

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST AS THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD

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All Christians should enjoy and announce the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel for the carrying out of God's eternal purpose, His eternal economy. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul said: "To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel." The Interpreter's Bible says that the word for "unsearchable" means "trackless, inexorable" (669), but

not in the sense that any part is inaccessible, but that the whole is too vast to be mapped out and measured. It suggests a treasure house of grace, vast beyond all conceiving, so that no matter how far we penetrate there are rooms and corridors opening out in endless vistas, far beyond our capacity of apprehension or of vision. But as our vision widens, the limitless treasures which unfold themselves to us are always the riches of Christ. He Himself is the treasure house and "from His fullness have we all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). (669)

The apostle Paul enjoyed and announced the person of Christ with His unsearchable riches as the gospel to produce the church as the fullness of Christ, the expression and overflow of Christ, for the exhibition of Christ as the multifarious wisdom of God according to the eternal plan of God (Eph. 3:8-11, 16-19; 1:22-23). In our living and serving, we should follow the pattern of Paul by concentrating our being on enjoying and ministering Christ. We are His stewards, the trustees of His riches, who have the duty of dispensing Him into others as the unique treasure of untold wealth in the universe (1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:7).

Romans 1:17—the Key Word concerning the Unsearchably Rich Christ as the Content and Structure of the Gospel of God

All of Christ's unsearchable riches are the endless spiritual

blessings with which the Father has blessed us in the heavens and in Christ (Eph. 1:3). There are many aspects of Christ's riches in the Epistles of Paul, but all of them can be summed up in Romans, which reveals that the content and structure of the gospel of God are the unsearchably rich Christ as our righteousness, life, and faith for the accomplishment of His eternal economy. Romans 1:17 is the key verse to the entire book of Romans and the key to unlocking the treasure house of Christ with His unsearchable riches in all of Paul's Epistles.¹ It is the key word concerning the unsearchably rich Christ as the content and structure of the gospel of God. It may also be considered as the abstract of the entire book of Romans and as the banner of God's eternal economy.

We need to pay attention to the words *righteous*, *life*, and *faith* in Romans 1:17: "The *righteous* shall have *life* and live by *faith*." God dispenses Himself as life into His chosen people through the procedure of His righteousness and by the appropriation and substantiation of faith in His believers. We who were once mere sinners are now "the righteous" because we have been justified by God (3:24; 8:33). To be justified is to be approved by God according to His standard of righteousness. Christ is the righteousness of God to us, as the procedure of God's salvation, to satisfy God's judicial requirements for our justification (making us righteous in God's sight). Christ is the life of God to us to carry out the purpose of God's salvation within us so that we can be saved in our spirit by regeneration, in our soul by transformation, and in our body by glorification. Finally, Christ is the faith of God to us for our realization and appropriation of the riches of His person as our righteousness and our saving life. Thus, the unsearchably rich Christ as our righteousness, life, and faith is the content and structure as well as the extract and essence of the entire gospel of God.

Romans 1:17 is Paul's quotation from the book of Habakkuk. The name *Habakkuk* means "embracing," or "clinging to." Habakkuk's name shows us in a condensed form the highest peak of the divine revelation. God embraced us by becoming a man for our judicial redemption and reconciliation to Him so that we might cling to Him and become God, "God the sons," in life and nature but not in the Godhead through His saving life (Rom. 5:10). Habakkuk 2:2 through 4 say,

Write the vision, and render it plainly upon tablets, / That even he who runs by may read it. / For the vision is yet for the appointed time, / And it hastens toward the end and will not lie. / Though it tarries, wait for it; / For it will surely come; it will not delay. / See, he who is puffed up, his soul is not upright within him, / But the righteous one will live by his faith.

The Lord told Habakkuk to write the vision, and render it plainly on tablets, so that even he who runs by may read it. This phrase can also be translated "so that he who reads it may run." On the one hand, we need to see this great vision and proclaim it to others ("write the vision, and render it plainly upon tablets") so that even if they are running by, they will not miss it. On the other hand, when all of us see this great vision, we will be burdened to run and proclaim it to the whole inhabited earth. Furthermore, we need to be the faithful ministers of the new covenant by inscribing this vision of the saving Christ on the tablets of men's hearts to make them the living letters of Christ for all to read (2 Cor. 3:3). The vision seen by Habakkuk was "for the appointed time." There was an appointed time for Paul to open up and proclaim this vision. Today also is the appointed time, at the end of this age, for this vision to be released and proclaimed. We want to be one with the Lord so that we can be like Paul in his faithfulness to live and proclaim this vision, thus declaring, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

Hebrews 10:37 and 38 say, "In yet a very little while the Coming One will come and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith." Here Paul again quotes Habakkuk. Habakkuk says that the vision "is yet for the appointed time" and that "it will surely come; it will not delay." However, when Paul quotes this verse in Hebrews, he says, "The Coming One will come and will not delay." Paul refers to the vision as "the Coming One," who is the Lord Himself. This vision is actually the person of Christ Himself. Verse 39 goes on to say, "But we are not of those who shrink back to ruin but of those who have faith to the gaining of the soul." Thus, Paul is referring to our full salvation—the redemption of our body at the Lord's coming back and the full enjoyment of God's salvation, the gaining of the soul, in the kingdom. Footnote 3 of this verse in the Recovery Version says,

Our being is of three parts—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23), and our soul is different from our spirit. At the time that we believed in the Lord Jesus and were saved, our spirit was regenerated with the Spirit of God (John 3:6). But we must wait until the Lord Jesus comes back for our body to be redeemed, saved, and transfigured (Rom. 8:23-25; Phil. 3:21). Concerning the saving, or gaining, of our soul, it depends on how we deal with our soul in following the Lord after we are saved and regenerated. If we lose our soul now for the Lord's sake, we will save it (Matt. 16:25; Luke 9:24; 17:33; John 12:25; 1 Pet. 1:9), and it will be saved, or gained, at the Lord's coming back (Heb. 10:37). This gaining of the soul will be the reward (v. 35) of the kingdom to the overcoming followers of the Lord (Matt. 16:22-28).

