



Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul's Theology of Glory in Romans
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What does Paul mean when he speaks of being “conformed to the image of his Son”? Haley Goranson Jacob, assistant professor of theology at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, reopens a text perhaps too familiar and a meaning too often assumed. Introducing a new and compelling reading of Romans 8:29, Jacob offers a study that makes a strong bid to reorient our understanding of Paul’s classic statement concerning the goal of salvation.

Consider Again the Goal of Salvation

In my senior year of college, the Bible became alive to me. The literary and theological artistry that makes it the greatest story ever told unfolded before me in an unexpected place: a course on Paul’s letter to the Galatians. It is not a stretch to say that studying in depth the significance of the covenant promises, the arrival of the law 430 years later, and the seed of Abraham changed the course of my life. That semester the Bible became for me for the first time not a collection of stories or the place to find guidance for life and salvation. Suddenly the New Testament made no sense apart from the Old Testament, and the Bible as a whole became the one single story of God redeeming his people through the long awaited Messiah, Jesus. From that semester until now, the overarching story of how God redeemed the world has shaped my research, my career, and my faith.

This book is not about Galatians. It is, however, the first tangible result of that undergraduate Galatians course that set me on this path of interest in biblical theology — a path that has now continued through my PhD, the product of which is this book. The letter that occupies my attention in this book is Romans. Perhaps the thought of this will prompt my reader to question whether the pages that follow will contain anything truly new. On one level, the Teacher is correct: there is nothing new under the sun. And yet, imagine his response to the scene before him if he were transported from his place in history into Times Square today. His teaching would require a caveat — perhaps only a small one, but a highly significant one nonetheless. Such is the case with the pages that follow.

When I started my PhD at St Andrews, my stipulation for my research was that it would focus on something pertinent to the theology of the church and the average person within the church. What can be more pertinent than thinking afresh through the goal of salvation? For nearly two millennia Paul’s words about being conformed to the image of God’s Son in Romans 8:29 and believers’ glorification in Romans 8:30 have encouraged the church and offered insight into what, together, are commonly understood as the goal of salvation. But if five different Christians are asked what such conformity to Christ means, or what glorification actually entails, five different answers will probably ensue. And none of them will likely take into consideration the literary or theological context of Romans in which they are found, let alone the larger biblical narrative that undergirds Paul’s message in the letter. I cannot claim to answer these questions with any sense of completion in this book. But my hope is that the pages that follow will challenge readers to consider again how the church reconstructs Paul’s theology of believers’ glory and conformity to Christ. Put another way, my hope is that it will challenge readers to consider again the goal of salvation, the reason for God’s redeeming work in the life of the believer.

— Taken from the preface

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