial scrutiny. This let him refine his own thinking before facing comment and critique. He focused on the main text, before adding technical footnotes. This emphasized communicating the flow of an argument (e.g., Paul's *Romans* argument) before considering scholarly minutia.

Unfortunately, this meant that the only archives of the *Romans* commentary were a series of floppy disks of the draft of the commentary. From these, Robert ("Bob") Vacendak produced three files: the commentary, the translation of *Romans*, and the outline of the book. No other notes exist. Everything else was inside the mind of Zane Hodges and is inaccessible.

One could wish that he had submitted sections of the commentary (e.g., 1:1-16; 1:18-3:20; 3:21-5:11; 5:12-8:39; 9:1-11:36) to Robert ("Bob") Wilkin for initial review. Certainly, Hodges would not have switched to editing—preferring to continue writing. However, it would have allowed asking, "How does *x* relate to *y*?" He would have had one of two answers, "Have you considered. . .?" or "You may have a point." In my years with Zane Hodges, his simple and elegant answers resolved many of my initial bafflements over what he had written—winning me to his approach. However, he was also ready to rethink issues, whenever he lacked a satisfying answer.

Bob Wilkin and I, each having certain responsibilities for preparing the commentary for publication, needed to understand Zane Hodges' sense of Paul's meaning. Completing a mentor's work is harder than writing one's own work. Generally, we knew his conclusions and the arguments he favored. Yet, occasionally, it was clear that he had changed his view. Usually, when that occurred, his commentary itself provided sufficient clues. **End of Excursus.**

¹² Hodges, *Romans*, 240.

¹³ Hodges, *Romans*, 235-38.

¹⁴ Hodges, *Romans*, 246-9.

Zane Hodges was comfortable with our questions. If he could answer us, he would either validate his answer or go back to the drawing board. He would want us to do the same. It is not time to second-guess. Rather, we need to study our Greek texts to understand Romans 8:29f.

A Word about the Rest of the Article

My conclusion (after much study and analysis) is that Zane Hodges was on the verge of tying Romans 8 together in a most satisfying way. In order to reinforce that conviction, this article will put together the puzzle-pieces as Hodges saw them. By emphasizing his words (not mine) it should become apparent that my suggestion at the end of this article is a very small step. Unless you turn back to page 1, who was it that improved Edison's light by inventing the Tungsten filament? Similarly, the one piece of the Romans-8 puzzle with which Zane Hodges may have still been wrestling at the time of his death seems to be easily identifiable. Several people besides me view that puzzle-piece similarly.¹⁵

Co-Heirship, the Focus of Romans 8:17-39

*Gospel Under Siege*¹⁶ and *Grace in Eclipse*¹⁷ clarified the significance of co-heirship in 8:17 and to emphasize its impact upon the chapter as a whole. Hodges' translation follows:

And if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—heirs, on the one hand, of God, and on the other hand, co-heirs with Christ if we suffer together *with Him* so that we may also be glorified together *with Him*.

The concept is that all believers (as children of God) are heirs of God, but only those who suffer with Christ become His co-heirs. Romans 8:29 calls Jesus the Firstborn, His inheritance far exceeds that of other children of God. Being a co-heir with the Firstborn is a privilege that greatly exceeds merely being God's child. Hodges, *Romans*, comments further:

The second heirship—co-heirship with Christ—is predicated on “co-suffering” that leads to “co-glorification.” . . . The word *if* (*eiper*) indicates the conditional nature of this statement. It is false grammar to say that the “if” clause treats this as a definite fact. The construction means no more than the expression “on the assumption that” and leaves fully open the opposite possibility.

It is this last aspect of our heirship that leads Paul directly into the theme of suffering which will occupy him until the end of the chapter.¹⁸

The concluding statement is significant. Let us test it. Romans 8:18 urges the readers to regard present sufferings as a mere pittance, compared to glories yet to be revealed.¹⁹ All of creation is groaning (suffering), because it has been temporarily subjected to futility in anticipation of release from bondage (8:19-21).²⁰ Not only creation but those with the firstfruits

¹⁵ Robert Wilkin, Shawn Lazar, and Bill Fiess all were reaching similar conclusions long ago, but the first three worked with the per-publication manuscript. Others may have independently reached this as well. This minimizes my own role. Zane Hodges' words would have prompted a number to ask, “How does *x* relate to *y*?” Not surprisingly, several people close to Hodges reached similar conclusions, especially if the solution might be a minor shift. And, if it were a small step being proposed by several, their roles will be overshadowed by the magnitude of the pioneering work on Romans 8 that Zane Hodges did.

