

The Glory of God and the Economy of God

by Ron Kangas

God's eternal purpose is to have a corporate expression of Himself in Christ as the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29) with the believers in Christ as the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10). Since the glory of God is the expression of God, God Himself expressed, the purpose of God and the glory of God are intimately related. God's purpose is to be expressed, glorified, in and through a corporate entity composed of millions of redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified believers. Furthermore, the purpose of God is fulfilled through the economy of God—the divine plan and arrangement according to which God in His Divine Trinity dispenses Himself into His chosen and redeemed people and works Himself into them in order to be expressed through them in a corporate way. The glory of God, the purpose of God, and the economy of God are, therefore, vitally and intrinsically connected.

Purpose, Economy, and Glory in Ephesians

This connection of purpose, economy, and glory is revealed with particular clarity in the book of Ephesians, especially in chapters one and three. God the Father has made known to us “the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, unto the economy of the fullness of the times, to head up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him” (1:9-10). God's purpose is His plan according to His will to have a corporate expression of Himself through those whom He chose before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him and whom He predestinated unto sonship (vv. 4-5). This purpose is unto His economy, His administrative arrangement carried out by the stewardship of grace (3:2), to head up the entire universe in Christ at the fullness of the times, that is, in eternity in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-2).

According to the context of Ephesians 1, the divine purpose and the divine economy are for the divine glory. The Father's selection and predestination (vv. 3-6) issue in “the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved” (v. 6). Grace is God as our enjoyment, and glory is God expressed. Thus, the felicitous expression *the glory of His grace* indicates that God's grace results in a praiseworthy expression of God. The more we enjoy the grace that expresses God, the more we become the corporate expression of God—to the praise of the glory of His grace. The Son's redemption (vv. 7-12) brings God's chosen and predestinated ones into a situation and condition where they will “be to the praise of His glory” (v. 12). This condition refers to the inward being, the spiritual constitution, of God's graced people. Through His superabounding grace, God in His Divine Trinity will be wrought into us to such an extent that, having been constituted with Him, we will become His glorious expression. God will be expressed through us, this expression will be glory, and this glory will incite the angels and all positive things in the universe to praise God for His expression. The Spirit's sealing and pledging likewise issue in a corporate entity—the sons of God as the inheritance of God—which is “to the praise of His glory.”

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This is the third time a phrase like this is used....Verses 3-6 disclose what God the Father planned for us, that is, to choose us and predestinate us unto sonship to the praise of the glory of His grace. Verses 7-12 reveal how God the Son accomplished what God the Father planned, that is, to redeem us and make us God's inheritance to the praise of His glory. Verses 13-14 tell us how God the Spirit applies to us what God the Son accomplished, that is, to seal us and be the guarantee and foretaste of our eternal, divine inheritance to the praise of God's glory. In the blessings God bestows on us, the glory of the Triune God deserves the threefold praise. (Recovery Version, Eph. 1:14, note 6)

The purpose of God carried out through the economy of God results in the glory of God, God expressed in a corporate way. The same divine thought is presented in chapter three, where we once again read of God's purpose, economy, and glory. Whereas in 1:10 Paul speaks of "the economy of the fullness of the times," in 3:9 he writes concerning "the economy of the mystery" which had been hidden in God. Paul had a deep understanding of this hidden mystery—"the mystery of Christ," the church—for it had been made known to him by revelation in spirit (vv. 3-5). Having received this revelation, Paul was burdened to bring to light the economy of the mystery so that "now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord" (vv. 10-11). As in chapter one, Paul connects the economy of God to the purpose of God as the eternal plan made by God in Christ in eternity past. Both the purpose and economy are for the fulfillment of God's good pleasure, the desire of His heart, to have a glorious corporate expression of Himself in and through a marvelous divine-human organism—the Body of Christ (1:22-23; 3:6), the corporate Christ (1 Cor. 12:12), which will consummate in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 10-11). This expression is a matter of the glory mentioned in Ephesians 3:16 and 21.