The vision that Habakkuk saw was also the vision of God's judgment on mankind (2:5-20). Under God's judgment all sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles, are destined to die (Rom. 6:23). How can sinners escape God's judgment and be saved eternally? God's salvation is to save our whole being—spirit, soul, and body—for eternity (1 Thes. 5:23). The way for us to receive such a salvation is to believe in Christ so that we may be justified by God and thus be qualified to have life, the eternal life, the divine life, and to live by that life (Rom. 3:24; 5:1-2; Eph. 2:8). This is the New Testament gospel in an Old Testament prophetic book. The New Testament vision seen by Paul is the vision of God's eternal economy to work God in Christ into man's entire being to make man the depository and fullness, the expression, of the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is the gospel, the good news.

Habakkuk also reveals the aspiration for revival within all of God's chosen ones. In Habakkuk 3:2 there is a cry from the prophet to God: "O Jehovah, revive Your work / In the midst of the years." This revival is actually the content of the gospel of God as the dynamic salvation of God in its fulfillment, which is God's judicial redemption and His organic salvation. This dynamic salvation is summarized in Romans 5:10: "If we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled." Our being reconciled to God through the death of His Son is His judicial redemption. We were enemies of God, but Christ died a marvelous, all-inclusive death on our behalf to reconcile us to God. Much more, He wants to save us in His life. This salvation in Christ's life is our organic salvation, which progresses from regeneration through transformation all the way to glorification, eventually making us exactly the same as He is.

The structure of the gospel of God seen in Romans 1:17 is the righteousness of God, the life of Christ, and the faith of the believers. The righteousness of God is the procedure of God's salvation judicially (vv. 16-17), the life of

Christ is the purpose of God's salvation organically (5:10), and the faith of the believers is the substantiation of God's salvation practically (Heb. 11:1). All three—the righteousness of God, the life of Christ, and the faith of the believers—are a person, the all-inclusive Christ. Christ accomplished a judicial redemption for us so that He may become our righteousness and so that we may have Him as our life. Now we are becoming life in our entire tripartite being through the process of His divine dispensing of Himself into us for our organic salvation (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11). Our becoming life is our "Christification," our deification, and our deification is for the producing and building up of the Body of Christ, which is realized and expressed in the local churches—the stepping stones to the New Jerusalem. This is the book of Romans, and this is God's eternal economy.

There are four stations in Romans, each comprising four chapters (*Elders'* 24). Romans 1 through 4 is the station of justification. Chapters 5 through 8 compose the station of sanctification. We experience sanctification in every step of God's organic salvation, including regeneration, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification. We are being sanctified in our spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). Therefore, we may say that sanctification is organic salvation. The third station, in Romans 9 through 12, concerns the Body of Christ, and the fourth station (chs. 13—16) concerns the local churches. Then in Romans 16:27 we see that this book ends with the glory of God: "To the only wise God through Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

We need to see how these four stations relate to righteousness, life, and faith in Romans 1:17. The phrases *the righteousness of God* and *the righteous* in verse 17 correspond to the station of our justification in Romans 1 through 4. The expression *have life* in verse 17 implies our sanctification by life as we pass through all the stages of God's organic salvation and corresponds to the station in Romans 5 through 8. The term *by faith* in verse 17 relates to the proper way to live by the life that we have received by living in the reality of the Body of Christ, which is expressed in the local churches, where we are living out and working out the New Jerusalem for the eternal glory of God (12:1—16:27). This corresponds to the stations in Romans 9 through 16. This is God's entire eternal economy. Hence, Romans 1:17 may be considered the banner of God's eternal economy, which is altogether a matter in faith (1 Tim. 1:4).

The book of Romans shows that fallen sinners become

sons of God so that they can be organic members of the Body of Christ, which is expressed in the local churches. In his fallen condition a sinner needs to be justified by God, approved by God, according to God's standard of righteousness. This is the procedure of God's salvation judicially. Because a believer in Christ has the life of God, he is a son of God. As a son of God, he is an organic member of the Body of Christ, and he is being "sonized" and "Christified" in his entire tripartite being. This is the purpose of God's salvation organically. Such a believer is also living properly by the divine life—appropriating, practicing, enjoying, and living this life by faith as a God-man for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is the substantiation of God's salvation practically. This corporate living of the perfected God-men, a living that is by faith, is the reality of the Body of Christ expressed in the local churches. This is today's Zion (the overcomers) within today's Jerusalem (the church life), and it is the way that the bride will be prepared to bring the Lord back.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD SEEN IN ROMANS 1:17 IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, THE LIFE OF CHRIST, AND THE FAITH OF THE BELIEVERS. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS THE PROCEDURE OF GOD'S SALVATION JUDICIALLY, THE LIFE OF CHRIST IS THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S SALVATION ORGANICALLY, AND THE FAITH OF THE BELIEVERS IS THE SUBSTANTIATION OF GOD'S SALVATION PRACTICALLY.

Footnote 1 of Romans 1:17 in the Recovery Version says, "In John 3:16 God's love is the source and motive of God's salvation. In Eph. 2:5, 8 God's grace is the means of God's salvation. Here [in Romans] God's righteousness is the power of God's salvation." The righteousness of God is the procedure of God's salvation judicially (vv. 16-17). The word *judicially* indicates a legal matter. God cannot do anything in an unrighteous way. He is a God of love and a God of grace, but He is also a God of justice and righteousness, even righteousness itself. God cannot forgive sinful people without meeting the demands of His righteousness (Psa. 103:6-7). According to His righteousness, "the soul who sins, he shall die" (Ezek. 18:4) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). This is the situation of the fallen human race.

God created man according to His eternal purpose and heart's desire, but when man fell, he took the sinful element of Satan into his being. As a result, man's spirit was deadened, his soul became the self, and his body became the flesh. Thus, Adam and Eve were fully corrupted by Satan. Furthermore, God had said, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Adam and Eve hid themselves because they

thought that God had come to execute the sentence of death upon them. However, when God found them, He preached the gospel to them instead.

In this first preaching of the gospel in Genesis 3, God's opening word was, "Where are you?" (v. 9). God spoke this same word to each of us at the time of our initial salvation, and He speaks it to us again whenever we fall away from Him. The first gospel message was concerning Christ's coming as the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent on the cross (v. 15; Heb. 2:14). That was the good news to Adam. When he heard this word, Adam believed God's word and called his wife *Eve*, which means "living" (Gen. 3:20) That was Adam's declaration that he and Eve would not die; they would live. Nevertheless, someone had to pay the wages of sin, and man needed to be recovered back to God's original intention, which was for man to express God with His image and represent Him with His dominion (1:26).