¹⁶ The second edition contains notes, so it is the one I cite. Cf. Hodges, *Gospel*, 127; 129; 181, n. 2.

¹⁷ Hodges, *Eclipse*, 3rd ed., 78; 80; 127, n. 3.

¹⁸ Hodges, *Romans*, 225.

¹⁹ Hodges, *Romans*, 226f.

²⁰ Hodges, *Romans*, 227-29.

of the Spirit eagerly await redemption of the body (8:22f).²¹ We have been delivered in hope, for which we should wait with endurance (8:24f).²² The Spirit intercedes for suffering believers who pray—which Romans 10 refers to as calling upon the Lord that leads to deliverance (8:26f).²³ All things work together toward the good—the Millennial redemption—which will especially benefit those believers who love God (8:28).²⁴ (I will skip 8:29f for the moment).

Robert Wilkin offers an important clarification of Hodges, *Romans*, regarding 8:31-39:

Hodges told me [Wilkin] privately, and it can be seen in his discussion of 8:31-38[,] if read carefully, that he did not see Rom 8:31-38 as dealing with the doctrine of eternal security. The issue, he said, was out present experience of God's love in Christ. The believer who is walking according to the Spirit is one who is experiencing God's love even when he is undergoing persecution for his faith.²⁵

In that light, those who suffer for Christ in 8:31-39 qualify as the suffering-with-Christ co-heirs of 8:17b. Yes, Hodges' point that all of Romans 8:17-39 emphasizes suffering, is correct. This section relies heavily upon 8:1-16, which differentiates those walking by the Spirit from those walking (legalistically)²⁶ by the flesh. Only the former become co-heirs of Christ—by suffering for Him.

Romans 8:1-16 and the Flesh versus the Spirit

Zane Hodges devoted much attention to a proper understanding of Romans 8:1 in the Majority Text. Walking by the Spirit is the only escape for people in mortal bodies from the penal servitude to sin under which all of creation has labored since the fall. The translation of Hodges, *Romans*, follows:

Therefore there is now no servitude [*katakrima*] to sin for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk in relation to the flesh but in relation to the Spirit.

The term *katakrima* (penal servitude) occurs in Rom 5:16 and 18. Note especially 5:16a. The translation in Hodges, *Romans*, follows:

And the free gift is not like *what happened* through one *man* who sinned. For the judgment [*krima*] came for one *offense* to produce servitude [*katakrima*] to sin.

Genesis 3:16-19 emphasizes the sentencing of the man and woman to futility. This would be the *katakrima* concept. Genesis 2:16f announced that there would be judgment (i.e., what Paul calls *krima* in Rom 5:16), if they were to eat of the wrong tree. In this light, Romans 8:1 says that believers who walk by the Spirit rise above penal servitude to suffering rewardably in serving the Lord.²⁷

It is not my intent (due to the limitations of space and time for presentation) to explore the rest of Romans 8:1-16. Robert Wilkin's plenary paper on Romans 8 (which preceded mine)

²¹ Hodges, *Romans*, 229f.

²² Hodges, *Romans*, 230-33.

²³ Hodges, *Romans*, 233-35.

²⁴ Hodges, *Romans*, 235-38.

²⁵ Wilkin, "[Note 29]," on p. 248 in Hodges, *Romans*.

²⁶ Most assume that walking by the flesh involves license. While lawlessness would be fleshly, that is not Paul's point here. He, instead, describes one who imitates Paul trying to live the Christian life by law-keeping (Romans 7). See all the references to Romans 7 in Hodges, *Romans*, 206-17.

²⁷ Do not think that I refer to sinless perfection in mortal bodies. Instead, Paul means that those walking by the Spirit still suffer, but their suffering (rather than being futile penal servitude) find themselves suffering with Christ as they live for Him in this present world. In so doing, their suffering becomes a basis for rewardability.

certainly will clarify the first section of the chapter. My point in raising Romans 8:1 is to suggest something non-controversial (here, at GES): That walking by the Spirit, rather than walking (legalistically) by the flesh is the basis for one becoming a co-heir through suffering with Christ.

In light of this, the focus throughout Romans 8 is co-heirship. The book addresses believers (heirs of God). In the first section of Romans 8, Paul urges believers to walk by the Spirit. The aim in doing so is that they might become co-heirs through suffering with Christ that they might be co-glorified with Him. In all of this, they no longer are under the futility of penal servitude (8:1). Ultimately, they will be more than conquerors—they will be co-heirs whose exposure to suffering did not separate them from the love of Christ. They will continue to love Him and stand for Him, despite suffering persecution with Him.