Verses 14 through 19 are Paul's prayer regarding the believers' experience of Christ for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ. In the process of this experience, the glory of God is wrought into the church and then is expressed through the church, causing God to be glorified in the church. As we are strengthened by God the Father with power through His Spirit into our inner man (our regenerated human spirit), Christ makes His home in our hearts. For Christ to make His home in us means that He saturates and permeates our inner being, especially our mind, emotion, and will, with Himself, thereby occupying us, dwelling in us, possessing us, and constituting us with Himself. Because we are strengthened into our inner man according to the riches of God's glory (v. 16) and because the Christ who dwells in us is our hope of glory (Col. 1:27), we may say that the glory of God comes into us with God and makes us the glory of God, His expression. Eventually, the glory which came into us with God will return to God with us. "To Him be the glory in the church" (Eph. 3:21). "God's glory is wrought into the church, and He is expressed in the church. Hence, to God is the glory in the church; that is, God is glorified in the church" (Recovery Version, v. 1, note 2). Eventually, at His coming to marry His beloved bride, Christ will "present the church to Himself glorious" (5:27), and He will have what He has so long desired—a beautiful, glorious counterpart as His satisfaction and expression. Ultimately and consummately, the glorious church in Ephesians 5:27 becomes the New Jerusalem, the city of glory, in Revelation 21:9-11: "Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he...showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." This is the glory of God in the economy of God as the fulfillment of the purpose of God.

The God of Glory

God is the God of glory (Acts 7:2). We have pointed out that glory is God expressed. The God of glory, therefore, is God expressed, God in His expression. The expression of God cannot be separated from the glory of God, for whenever God is expressed, that

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is glory. To see God expressed is to see glory, and to see glory is to see God in His expression. Significantly, it was the God of glory who appeared to Abraham, calling him, attracting him, and separating him from the world to Himself. Once God had appeared to Abraham as the God of glory, transfusing Himself into him, Abraham could not escape; he had no choice except to believe in the Lord and follow Him in faith.

Since the Triune God is the God of glory, the three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are related to the divine glory. For this reason, the Father is called “the Father of glory” (Eph. 1:17), the One who strengthens the believers into the inner man according to the riches of His glory (3:16). *Father* implies regeneration, and *glory* indicates expression. Thus, God as the Father of glory is God in relation to regeneration and expression. In the context of Ephesians in particular and of the Bible in general, the title *the Father of glory* refers to God the Father’s expression through His many sons (1:5; Rom. 8:14, 29; Gal. 3:26; 4:6; Rev. 21:7). The Father is leading many sons into glory for His corporate expression (Heb. 2:10).

As God the Father is the Father of glory, so Christ the Son is the effulgence of God’s glory, the shining, or the brightness, of the Father’s glory (Heb. 1:3). This shining One is the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8; James 2:1). The glory of Christ the Son, which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), was appreciated by Isaiah, who “saw His glory and spoke concerning Him” (12:41). As the second of the Triune God, Christ possessed the divine glory from eternity past. However, in His incarnation the glory of His divinity was concealed within the shell of His humanity. Through the breaking of the shell of His humanity by His death on the cross, the divine glory within the humanity of the Lord Jesus was released. Then in His resurrection He was glorified by the Father (17:1; Acts 3:13), and He entered with His humanity into His glory (Luke 24:26) and was crowned with glory, with the splendor related to His person (Heb. 2:9). Now we may declare, “There’s a Man in the glory / Whose Life is for me” (*Hymns*, #505).