According to His intention, God placed man in front of the tree of life so that man would take Him in as food. Genesis 2:9 says that the tree of life is "good for food." Thus, God's original intention is that man would eat, enjoy, digest, and assimilate God as his spiritual food and then express God in glory. However, because man fell, God had to block the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24 says, "He drove the man out, and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life." The sword signifies God's righteousness, the flame signifies God's holiness, and the cherubim signify God's glory (Recovery Version, v. 24, note 1). Righteousness, holiness, and glory are God's attributes.

God's eternal economy is the reversal of this fallen situation. God desires to make man the same as He is by dispensing Himself into us as the tree of life so that His divine attributes would be expressed in our human virtues. When we enjoy Him as the tree of life, He fills and uplifts our human virtues with His divine attributes. He mingles with us and dispenses Himself into us as righteousness, holiness, and glory. First, He comes into our spirit. Romans 8:10 says, "If Christ is in you,...the spirit is life because of righteousness." Then He sanctifies us mainly in our soul (Eph. 5:26). Finally, he glorifies us by redeeming us in our body (Rom. 8:23). First Corinthians 1:30 says, "Of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption." Righteousness, sanctification, and redemption in this verse correspond respectively to God's righteousness, holiness, and glory, signified by the sword, the flame, and the cherubim in Genesis 3:24.

In spite of God's intention for man to take Him in as life, God blocked the way to the tree of life after man fell.

God did this to protect man, for if man had partaken of the tree of life in his fallen condition, he would have lived forever in his fallen nature. In order to prevent this, God closed the way to the tree of life until the seed of the woman was fully manifested. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 1:30 we see the reversal of the situation in Genesis 3:24, and we are brought back to the point where God's eternal purpose can be fulfilled in us. When Christ as the tree of life is dispensed into us, He is righteousness for the regeneration of our spirit, sanctification for the transformation of our soul, and redemption for the glorification of our body. Christ spreads out from our spirit into our soul, and eventually, He will resurrect our mortal body (Rom. 8:10, 6, 11). Then the multifarious wisdom of God will be fully expressed and radiated out through our tripartite being to the entire universe. This is God's eternal intention and heart's desire unveiled in Ephesians 3:8-11. By the dispensing of Christ into our being as the manifold wisdom of God—righteousness for our past so that our spirit can be regenerated, sanctification for our present so that our soul can be transformed, and redemption for our future so that our body can be glorified—we become the church according to His plan, the masterpiece of God, for the infinite display of His divine wisdom and perfect design to the whole universe (2:10).

Christ Being Our Righteousness as the Procedure of God's Salvation

Christ died a vicarious death as the Substitute for sinners, a death that was legal according to God's law and was recognized and approved by God according to the law (Isa. 53:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 27:45-46). Someone had to pay the wages of sin to satisfy God's righteousness expressed by His law. Because we were sinners and had been sentenced to death, we needed Christ to die for us as our Substitute. Isaiah 53:6 reveals that when Christ died on the cross, God caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He laid the iniquity of all mankind on Christ, and then He judged Him on the cross in our place. The Lord was on the cross for six hours. During the first three hours Christ was persecuted by men, but during the last three hours He was judged by God. "It was when God was judging Jesus on the cross that He caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him, making Jesus, in the eyes of God, the unique sinner at that moment" (Recovery Version, v. 6, note 2). Thus, while the Lord was being crucified, at a certain point He cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). At that moment in the eyes of God, He was the unique sinner, and God judged Him on our behalf. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "Him [Christ] who did not know sin He [God] made sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." This verse reveals that Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin on the cross on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

The price of our judicial redemption was paid to the righteous law of God. The word *judicial* means “to make lawful.” God’s redemption is judicial because all sinners have been condemned by God’s righteousness, and everyone has been sentenced to death according to His righteous law (Ezek. 18:4, 20; Rom. 3:19-20). To be redeemed from the curse of the law means to be redeemed from the consequence of the law (Gal. 3:13). Because Christ paid the debt we owed to the law, He is “the end of the law” to us (Rom. 10:4). He came to fulfill the law that He might terminate it and replace it. Thus, everyone who believes into Him receives Him as God’s righteousness, and everyone who calls on Him receives Him as God’s riches (vv. 9-13).

Christ, the righteous One, was judged on behalf of us, the unrighteous, by the righteous God according to His righteousness, that He might remove the barrier of our sins and bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). On the cross Jesus was made sin for us, condemned sin in the flesh, and by dying on our behalf fulfilled all God’s righteousness. Now for the sake of His righteousness, God must forgive us (Heb. 8:12; 1 John 1:7, 9). God has no choice but to forgive us. Let us illustrate this with the situation of a landlord and his tenant. Suppose the tenant has not paid rent for many years, but one day a friend of his pays all the rent that the tenant owes on his behalf. Since the rent has been paid, the landlord cannot then demand any payment from the tenant; if the landlord did, he would be unrighteous. The accumulation of the unpaid rent is like a sinner’s “wages of sin,” which is death and which must be paid (Rom. 6:23). However, Christ paid the wages of sin by His death on the cross for all sinners. Therefore, by dying on our behalf, Christ fulfilled all of God’s righteousness.

Furthermore, not only did Christ die as our Substitute, paying the wages of sin for us; He also resurrected as a proof that God was satisfied with His death for our justification and that in Him, as the resurrected One, we have been accepted before God. Because the soul who sins must die, Christ had to die to pay the wages of sin as our Substitute. Moreover, every sinner who believes into Christ has also been crucified with Christ and is thereby dead to the demands of God’s righteousness. As a result of Christ’s death on the cross, we have access unto the Father (Eph. 2:18). Furthermore, we have been crucified with Christ, we were raised together with Him, and we have been seated with Him in the heavenlies (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6). We can tell the enemy, “Satan, do not accuse me. All my sins are forgiven. My debt has been paid. I am in Christ. I am crucified with Christ and have been resurrected with Him.” In His resurrection Christ became the

“receipt” of the payment for our sins. Using this illustration, when the rent is paid, the landlord issues a receipt as proof of payment. Likewise, the receipt that proves Christ’s death has been accepted by God is the resurrected Christ Himself. He is the proof that we have been justified by God. Today this receipt is in our spirit. We can contact Him, enjoy Him, and live Him. Then this receipt is lived out through us for Him to become our subjective righteousness (Phil. 3:8-9).

