

## Predestined and Glorified: Rescuing Rom 8:30-32 from Calvinism<sup>1</sup>

Dr. John H. Niemelä, President of Message of Life

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Zane Hodges indicated that his own understanding of the book aligned with that of his seminary professors, until he started wrestling with Romans 5:9-10. That passage convinced him that Romans does not equate *future* salvation with *past* justification or *past* reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

**All the more** therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, we shall be delivered from wrath through Him. Indeed, if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, **all the more**, since we have been reconciled, we shall be delivered by His life. [ZCH-RT, emphasis mine]<sup>3</sup>

Also, fairly early in the process, he discovered that the prevailing view of Romans 8:17 is incorrect, because Paul distinguishes being an heir of God from being a co-heir with Christ. Most interpreters do not differentiate these. All believers are heirs of God, but only those who suffer with Christ become co-heirs with Him.<sup>4</sup>

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. [ZCH-RT, my spacing and emphasis.]

He also recognized early that the co-heirship with Christ was particularly impressive, because Jesus is the *firstborn-inheritor*, the Son with a double portion.<sup>5</sup> In the OT, Jacob adopted Joseph’s two sons, thereby giving Joseph a double portion, but he also treated Ephraim (“Doubly Fruitful”) as the firstborn inheritor. Joseph’s column is twice as wide as the other sons (double portion) and Ephraim’s is twice as wide as Manasseh’s (double portion). Cf. Genesis 48–49.

Two Shares Joseph Firstborn		Share 2nd	Share 3rd	Share 4th	Share 5th	Share 6th	Share 7th	Share 8th	Share 9th	Share 10th	Share 11th	Share 12th
E	M	R	S	L	J	Z	I	D	G	A	N	B
p	a	e	i	e	u	e	s	a	a	s	a	e
h	n	u	m	v	d	b	s	n	d	h	p	n
r	a	b	e	i	a	u	a			e	h	j
a	s	e	o		h	l	c			r	t	a
i	s	n	n			u	h				a	m
m	e					n	a				l	i
	h						r				i	n

<sup>1</sup> This is a revision of my April 22, 2014, GES paper: “Golden Chain of Christ’s Co-Heirs: Romans 8.”

<sup>2</sup> The passage speaks of past justification and reconciliation. Further, it twice uses the phrase “much more” in differentiating these past events as the basis for an offer of a potential deliverance from wrath.

<sup>3</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin, Introduction and Selected Notes by John H. Niemelä (Corinth, TX: GES, 2013), 131. ZCH-RT = Hodges’ translation in Romans commentary.

<sup>4</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege: Faith and Works in Tension* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1981, 1992), 128-29. All page references to this work are to the second edition, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> Hodges, *Siege*, 128-29.

Another pertinent part of Zane Hodges' approach to Romans also arose early, even though not discussed in his earlier published works. He was well-aware of Specifically, his rendering of the *Majority Text* for Romans 8:1 [NA/UBS omit what follows [and 2]:

Therefore there is now no servitude [*katakrima*] to sin for those [1] who are in Christ Jesus, [and 2] who do not walk in relation to the flesh but in relation to the Spirit. [ZCH-RT, emphasis mine]

Zane Hodges was well aware of Moulton and Milligan's research showing that *katakrima* means *penal servitude*, not *condemnation*. Clearly, the MajT presents two steps as necessary for rising above a life of futility: (1) believe in Jesus Christ, and (2) pleasing God by walk in relation to the Spirit [rather than attempting to please God by a life of (Romans 7) lawkeeping (which is walking in relation to the flesh). Within this context, walking according to the flesh is not license, but law. It is exactly what Paul attempted in Romans 7. One does not rise above the Genesis-3-imposed thorns and thistles as penal servitude simply by believing.

<b>Thorns and Thistles serve as:</b>		
<b>Penal servitude for:</b>	<b>Opportunity for reward for:</b>	
unbelievers	believers walking by the flesh	believers walking by the Spirit

For many decades Zane Hodges had come to see the foregoing passages (Romans 5:9-10; 8:1 and 17) differently than his seminary professors and most expositors. However, the process of re-examination of a major book (like Romans) is one in which certain gems do not come into focus right away. Romans 8:29-30 (the **Golden Chain**) is such a case. The passages discussed up to this point affect one's understanding of the contribution of the Golden Chain also.

### **How Zane Hodges Formerly Understood the Golden Chain**

In 1981 he understood it to speak of all believers. They would all be conformed to the image of Christ, namely they would finally be sinless. Most expositors would concur:

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].<sup>6</sup>

His 1985 statements follow the same pattern:

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.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hodges, *Siege*, 122f.

<sup>7</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards* (Dallas, TX: Redención Viva, 1985, 2007), 72.

## How Zane Hodges Saw Romans 8:29-30 in His Final Years

No longer did he view the passage's focus as being upon heirs of God (all believers), but upon the co-heirs of Christ (Romans 8:17). No longer did he view *to share the likeness of His Son* as emphasizing *sinlessness*, but *co-heirship with Christ*:

Our destiny, that God has predetermined for us, is to share the likeness of this Firstborn Heir [Jesus Christ]. But as we noted under v 17, in the OT 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. 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, marvelous beyond words though that is. But in this passage (8:17-30), the preeminent emphasis lies in our sharing His destiny as the Heir of all things...<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, at the time of Zane's death, no one else had seen his manuscript. It seems that he may not have fully integrated this understanding, because parts of his treatment of Romans 8:29-30 goes back to what he was taught at seminary.