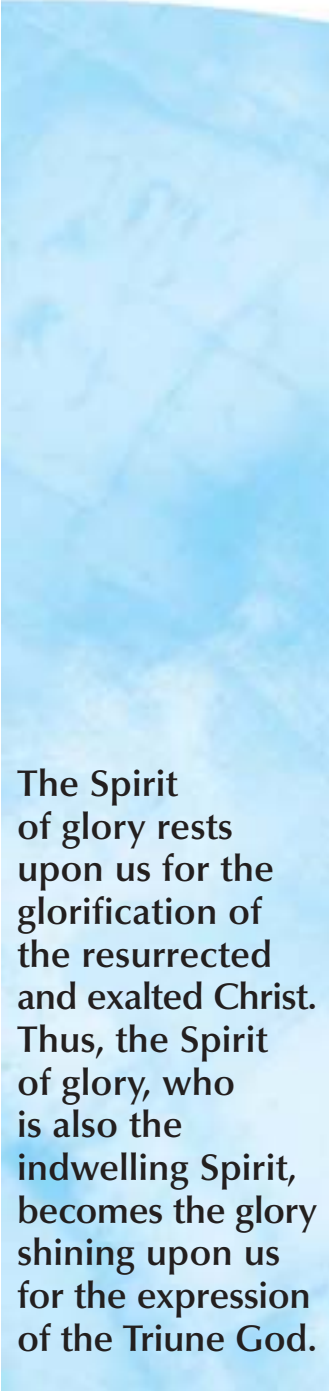
The Spirit, the third of the Triune God, is the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14). As the One through whom Christ was glorified in His resurrection (Rom. 1:4), the Spirit of glory rests upon us for the glorification of the resurrected and exalted Christ. Thus, the Spirit of glory, who is also the indwelling Spirit (8:9, 11), becomes the glory shining upon us for the expression of the Triune God of glory.

The Glory of God and God’s Salvation

God’s salvation does not bring us to a “mansion” in heaven—it brings us into glory. Paul, of course, was very clear concerning this. “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they themselves also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). “It is not salvation *and* eternal glory but salvation *with* eternal glory. Eternal glory is the ultimate goal of God’s salvation (Rom. 8:21); God’s salvation leads us into His glory (Heb. 2:10)” (Recovery Version, 2 Tim. 2:10, note 2). With this as the goal, the ascended Christ, in His heavenly ministry as the High Priest, intercedes for us so that we may be saved to the uttermost, that is, saved into God’s eternal glory, to which we have been called (Heb. 7:25; 1 Pet. 5:10). On the one hand, we have been called into God’s glory; on the other hand, we have been called by this glory (2 Pet. 1:3). In God’s complete salvation the Lord is able to guard us from stumbling and to set us “before His glory without blemish in exultation” (Jude 24). The God of glory is thus saving us into glory.

The Gospel of the Glory of God

If we would participate in this glorious salvation, we need to receive the gospel of the glory of God, through the preaching of which we are called by God into His eternal



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glory. In 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul tells us that he was entrusted with “the gospel of the glory of the blessed God,” the gospel in which the glory of God for the economy of God is manifested.

The gospel of the glory of the blessed God is an excellent expression. It refers to God’s economy, mentioned in v. 4. The gospel with which the apostle Paul was entrusted is the effulgence of the glory of the blessed God. By dispensing God’s life and nature in Christ into God’s chosen people, this gospel shines forth God’s glory, in which God is blessed among His people. (Recovery Version, 1 Tim. 1:11, note 1)

More details concerning the proclamation of this gospel are presented in 2 Corinthians 4. As one who had a share in the ministry of the new covenant, a ministry of the Spirit and of righteous (3:6, 8-9), Paul, in contrast with those who adulterated the word of God for profit (2:17), could say, “We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake” (4:5). Paul and his co-workers did not display themselves, exalt themselves, exhibit themselves, or glory in themselves. On the contrary, as broken and transparent vessels (vv. 7-11), they ministered the Christ of glory (3:18) and heralded “the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (4:4). Because Christ is the image of God and the effulgence of God’s glory, the gospel of Christ is the gospel of His glory that illuminates and shines upon us and in us. This is the shining of the God of glory into our hearts: “Because the God who said, Out of darkness light shall shine, is the One who shined in our hearts to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (v. 6). To know Christ in His glorious shining is to know the glory of God and the God of glory. The glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ is the God of glory expressed through Jesus Christ, and it is Jesus Christ, who is the effulgence of the glory of God (Heb. 1:3); to know Him is to know the God of glory.