Because God is bound by His righteousness to forgive us, righteousness is the power of God’s salvation and the unshakable foundation of our salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). Our experience of Christ rests on the foundation of God’s righteousness, which is the solid, steadfast, and unshakable foundation of His throne (Psa. 89:14) and the base on which His kingdom is built (Rom. 14:17). God has put Christ to death on our behalf, He has recognized the death of Christ as the full payment of our debt of sins, and the resurrected and ascended Christ sitting at the right hand

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of God is the “receipt” of this payment (4:24-25). We have been forgiven of our sins once for all. All our sins were nailed on the cross, but in our experience, in our conscience, and for our fellowship with God, we simply need to confess them whenever we become conscious of any sins in the light of our fellowship with God. When we confess our sins, God is bound by His righteousness to forgive us. Hence, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He is faithful to His word and righteous in the blood of Jesus His Son; therefore, He must forgive us, for the debt of sin has already been paid. Furthermore, whatever sins we confess before God can never be brought up at the judgment seat of Christ. Thus, whenever we claim the blood of Jesus and appeal to God’s righteousness, He has no choice except to forgive us (*Hymns*, #1003).

In *The Gospel of God* Brother Nee recounts the story of a pastor who was a modernist. Modernists do not believe in the death or resurrection of Christ. They believe that Christ was an exemplary model for us to imitate and that He lived a martyr’s life and died for His good cause. Of course, that is not according to the truth. Christ suffered the fire of God’s judgment and died on the cross as

the passover Lamb of God for our sins. He endured the fire of God's holy judgment on our behalf. This modernist pastor's name was Mr. Barry, whom, as Brother Nee recounts, was saved in a remarkable way:

In America there was a famous preacher named Dr. Jowett. He had a co-worker named Mr. Barry. Mr. Barry was a pastor in a church, but he had not yet been saved. One night someone rang the doorbell of his church. After letting the bell ring for a long time, Mr. Barry reluctantly put on his night robe and went to see who it was. At the door was a young, improperly dressed girl. When he asked her bluntly what she wanted, the girl asked, "Are you the pastor?" When he admitted that he was, the girl said, "I need help to get my mother in." He thought that a girl dressed in such a way must have a terrible home. He thought that perhaps her mother was drunk, and she needed help to get her mother back into the house. He told the girl to call the police, but the girl insisted that he go. He tried his best to turn her down and told her to go to the pastor of the church nearest her. But the girl said, "Your church is the nearest church." Then he said, "It is too late now. Come back tomorrow." But she insisted that he go at once. Mr. Barry thought for a while. He was a pastor of a church with over twelve hundred members. If one of them saw him walking with this young girl dressed in that kind of way in the middle of the night, what would they think? But the girl insisted and said that if he would not go, she would not leave. Finally, he gave in and went upstairs to change. Mr. Barry later told Dr. Jowett that while he was walking to the girl's house, he pulled his hat down very low to cover his face and tucked his face into his coat for fear that others might see him. The place where they went was not in a nice area. When he stopped before the house that they were to enter, he saw that it was not a decent place at all. Then he asked the girl, "Why do you want me to come to such a place?" The girl answered, "My mother is very sick. She is in terrible danger. She said that she wants to get into the kingdom of God. Please get her in." Mr. Barry could not do anything except step into the house. The girl and her mother lived in a very small and dingy room. Their home was very poor. When the sick woman saw him coming, she cried out, "Please help me to get in. I cannot get in." He thought for a while and wondered what he should do. He was a pastor and a preacher, and here was a woman who was dying. She wanted to enter the kingdom of God; she wanted to be taught how to get in. What could he do? He did not know what to do. So he spoke to her in the way he spoke to his congregation. He began to tell her that Jesus was a perfect man, that He was our model, that He sacrificed Himself, that He displayed such benevolence, and that Jesus went about helping people. If men follow in His footsteps to sacrifice themselves, to love and help others, and to serve society, they would uplift their humanity and others' humanity. Mr. Barry was talking to her with his eyes

closed. When he finished, she became mad. She cried out, "No, no! This is not what I want you to speak about." Her tears began to fall. She said, "Sir, tonight is my last night on earth. Now is the time for me to settle the question of eternal perdition or entry into God's kingdom. This is my last chance. Don't try to take me for a ride or play games with me. I have sinned my whole life long. And not only have I sinned, but I have also taught my daughter to sin. Now I am dying. What can I do? Don't play games with me. All my life I have done nothing but sin. Everything I did was unclean. I never knew what being moral meant. I never knew what it was to be clean. I never knew what it was to have a conscience. Now you are telling such a sinner as me, in the state that I am in tonight, to take Jesus as my model! How much work would I have to do before I could take Jesus as my model! You told me that I have to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. But how much would I have to do before I could follow in His footsteps! Don't play games with me at this hour so crucial to my eternity. Just tell me how I can get into God's kingdom. What you told me will not work for me. I cannot do any of those things." Mr. Barry was taken by surprise. He thought to himself, "These are the things that I learned in theological school. I studied them for my doctorate in theology. I have been preaching them for the past seventeen or eighteen years. And these are the things I have read out of the Bible. But here is a woman who wants to get in, and I cannot help her." So he said, "To tell you the truth, I don't know how to get in. I only know that Jesus was a good man, that we have to imitate Him, that He was benevolent, and that He sacrificed Himself to help others. All I know is that if a man takes Jesus as his example and walks as He walked, he will be a Christian." In tears the woman said, "Can you do nothing for a woman who has been sinful all her life to help her enter God's kingdom at the last hour? Is that all you can do to help a dying woman to get into God's kingdom, who will have no tomorrow and who will have no second chance?" Mr. Barry was stuck. He had nothing more to say. He thought, "I am a servant of Christ. I am a doctor of theology. I am a pastor of a twelve-hundred-member church. But here is a woman on her deathbed, and I cannot help her at all. She even thinks that I am playing games with her." But then Mr. Barry remembered something he had heard from his mother while sitting on her lap when he was seven years old. She had told him that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, that He was crucified, and that He shed His blood to cleanse us from sins. Jesus of Nazareth died for our sins on the cross and has become the propitiatory sacrifice. He remembered these words then. He had neglected these words all his life, but that day these words came back to him. Then he rose up and said, "Yes, I have something for you. You do not have to do anything, but God has done everything in His Son. He has dealt with our sins in His Son. God's Son has taken away all our sins. The One who demands the payment became the One who pays. The

One who was offended became the One who suffered for the offense. The Judge has become the judged.” At that word, the woman’s face showed signs of joy. He went on to tell her all that his mother had told him. Then suddenly the woman’s face turned from joy to tears, and she cried, “Why didn’t you tell me this earlier? What should I do now?” He then told her that she needed only to believe and to receive. At that word, the woman died. Later Mr. Barry told Dr. Jowett that on that night the woman entered in and he also entered in.