The Inference

What shall we say then? Romans 8:17-28 and 31-39 focus on co-heirs suffering with Christ that they might be more than conquerors. Romans 8:1-16 emphasize walking by the Spirit, that we might no longer be under penal servitude—so we might become co-heirs. So, what should we say about Romans 8:29f?

Romans 8:1-28 and 31-39 focus on co-heirship with the Firstborn, rather than general heirship as children. Why, then, would interpreters look at 8:29f as focusing upon general heirship—becoming God’s children through faith alone in our crucified-and-resurrected-Savior alone?

The answer should be clear. On page 2 of this paper (especially, note 6) a small percentage of expositors and theologians recognize that Romans 8:17 discusses two inheritances. It is not the only passage discussing this concept.²⁸ However, if the vast majority of interpreters fail to see two heirships in 8:17, would anyone expect them to see it elsewhere in Romans 8? Of course not.

In light of that sad track record, how many theologians or exegetes have even considered the possibility that Romans 8:29f might discuss the golden chain of the co-heirs? Zane Hodges was exploring virgin territory. He was seeing glimpses of this pair of verses pointing to co-heirship, but was not yet ready to let go of the old model: that it was the golden chain of the heirs. His comments are a both-and proposal: With regard to being conformed to Christ’s everlasting life and sinlessness, that is guaranteed by the golden chain. With regard to being conformed to Him as Preeminent Heir, the golden chain makes that potential.

I wonder what he would have said, if asked, “How can the golden chain portray both guarantee and potentiality?” I also wonder what he might have said, if asked, “If the focus of 8:29f is co-heirship, how can it also be about general heirship? Another question would be, “If 8:1-28 and 31-39 look at co-heirship, how can 8:29f be about general heirship at all? I suspect that he would have said, “You men have a point.” That would be a most gracious response, as usual.

How big a contribution would our questions have been? Very small, indeed. Essentially, we view Zane Hodges as having already established the answers to all three. Zane Hodges is not noted for both-and answers, but for clearly delineating one topic for a verse (a betwixt and between approach).

Regarding the second question, he did not claim general heirship to be the focus of any verse in Romans 8 (except 8:29f). He would rethink these two verses—or substantiate his view.

²⁸ Some of the others include 2 Tim 2:11-13; Rev 20:4-6; Matt 5:3-10; Heb 12:28f. The reader may profitably consult the chapter, “To Receive a Kingdom,” in Hodges, *Eclipse*, 73-89.

He emphasized the need for views to reflect the overall flow of their passages. He probably would have taken a second look.

In other words, our query to Hodges would have been, “We accept your original thinking about 8:29f (about its relation to co-heirship). Why not *investigate whether* the part of your interpretation (that is also accepted by theologians and expositors who do not distinguish two heirships) is sound?”

Note my wording carefully. I do not urge immediately rejecting a relationship between 8:29f to general inheritance. It is a time to investigate this issue within the argument of Romans exegetically. Many issues require exploration, possibly leading to other hypotheses. A both-and answer is unsatisfying, but careful investigation should clarify. Scientific investigation involves proposing hypotheses and testing them to determine which are sound and which are not.

Conclusion

Thomas Edison was a persistent investigator. He did not let failure deter him from seeking the answer. Neither did he allow success to deter him from further experimentation to improve. Neither did Sándor Just and Franjo Hanaman let Edison’s successes and failures with filaments for incandescent light bulbs deter them from further experimentation.

We should thank God for letting Zane Hodges find significant truths and for his diligence in refining his understanding of God’s revelation. It would seem that he wrestles with new discoveries and old teaching on Romans 8:29f. He may well have been on the verge of major discoveries. We need the same curiosity to understand truth. Perhaps, we will discover exactly what contribution Romans 8:29f makes to the chapter’s argument. Possibly, Paul is tracing the golden chain of the co-heirs.

If so, Paul may assert that such a chain (known in advance, predetermined, called, justified, glorified) is unbreakable for co-heirs. In other words, “Yes, you lovers of God, called in harmony with His purpose can know that all things work together toward the good. That is, creation’s subjection in futility will end and you co-heirs will be more than conquerors. You can count on it.”

Paul’s challenge in Ephesians 3:19 is appropriate. He wanted the Ephesians to *know the love of Christ which is beyond knowledge*. It may initially seem self-contradictory. Instead, he challenged readers to continue growing in knowledge of Christ’s love—something that can never be known exhaustively. Similarly, a better understanding of Romans 8 challenges us toward co-heirship, despite “sufferings of the present time that *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18).²⁹ A greater knowledge of and appreciation for the message of Romans 8 (including the golden chain) can only motivate us toward being pleasing to Him.

²⁹ Translation by Hodges, *Romans*, 226.