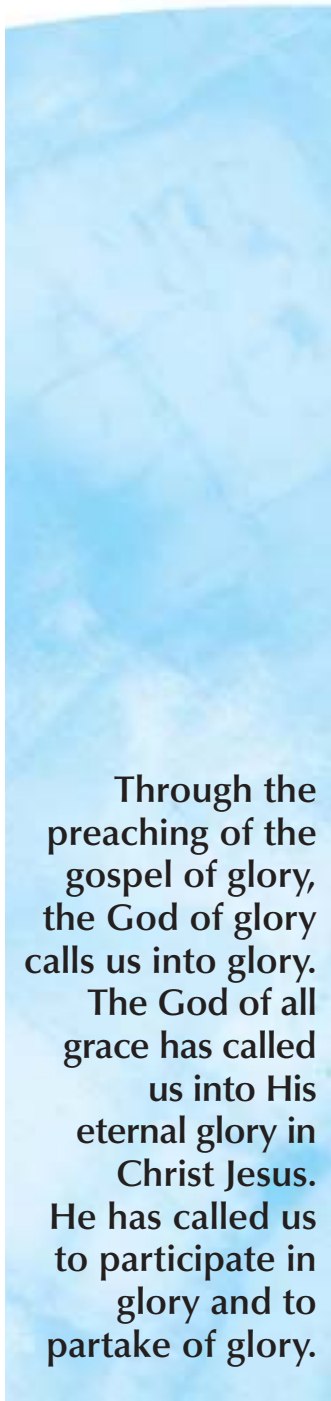
Through the preaching of the gospel of glory, the God of glory calls us into glory (1 Thes. 2:12). In Peter’s words, the God of all grace has called us into His eternal glory in Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 5:10). This means that He has called us to participate in glory and to partake of glory. Furthermore, God has called us into His glory by His glory (2 Pet. 1:3). With striking clarity, in 2 Thessalonians 2:14 Paul links God’s calling, God’s gospel, and God’s glory: “He called you through our gospel unto the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is a marvelous thought that God’s intention is to cause us, through the grace of His salvation, to obtain not only the Lord of glory but also the glory of the Lord. “The glory of the Lord is that He, as the Son of God the Father, possesses the Father’s life and nature that He may express the Father. To obtain the Lord’s glory is to be in the same position as the Son of God that we may express the Father (John 17:22)” (Recovery Version, 2 Thes. 2:14, note 2).

The Glory of God and the Christian Life

Since the goal of God’s salvation is the glory of God and since the gospel is the gospel of the glory of God by means of which we are called into the glory of God, the Christian life is intimately involved with the glory of God. In fact, every stage of the Christian life from creation to glorification is related to God’s glory.

Creation

As human beings, we were created as tripartite vessels (Rom. 9:21; Gen. 2:7; 1 Thes. 5:23) to receive God, to contain God, to assimilate God, to be constituted with God, and to express God for His glory. This is Paul’s concept in Romans 9:23-24: “In order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He had before prepared unto glory, even us, whom He has also called.” According to Romans 8:2, 6, and 10-11, God in His Divine Trinity seeks to dispense Himself as life into vessels of honor. The result of this dispensing is that we are constituted with God inwardly to



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become His glorious expression outwardly. Therefore, we may say that God's thought in the creation of humankind was that we, His chosen ones, would be vessels "prepared unto glory," that is, designed and made to contain God and to express God in glory.

Fall and Redemption

If we understand God's intention in creating human beings as vessels for His glory, we will be able to see that the fall of humanity into sin is also related to God's glory and is measured by it. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." To be fallen is not merely to commit gross sins; to be fallen is to be short of God's glory. In the sight of God, anything that is short of God's glory is sin. We were created in God's image for His expression in glory. However, being sinners, we fall short of God's glory and live in a manner that insults the divine glory and disregards the divine purpose. Instead of expressing God, we express sin and our sinful self. Thus, we have fallen short of God's glory. Sin, therefore, is a matter of falling short of God's glory and of expressing the self. We were created to express God, but as fallen human beings, we express the self. This is sin. Because all human beings are short of God's glory, all are under God's condemnation.