I have been touched in my heart many times by this story. If there is salvation, it should be available to anyone. If you say that one must be baptized before he can be saved, then the thief on the cross could not be saved, because he was not baptized. If you say that one cannot be saved unless he makes restitution, then the thief on the cross could not have been saved, because both his hands and feet were nailed firmly to the cross. I am not saying that we should not be baptized or make restitution. But the condition for salvation is not restitution, baptism, confession, or repentance. Repentance is nothing but a changed view about one’s past. If it were a matter of law and work, who could fulfill it? This woman is the best example of God’s salvation being for everyone. (268-271)

Christ Being Our Life as the Goal of God’s Salvation

Life is the goal of God’s salvation. Thus, Romans 5:18 says that justification is “of life.” Through justification we have come up to the standard of God’s righteousness and correspond with it so that now He can impart His life into us. This corresponds to the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The prodigal son left his father’s house, squandered his estate, and because of a famine he became so hungry that he desired to eat the carob pods, which the hogs that he fed were eating. Eventually, he came to his senses, saying,

How many of my father’s hired servants abound in bread, but I am perishing here in famine! I will rise up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants...But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him affectionately. And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (vv. 17-21)

But the father interrupted him and “said to his slaves, Bring out quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet” (v. 22). The best robe

signifies Christ as the God-satisfying righteousness to cover the penitent sinner. Had the father only given the best robe to his returned son, the son might have said, “Father, I am so happy that I have the best robe, but I am so hungry.” However, his father also said, “Bring the fattened calf; slaughter it, and let us eat and be merry” (v. 23). The fattened calf represents the unsearchably rich Christ who was killed on the cross and resurrected to be the life-giving Spirit for our enjoyment (1 Cor. 1:9; 15:45).

Although we all were prodigal sons, we have been justified, approved by God, according to His standard of righteousness. What God sees on us is Christ as the best robe, and by eating the fattened calf God’s life is dispensed into us. Through the dispensing of His life, we not only have a garment for justification, but Christ is also “stitching” Himself into our being to prepare us to be His bride with an embroidered wedding garment (Psa. 45:13-14). We receive this second garment not by working but in the same way that we received the first garment—by

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receiving the Lord as our life. We eat Christ as our spiritual food in order that God would rule within us, that we would be beautified with Christ as our embroidered garment, and that Christ would be expressed out of us as His glorious bride (John 6:57; Rev. 19:7-9). Then we will be qualified to enter into the wedding feast for a thousand years. Therefore, through justification we have come up to the standard of God’s righteousness so that He can impart His life into us for His expression.

The life of Christ is the purpose of God’s salvation organically. Romans 5:1 through 11 reveals that the result of our justification is the full enjoyment of God in Christ as our life. Romans 5:1 and 2 say, “Having been justified out of faith, we have peace toward God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.” This means that we have been justified by faith. Now we are enjoying the fattened calf and are taking the way of peace, for this is the gospel of peace. When we are wondering where we should go and what we should do, we simply need to take the way of peace. We have peace toward God (v. 1), in Christ we have peace (John 16:33), and we can go in peace, taking the path of peace (Luke 7:50). Moreover, Romans 5:5 says, “Hope does not put us to shame, because

the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” The love of God has been poured out into our hearts, and we are standing in the realm of grace (v. 2). Romans 5:1 through 11 speaks of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, love, grace, peace, hope, light, and glory. Thus, we have the Triune God—God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—as our enjoyment, which is signified in totality by the fattened calf. This is the wonderful saving result of our being justified.

The saving life of Christ is accomplishing the organic goal of God’s dynamic salvation in the following ways:²

(1) We have been justified by God in Christ as the righteousness from God to us, so that we may live in this life before God (1:17).

(2) This life makes the God-justified believers the many sons of God (8:14; Heb. 2:10), who are the many brothers of Christ (Rom. 8:29) through regeneration (1 Pet. 1:3) by the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2) with God’s producing and multiplying life.

(3) This life is imparted into the dying believers so that they may grow in Christ out of death unto maturity (v. 11). Christ saves us organically unto maturity in His heavenly ministry by His praying for us. Witness Lee says the following concerning Christ’s interceding for us in His heavenly ministry:

In His heavenly ministry, He, as the pneumatic Christ, intercedes for us in our weakness with groanings within us in the heavenlies that we may grow in Him unto maturity to reach our sonship in full, which is the redemption of our body, the glorification of our entire being (Rom. 8:23-30). While He is indwelling us, He is ministering life to us and also interceding for us.

We do not realize exactly how Christ prays for us, but all the real seeking Christians are always groaning—“O, Lord. O Lord.” In the morning we may say, “O Lord, have mercy upon me. I know I have to be a vitalized member. I have to be an overcomer. I have to be one in Mount Zion. But You know my situation. I intended and decided to be such a person, but I failed. What shall I do, Lord?” This is your groaning. Do you not groan in this way all the time? This kind of groaning is our groaning, but in our groaning is Christ’s intercession. When you groan in this way for your failure, for your defeat, in your groaning is Christ’s praying for you. Christ is interceding for us in our weakness through our groaning.

If you were stiff-necked and hardened in your heart, you would say, “I don’t care. I want to be an overcomer, but I cannot do it, and I will never do it.” This is not groaning. This is to be stubborn and hardened. But the ones who

would receive mercy and grace would groan, “O Lord, O Lord, what shall I do, Lord? How can I overcome all these failures, Lord?” In this is the indwelling Lord’s prayer for you in your weakness. Even in the meetings we may groan by saying, “O Lord Jesus. I don’t know what to say, Lord. O Lord, what should I say? I have much to say, but I don’t know how to start.” When you groan, right away Christ intercedes for you. Then you will have something to say.