### My Resolution

Three options now confront me as interpretive possibilities. Does Romans 8:29-30:

1. discuss what is promised to all believers (heirs of God)?
2. discuss what is promised to all believers as heirs of God as well as discussing what is promised to co-heirs with Christ?
3. discuss what is promised to co-heirs with Christ?

View 2 is a difficult one, because the Golden Chain has language of guarantee, but it is not clear how the language of guarantee can apply **in the same way** both to heirs and co-heirs. [View 3 sets forth a guarantee to co-heirs without guaranteeing that any given believer will attain to that status at the *Bēma*]. Thus, I find view 2 problematic.<sup>9</sup>

The whole chapter urges believers (who are heirs of God) to become co-heirs with Christ. Thus, view 3 continues the contextual flow. The rest of this paper will present a contextual argument in favor of view 3.

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

*Gospel Under Siege*<sup>10</sup> and *Grace in Eclipse*<sup>11</sup> 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

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<sup>8</sup> Zane C. Hodges, *Romans: Deliverance from Wrath*, ed. Robert N. Wilkin, Introduction and Selected Notes by John H. Niemelä (Corinth, TX: GES, 2013), 240.

<sup>9</sup> It may be that Zane Hodges had a resolution to this issue, but we cannot discuss this with him.

<sup>10</sup> The second edition contains notes, so it is the one I cite. Cf. Hodges, *Gospel*, 127; 129; 181, n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Hodges, *Eclipse*, 3rd ed., 78; 80; 127, n. 3.

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.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> All of creation is groaning (suffering), because it has been temporarily subjected to futility in anticipation of release from bondage (8:19-21).<sup>14</sup> Not only creation but those with the firstfruits of the Spirit eagerly await redemption of the body (8:22f).<sup>15</sup> We have been delivered in hope, for which we should wait with endurance (8:24f).<sup>16</sup> The Spirit intercedes for suffering believers who pray—which Romans 10 refers to as calling upon the Lord that leads to deliverance (8:26f).<sup>17</sup> All things work together toward the good—the Millennial redemption—which will especially benefit those believers who love God (8:28).<sup>18</sup> (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 our 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.<sup>19</sup>

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)<sup>20</sup> 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:

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<sup>12</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 225.

<sup>13</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 226f.

<sup>14</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 227-29.

<sup>15</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 229f.

<sup>16</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 230-33.

<sup>17</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 233-35.

<sup>18</sup> Hodges, *Romans*, 235-38.

<sup>19</sup> Wilkin, “[Note 29],” on p. 248 in Hodges, *Romans*.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

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 2:16<sup>f</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

It is not my intent (due to the limitations of space and time for presentation) to explore the rest of Romans 8:1-16. My point in raising Romans 8:1 is to suggest something non-controversial (not controversial within grace circles, that is): 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. It is important, though, to clarify that walking by the flesh does not refer to a life of license. Rather, in Romans 7, Paul catalogs his own failed attempt to please God by lawkeeping. Romans 8:1-16 shows that the solution is to walk by the Spirit.

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 8:29<sup>f</sup>?

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 8:29<sup>f</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> 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 8:29<sup>f</sup> might discuss the golden chain of the co-heirs? Zane Hodges

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<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Some of the others include 2 Tim 2:11-13; Rev 20:4-6; Matt 5:3-10; Heb 12:28<sup>f</sup>. The reader may profitably consult the chapter, “To Receive a Kingdom,” in Hodges, *Eclipse*, 73-89.

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.

Now, since we cannot ask this of Zane, we must look for the answer ourselves.

### **The Golden Chain of the Co-Heirs (Romans 8:29-30)**

Let us start Hodges' translation of 8:29-30:

Because those whom He knew in advance He also predetermined to share the likeness of His Son, so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers. And whom He predetermined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified, and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Let us also remind ourselves of a point mentioned on page 4 of this paper. Hodges rightly sees Romans 8:31-39 as discussing a topic other than eternal security. Namely, nothing external can force the believer to stop loving Christ through walking by the Spirit. If we allow circumstances to separate us from loving Christ, we have only ourselves to blame.

Taking Romans 8:29-30 in the sense of the Golden Chain for the co-heirs, it would mean:

God knew in advance which believers would be co-inheritors with Christ. He prepared a destiny beforehand that they would share the likeness of His Son (that goes beyond "being morally and spiritually like Him." It extends to them "sharing His destiny as Heir of all things," the Firstborn. Those with this destiny being prepared beforehand, He invited. Of course, the invitation was extended to all Christians, but He certainly invited the ones that responded appropriately. These same ones were vindicated (justified) at the *Bēma* with, "Well done, good and faithful servant."<sup>23</sup> Then those who are vindicated will be glorified. Glory is picking up on 8:17-21. The glorification in 8:30 is the co-glorification of the co-heirs in context.

In light of that, 8:31-39 reminds believers whose love-for-Christ that results from walking-by-the-Spirit—that love which causes them to suffer with Christ of something. The suffering with Christ that they suffer is nothing in comparison with co-glorification. He reminds them that nothing external can cause them to abandon their love for Christ that comes from walking by the Spirit. The believer who walks by the Spirit can look forward to co-heirship.

### **Conclusion**

What a travesty it is that Christendom has focused on the wrong heirship in Romans 8. Calvinism sees this passage as emphasizing heaven/hell and runs off on a rabbit-trail. They think all true believers walk by the Spirit and they define walking by the flesh in terms of license. They tend to become lawkeepers as attempts to prove that they walk by the Spirit. As such, they live the Romans 7 life and do not realize that what they do is exactly what Paul said not to do.

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<sup>23</sup> Vindication is within the range of meaning for *dikaioō*. Cf. Luke 18:14 in light of 18:10-14.