

The Gospel in Romans

When believers think of the gospel, the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John immediately come to mind. Rarely, however, is the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, which presents the gospel of God, included in considerations pertaining to the gospel. But Paul declares in the very first verse that he is presenting the gospel of God, and in the subsequent sixteen chapters he unveils this gospel that comes from God. It is important, not just for the sake of truth, but for the sake of entering into the realities of our faith, that we come to a deeper appreciation and apprehension of the gospel that is in Romans.

The basic thought of Romans is that God, in His complete salvation (5:10), is making sinners sons of God to constitute the Body of Christ, which is expressed as local churches. Three significant components of this basic thought are sons, the Body, and local churches. Through

“God...whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son”

regeneration we, the believers in Christ, have become children of God and “the Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God” (8:16). Although the Father has begotten many children through regeneration, His goal is to have sons who are the duplication and reproduction of Christ, the firstborn Son of God. In order to reach this goal for the fulfillment of His purpose, the children of God must grow and develop into sons of God. This growth and development require God’s organic salvation, salvation in the life of God (5:10), which includes sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification (6:19; 12:2; 8:29-30). As we experience each stage of God’s salvation in life, we gradually grow in the divine life and develop into mature sons, “eagerly awaiting sonship, the redemption of our body” (v. 23).

Romans 8 is a crucial chapter in the experience of those who would be matured in the divine life to express the Triune God in the Body of Christ. These mature sons are overcomers, and Romans 8 presents the key to being an overcomer. Overcomers are not a special breed of Christian. Rather, they are normal Christians who live a normal Christian life. The normal Christian life requires God’s divine life, which is the highest life, and the law of this life is the highest law. The law of the Spirit of the divine life is the spontaneous power of the divine life; it is the natural characteristic and the innate, automatic function of the divine life. The very God who dwells in

us is a life-law. The Christ who dwells in us is the inner operating God, who is the law of the Spirit of life (Phil. 2:13). Romans 8 reveals the divine operation of this law and the believers’ cooperation with this law so that they may be the sons of God in reality who are conformed to the image of Christ (vv. 4, 14, 29). This cooperation involves walking according to the spirit (v. 4); minding the things of the Spirit—setting the mind on the spirit (vv. 5-6); putting to death by the Spirit the practices of the body (v. 13); being led by the Spirit as the sons of God (v. 14); crying to the Father in the spirit of sonship (v. 15); groaning for the full sonship, the redemption of our body (v. 23); loving God and being constrained by the love of Christ (vv. 28, 35-39); and being in the Body life to enjoy the Body’s supply (12:4-5).

The contents of this gospel are complete and, thus, strikingly reflected in the details of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22. The New Jerusalem is the consummate sign of the accomplishment of God’s eternal economy, which is His plan to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people as their life, their life supply, and their everything in order to make them His corporate expression. God’s corporate expression is a single, organic entity consisting of Christ as the firstborn Son and the believers in Christ as the many sons of God. This organic entity is the Body of Christ in this age and will be the New Jerusalem in eternity.

The goal of God’s economy is to gain such a corporate expression—the Body of Christ consummating in the New Jerusalem. Far from being a literal, physical city, the New Jerusalem is actually a corporate person who includes the processed and consummated Triune God and, as the issue of God’s complete salvation, all the chosen, redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, built-up believers in Christ. The book of Romans delineates an outline of God’s economy in the form of a summary and basic definition of the Christian life and the church life, and it is structured upon the operation of the Triune God within the believers. May the contents of the gospel in Romans rise in our appreciation and be established in our experience.

by the Editors