He is groaning within us in the heavenlies that we may grow in Him unto maturity. I have the faith that regardless of how many times we are defeated, one day we will reach the goal of maturity. This is because Christ Himself is interceding for us that we may grow unto maturity to reach our full sonship, which is the redemption of our body, the glorification of our entire being. (*Crystallization* 24-25)

(4) The indwelling Christ moves in the believers by the Spirit of life so that they may enjoy Christ’s life with its peace (Rom. 8:5-6).

(5) This life sanctifies us with the holy nature of God as the holy element (6:19-20).

(6) This life renews us, by the Spirit of life, based upon the washing of regeneration, from the old element of our old man into the new constitution of our new man (12:2; Titus 3:5).

(7) This life transforms us metabolically by the Spirit of life with the element of Christ’s divine life, from our old constitution to our new constitution, for the building up of Christ’s organic Body (Rom. 12:2, 5; 2 Cor. 3:18).

(8) This life conforms us to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God so that we may be full-grown Godmen for the Triune God’s expression (Rom. 8:29).

(9) This life glorifies us through the redemption of our body so that we may enter into the freedom of glory and our full sonship (vv. 21, 23, 30).

(10) This life makes us reign as kings over Satan, sin, and death (5:17, 21).

The unsearchably rich Christ as our saving and reigning life is the power of life, the reality of resurrection, in our spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). We need to experience the functions of the life-giving Spirit as the reality of this resurrection-life-power. Second Corinthians 4:7 says, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God,” and 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle

over me.” These verses show that Christ, the excellent treasure in our earthen vessel, is the power, strength, and ability of grace. He is also the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Today, Christ as the power of God is the life-giving Spirit, the life-power, the reality of resurrection. Such a life-power is functioning in us by conquering all the negative things—Satan, sin, and death (Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:26; Acts 2:24); swallowing up death (Num. 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:4); producing growth, transformation, and shaping (Rom. 6:5; Col 2:19; Rom. 12:2; 8:29); and releasing the positive things of the divine life (John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12). It is also functioning in us as the power to rise up, typified by the calamus in the compound ointment in Exodus 30:22-25 (Recovery Version, Exo. 30:25, note 1).

When we contact this resurrecting Spirit (Rom. 8:11), we experience Him in all His rich aspects. How then do we contact Him? We contact the resurrecting Spirit by caring for our spirit and our heart. The apostle Paul writes that he served God in his spirit (1:9), and he says that the Spirit witnesses with our spirit (8:16). Then he speaks about the love of God being poured out in our hearts and that we more than conquer through Him who loved us (Rom. 5:5; 8:37). First, we need to exercise our spirit to contact the Lord as the indwelling Spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 2 Cor. 3:17). Second, we need to take care of our heart, to turn our heart to the Lord (v. 16). We need to exercise our spirit and keep our heart turned to the Lord day by day and moment by moment. We need to be those who are poor in spirit by remaining absolutely open to the Lord and pure in heart by taking Him as our unique goal. With an exercised spirit and a heart that is turned to the Lord, we need to call upon the name of the Lord. Romans 10:12 says the Lord is “rich to all who call upon Him.” This verse does not say that He is rich to all who think about Him but to all who call upon Him. We need to call, “Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus.” When we call on the Lord, we switch on the divine electricity, which is the Spirit as the Triune God in motion within our spirit. The Lord, who is the Spirit as the divine electricity, is rich to all who “switch on” by calling upon His name.

We also need to “receive...the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit” (Eph. 6:17-18). This is to pray-read His word. We need to receive the word of God by various means and all kinds of prayer and petition. The sword, the Spirit, and the word are one. When we pray-read the constant word of the Bible, the word becomes the instant word to us, and that word is the Spirit as the sword that kills the enemy. As we spend time

with the Lord to pray-read His word, the word becomes the Spirit applied to our inner being as a sword that kills all the negative things in our being.

We also need to be open to the word, by saying Amen to the Lord’s word. Luke 1:37-38 says, “No word will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, the slave of the Lord. May it happen to me according to your word.” The angel Gabriel came to Mary to tell her that she would conceive in her womb, bear a son, and call His name Jesus (v. 31). Her initial response was to ask, “How will this be, since I have not known a man?” The angel went on to explain further by saying, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore also the holy thing which is born will be called the Son of God.” Mary acknowledged that she was the slave of the Lord and willingly received the word spoken by God to her through the angel (vv. 34-35, 38). She believed God’s word, agreed with it, and submitted to it. We all need to take Mary as our pattern

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THE LIFE-POWER, THE REALITY OF RESURRECTION.
SUCH A LIFE-POWER IS FUNCTIONING IN US BY CONQUERING ALL THE
NEGATIVE THINGS—SATAN, SIN, AND DEATH; SWALLOWING UP DEATH;
PRODUCING GROWTH, TRANSFORMATION, AND SHAPING;
AND RELEASING THE POSITIVE THINGS OF THE DIVINE LIFE.

by receiving His word as His slaves and by expressing our desire for the fulfillment of His word in our lives for His purpose.

We may also activate the life-power of the life-giving Spirit in our spirit by daily coming forward to the throne of grace to receive God as our mercy and enjoy Him as our grace for timely help (Heb. 4:16). Second Timothy 2:1 says, “You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” We are empowered in the grace by turning to our spirit to touch the indwelling and ruling Christ as the reigning grace, the reality of the throne of grace, in our spirit (Rom. 5:21; also see Recovery Version, Heb. 4:16, note 1).

The life-giving Spirit in our spirit is also activated as the life-power in us as we remain under the speaking of the ministry of the New Testament. Second Corinthians 13:3 says, “Since you seek a proof of the Christ who is speaking in me, who is not weak unto you but is powerful in you.” In his ministry Paul experienced Christ as the One who was speaking within him, and while Christ was speaking within him, He was powerful in the believers. This is another experience of resurrection as the saving power of Christ as the life-giving Spirit.

