

The Crystallization

THE ECONOMY OF THE GRACE OF GOD

God's eternal economy is His plan to dispense Himself into His chosen and redeemed people to make them His corporate expression. This economy of God is an economy of the grace of God, for in God's economy grace is actually the processed and consummated Triune God dispensed into us to produce and build up the Body of Christ. The economy of the grace of God, therefore, involves the dispensing of the grace of God into the believers for the building up of the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem. To speak of such a dispensing in relation to grace is to suggest that grace is not merely the unmerited favor bestowed by God but the very God who bestows this favor. We begin the Christian life by receiving grace as unmerited favor, but we advance in the Christian life only by experiencing the grace which is actually the Triune God Himself.

God's salvation through His Son is not of ourselves but wholly of God's grace. When we received this salvation, we heard and knew the grace of God in truth, and the Lord's grace superabounded with faith and love to us in Christ Jesus. Once we realize this, we need to go on to see that salvation by grace entails the enjoyment of the abundance of grace. Where once we were constituted sinners, now grace constitutes us righteous. Where once sin abounded, grace has superabounded. Where once sin reigned in death, now grace reigns unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. As heirs of the grace of life, we may experience and enjoy the grace that affords us a living that glorifies the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. For timely help, in spirit we may come forward to the throne of God, which to us is not primarily a throne of judgment but a throne of grace. In our personal weaknesses and trials, grace is sufficient to sustain and uphold us, for this grace is actually the power of the resurrected Christ. The ministry of the apostles was by grace, for grace, and unto grace. For this reason Paul could say that his ministry, his apostleship, was a stewardship of the grace of God. Furthermore, through grace we are members of the Body of Christ, and grace, which is given according to the measure of the gift

of Christ in us, constitutes and energizes us for our function in the Body. Such a grace is even now with our regenerated spirit.

The intrinsic relationship between grace and the organic Body of Christ is revealed in Ephesians. Paul's emphasis in Ephesians is not on the role of grace in our initial salvation but on the organic operation of grace that will bring the believers in Christ to the consummation of God's eternal purpose. The book of Ephesians thus presents a view of God's plan that begins in eternity past with His desire for many sons who are conformed to the image of the firstborn Son, that continues in time with the revelation and impartation of the Triune God as life into His chosen and redeemed people, and that consummates in eternity future with the many members of Christ, as His corporate Body, being filled unto all the fullness of God. In its content Ephesians reveals that God's plan is accomplished through an organic operation of grace. Based on the judicial redemption wrought by Christ on the cross and according to His gracious, unmerited favor, the Triune God as grace is imparted into redeemed humanity. Then through the organic operation

of the Triune God as grace dispensed into us, God's eternal purpose will be fulfilled because the grace of God will produce a consummate, corporate expression of the Triune God in the church and in Christ Jesus. In Ephesians the operation of grace not only redeems but also organically enlivens through the divine life those who were dead in offenses and sins and organically fits the members of the Body together, causing the growth of the Body unto the building up of the Body. Ultimately universal praise will be elicited for the glory that is displayed in and through the church which has attained to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ through its experience and enjoyment of the Triune God as grace. This is the economy of the grace of God. May all the redeemed and regenerated children of God enjoy Him as grace for the Body, His corporate expression!

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by the Editors