In order to redeem us, Christ, through His death on the cross, fulfilled all the requirements of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory. These requirements are signified in Genesis 3:24 by the cherubim and the flaming sword. The cherubim (glory), the flame (holiness), and the sword (righteousness) blocked the way to the tree of life—God in Christ as our life and life supply. However, based upon Christ's redemptive death on the cross, we have been justified freely by God's grace "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth as a propitiation place through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:24-25). We could not meet the demands of God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, but Christ died on the cross to redeem us (Gal. 3:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24), and His blood obtained an eternal redemption for us (1:18-19; Heb. 9:12). The way to the tree of life has been opened, and we may now have boldness "for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus" (10:19). Now, in Christ and on Christ, we can meet with God and behold His glory, delight in His presence, and be infused and saturated with His glorious element.

Beholding the Glory of the Lord

Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 3:18 of beholding the glory of the Lord: "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit." *The glory of the Lord* is the glory of Christ, the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, ascended, and glorified God-man who, in resurrection, has become a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), the Lord Spirit in our regenerated human spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 1 Cor. 6:17). The more we behold Him with an unveiled face, the more He infuses us with all that He is and with all that He has accomplished so that, gradually, we may be transformed into the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ. This process of transformation by beholding is "from glory to glory," that is, from one degree of glory to another until we arrive at the highest level of oneness with the Triune God—the oneness in the divine glory for the divine expression (John 17:22, 24).

The Treasure in Earthen Vessels

The glorified, indwelling, pneumatic Christ is "this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7). "God's shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God to be our life and our everything. But we who contain this treasure are earthen vessels, worthless and fragile. A priceless treasure is contained in worthless vessels!" (Recovery Version, 2 Cor. 4:7, note 1). According to the context



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of entire book of 2 Corinthians, these vessels must experience much suffering and breaking through the application of the cross (vv. 10-12) so that they may know God as the God of resurrection and be brought into resurrection for God's expression (1:9; 4:14). In the course of this suffering, this affliction, "our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (v. 16) by being nourished with the ever-fresh supply of Christ's resurrection life. Whereas, in Paul's understanding, the affliction is momentary and light, it issues in a glory that is weighty and eternal. "Our momentary lightness of affliction works out for us, more and more surpassingly, an eternal weight of glory" (v. 17). This glory is the expression of God as resurrection life through transformed and transparent human vessels.

The Hope of Glory

The glorious treasure within us is the indwelling Christ as the hope of glory spoken of in Colossians 1:27: "To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." The pneumatic Christ, the Christ who as the life-giving Spirit dwells in our spirit, is our hope of glory, our hope of being glorified at His coming. Christ is now our life, and when He is manifested, we will "be manifested with Him in glory" (3:4). This is our unique hope, the one hope of our calling (Eph. 4:4). To have Christ as our hope of glory implies that He will permeate and saturate our tripartite being with His glorious element until we are glorified in Him and He is glorified in us. As the pneumatic Christ permeates and saturates us with Himself, we may "exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory"—joy that is immersed in glory and full of the expression of God (1 Pet. 1:8).

Christ Coming to Be Glorified in Us

The One who is our hope and the One in whom we hope will come "to be glorified in His saints" (2 Thes. 1:10).

The Lord is the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8); He was glorified in His resurrection and ascension (John 17:1; Luke 24:26; Heb. 2:9). Now He is in us as the hope of glory (Col. 1:27) to bring us into glory (Heb. 2:10). At His coming back, on the one hand He will come from the heavens with glory (Rev. 10:1; Matt. 25:31), and on the other hand He will be glorified in His saints; that is, His glory will be manifested from within His members, causing their body of humiliation to be transfigured into His glory, conforming it to the body of His glory (Phil. 3:21). (Recovery Version, 2 Thes. 1:10, note 1)

At that blessed time, glory will be revealed upon us (Rom. 8:18), and creation will be "freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (v. 21). Then in the manifestation of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:11), the overcomers, as the Lord's co-kings, "will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:4). After the glorious age of the kingdom, there will be the eternal consummation of the divine economy. In the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1-2), the New Jerusalem will come "down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (vv. 10-11). This city of glory will be the ultimate, consummate, corporate expression of the Triune God in His chosen, redeemed, transformed, and glorified sons. As the glorified sons of God who will be the constituents of the New Jerusalem, we, the believers in Christ, will enter into the glory of God and become the glory of God. This is the glory of God in the economy of God. **AC**

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