In addition to calling on the Lord, pray-reading the word, being obedient to and receiving the word of God without reservation, coming forward to the throne of grace, and being under the speaking of the ministry, we need to be in the church life. When we are in the church life, we enjoy Christ as Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). The expression *to the church* in verse 22 indicates that whatever Christ has attained and obtained is being transmitted to the church. Christ as the life-giving Spirit, the power of life, is the reality of resurrecting power, ascending power, subjecting power, and heading-up power that is being transmitted into our being (vv. 19-23). When we switch on this life within us, it conquers all the negative things in our being—Satan, sin, and death. Then this life swallows up all the by-products of death in our being. Weakness, hatred, darkness, pride, criticism, and rumors are by-products of death. When we exercise our spirit, turn our heart to the Lord, call on the name of the Lord, pray-read the Word, open up to Him, come to the meetings, and enjoy the transmission—the transmitting of the transcending Christ as resurrecting, ascending, subjecting, and heading-up power—we have no desire to criticize anyone. Switching on the life-power of resurrection produces growth, transformation, and shaping into the image of Christ. It releases the positive things and gives us the power to rise up.

When we “switch on” our spirit to contact the Spirit, we experience the richness of the indwelling Spirit, the unsearchable riches of Christ. We need to experience the aspects of the Spirit, the riches of the indwelling Spirit. When we are switched on, we experience the Spirit as holiness (Rom. 1:4; 5:5) and life (8:2, 6). We should not set our mind on our situation or environment but on the spirit. When our mind is set on the spirit, we are living, energized, strengthened, and satisfied. When we turn to the rich Spirit within our spirit, we experience Him as the law of the Spirit of life (v. 2), peace (v. 6), joy (14:17; Heb. 1:9), hope (Rom. 15:13; cf. Ps. 3:3), love (Rom. 5:5; 15:30), power (vv. 13, 19), service (1:9; 7:6), preaching the gospel (1:1; 15:16, 19), freedom (8:2, 21), foretaste (v. 23), sonship (v. 5), the leading of the Spirit (v. 14), witnessing (v. 16), interceding (vv. 26-27), renewing (6:4), newness of spirit (7:6), resurrection (8:11), and sanctification (6:19; 15:16). The indwelling Spirit is rich in all His aspects, and we need to switch on our spirit in order to experience Him in all these aspects.

Christ Being Our Faith as the Substantiation of God’s Salvation

Christ as the Spirit has entered into our spirit to make our spirit a spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13). Our spirit of faith is the organ that we must exercise by prayer in order to substantiate everything of the unseen God, transferring all that He is objectively into us to become our subjective experience (Heb. 11:1, 27). When we exercise our spirit,

we are exercising our faith to enjoy all the invisible and unsearchable riches of Christ. We do not regard, look at, the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7). The Christian life is a life of things unseen (Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:27). The degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things. This is why the Lord needs a recovery—a restoration back to His original intention. The Lord’s recovery is to recover His church from things seen to things unseen—the unseen Christ of untold wealth and supreme preciousness (1 Pet. 1:8; 2:7).

The faith of the believers is the practical substantiation of God’s Christ as the unseen reality of God’s salvation. Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substantiation of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith (Rom. 1:12; 3:22; Gal. 2:16). We need to look away unto Jesus—the Author and Perfecter of our faith—with undivided attention by turning away from every other object (Heb. 12:1-2; Ps. 27:4). When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) transfuses us with Himself, His believing element. This faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself into us as the believing element that He may believe for us. We live by the faith of Christ as the Son of God and by the Son of God as our God-allotted gift of faith (Gal. 2:20; 2 Pet. 1:1). In his *Confessions*, Augustine says, “My faith, Lord, calls upon You. It is your gift to me. You breathed it into me by the humanity of Your Son, by the ministry of your preacher” (3). The preacher to whom Augustine referred was probably Ambrose, who ministered God’s word to him. Augustine was infused with Christ by the preaching of Ambrose, and this Christ who was infused into him became his believing element to believe in him and for him. This is the miracle and mystery of the faith as the gospel (Gal. 1:23).

In Romans 4 Paul sets forth Abraham as the example of faith. Many believers think that Abraham was a giant of faith. Actually, the only giant of faith is the Triune God. Abraham was not a giant of faith, for God had to appear to him again and again, and through His numerous appearances, God transfused Himself into Abraham (Acts 7:2; Gen. 11:31; 12:6-7; 13:14-18; 17:1; 18:1). Like Abraham, we need to be under God’s transfusing, infusing, and saturation. These words—*transfusion*, *infusion*, *saturation*—should be part of our divine vocabulary. We need to pray, “Lord, transfuse me, infuse me, and saturate me with Yourself.” The words *transfuse* and *infuse* are very close in meaning. The prefix *trans-* in the word *transfuse* means that something is transferred from one person to another. The prefix *in-* in the word *infuse* denotes something filling us within. Of course, Christ is the person within us. On the one hand, Christ is transfusing faith from His person

to us. On the other hand, because He indwells us, He is infusing faith into us from within. The word *saturation* implies suffusion (the gradual spreading of Christ through our inward being). When we are transfused, infused, and saturated with God, there will be a spontaneous reaction in our being—faith. As our measure of faith increases, then the church corporately becomes the household of the faith (Gal. 6:10). “Faith” is our family name because we are the household of the faith.

Our believing into Christ is our appreciation of Him as a reaction to His attraction (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 12:1-2; cf. Acts 14:27). Faith comes out of the hearing of the word. When we come to the living Word (Christ) in the written word (the Bible), He becomes the applied word (the Spirit) of faith to us (Rom. 10:8, 17; Gal. 3:2; cf. Heb. 3:12). When man hears Christ, knows Him, appreciates Him, and treasures Him, He causes faith to be generated in man, becoming the faith in man that enables man to believe in Him (12:2; Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:2, 5; 5:6). It is a great thing that Christ becomes our believing ability. Hence, when we preach the gospel, we need to present Christ, minister Christ, and show Christ’s preciousness to people. We need to live Him, enjoy Him, express Him, radiate Him, and minister Him to others. Our ministering Christ transfuses and infuses Christ into others so that He becomes their believing ability.

This was our experience when we believed. Faith was transfused and infused into us for our justification and regeneration, and today faith is still being transfused and infused into us in Christ and through His Body.

Faith is to believe that God is and we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything that we are and do, and we must be nothing in everything (Heb. 11:1, 5-6; Col. 3:10-11). We have a spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13). Doubts exist only in the mind. If we are in our mind and apart from our spirit, we will be full of doubts. Faith, however, is in our spirit because our spirit is a spirit of faith; thus, we need to exercise our spirit. If we do not exercise our spirit, we will be like the unbelievers (who are alienated from the life of God, Eph. 4:18), but when we exercise our spirit of faith, we can believe and enjoy everything that God has accomplished for us in Christ and everything that He is doing in us. Then we can also exercise our spirit of faith to speak Christ into others.

In Acts 26 we see an example of Paul exercising his spirit of faith to proclaim, defend, and confirm the gospel. He spoke before King Agrippa, and according to the context of these verses, many of the prominent men of the city were present to hear Paul (25:23). Acts 26:1 says,

“Agrippa said to Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense.” Because Paul was a visionary, he did not argue or reason with King Agrippa but simply spoke what he had seen and heard through his conversion. Eventually, Paul said, “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (v. 19). Then Festus interrupted and said, “You are insane, Paul. Much learning is driving you insane” (v. 24). Festus knew that Paul was brilliant, so he accused Paul of being insane from studying too much. By using the word *insane*, Festus was saying that Paul was raving mad. But Paul said, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus, but I am uttering words of truth and soberness” (v. 25). Then Paul went on to say,

For the king knows about these things, to whom also I speak freely, for I am persuaded that none of these things have escaped his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe. (vv. 26-27)

FAITH COMES OUT OF THE HEARING OF THE WORD. WHEN WE COME TO THE LIVING WORD (CHRIST) IN THE WRITTEN WORD (THE BIBLE), HE BECOMES THE APPLIED WORD (THE SPIRIT) OF FAITH TO US. WHEN MAN HEARS CHRIST, KNOWS HIM, APPRECIATES HIM, AND TREASURES HIM, HE CAUSES FAITH TO BE GENERATED IN MAN, BECOMING THE FAITH IN MAN THAT ENABLES MAN TO BELIEVE IN HIM.

The statement *I know that you believe* indicates that Paul was speaking faith into King Agrippa. Then King Agrippa said, “By so little are you trying to persuade me to become a Christian?” (v. 28), and Paul replied, “I would to God that both by little and by much, not only you, but also all those who hear me today might become even such as I am, except for these bonds” (v. 29). Like Paul we need to live by faith and exercise our spirit of faith to live Christ for His magnification and to infuse Christ as faith into others.

Faith in Christ brings us into the following organic relationships with Him for His purpose. All the following points depict the nature of our organic union with Christ by faith. Christ is the cultivated olive tree and the vine, and we are His branches (Rom. 11:17, 24; John 15:1-8). Christ is the Head, and we are His members (1 Cor. 12:12, 27). Christ is the breath of life, the water of life, and the bread of life, and we are His breathers, drinkers, and eaters (John 20:22; 4:10, 14; 7:37-39; 6:35, 51-63, 68). We need to bring all the new ones into breathing, drinking, and eating Christ. Christ is the Bridegroom, and we are His bride (3:29-30). We also need to bring people to love Christ, following the pattern of the apostle Paul to betroth people to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). Faith operates through love. The hearing of faith through the ministry of God’s word into us

awakens our loving appreciation of Christ, and the more we love the Lord, the more faith operates to bring us into the riches, the profit, of the unsearchably rich Christ as the all-inclusive Spirit (Gal. 5:6; Mark 12:30).

Faith is the subjective God applied to our being. Thus, just as nothing is impossible to God, nothing is impossible to faith (Matt. 17:20; 19:26). Charles Wesley expresses this in the following beautiful hymn (*Hymns*, #535):

- 1 All things are possible to him
That can in Jesus' name believe;
Lord, I no more Thy name blaspheme,
Thy truth I lovingly receive.
I can, I do believe in Thee;
All things are possible to me.
- 2 'Twas most impossible of all
That here sin's reign in me should cease;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall;
Jesus, I trust Thy faithfulness.
If nothing is too hard for Thee,
All things are possible to me.
- 3 Though earth and hell the Word gainsay,
The Word of God shall never fail;
The Lord can break sin's iron sway;
'Tis certain, though impossible.
The thing impossible shall be,
All things are possible to me.
- 4 All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in man;
To me when I am all renewed,
In Christ am fully formed again,
And from the reign of sin set free,
All things are possible to me.
- 5 All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in me;
Now shed Thy mighty Self abroad,
Let me no longer live, but Thee;
Give me this hour in Thee to prove
The sweet omnipotence of love.

Nothing is impossible to faith, since faith is God Himself, Christ Himself, as the power of God in us. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have in our inner being depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us (Rom. 12:3; Acts 6:5). Faith in the progressing stage comes though our contacting Christ, who is faith in us (Heb. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:16-19). The way to receive such a faith is to contact Christ, our source of faith, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word (Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Heb. 4:2). When we contact Him, He is overflowing within us, and there is a mutuality of faith among us. We are encouraged through the faith that is in one another (Rom. 1:12; Philem. 6). This mutuality of faith is the reality of the Body of Christ.

Christ as the righteousness of God (by which we are justified) and Christ as the life of God (by which we are deified) are realized, appropriated, and substantiated by the faith of the believers. Because faith is to believe that God is, faith always annuls our self and reveals Christ to us, so that we may enjoy Him as our superabundant life (John 10:10). Faith links us with all that Christ is as the unsearchably rich content and structure of the gospel of God. Witness Lee gives the following marvelous and fitting conclusion to this fellowship concerning righteousness, life, and faith in Romans 1:17:

The righteous, those who are absolutely right before God and before man, shall have life, the divine life. Then, how can we, the vile sinners, have the divine life of the righteous God according to His righteousness? By faith! It is by faith, which is the moving and working God in Christ who puts us into Christ as our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), that we, the sinners, have the divine life according to God's righteousness judicially. By this linking faith we are linked to God in Christ to participate in all that the all-inclusive Christ is, has, and has attained to, for the producing of the organic members of Christ to constitute and build up His organic Body, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem as the enlargement and expression of the eternal Triune God in His unlimited glory in the mysterious mingling of divinity with humanity for eternity (Rev. 21:2—22:5). This is the eternal fulfillment of the gospel in Romans 1:17, that "the righteous shall have life and live by faith"! (*Crystallization* 123-124) **AC**

Notes

¹The primary source for this article comes from *Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans*, chapters 5 through 11.

²These ten ways are based on Witness Lee's outline for message 6 in *Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans*, pages 57-58.

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