

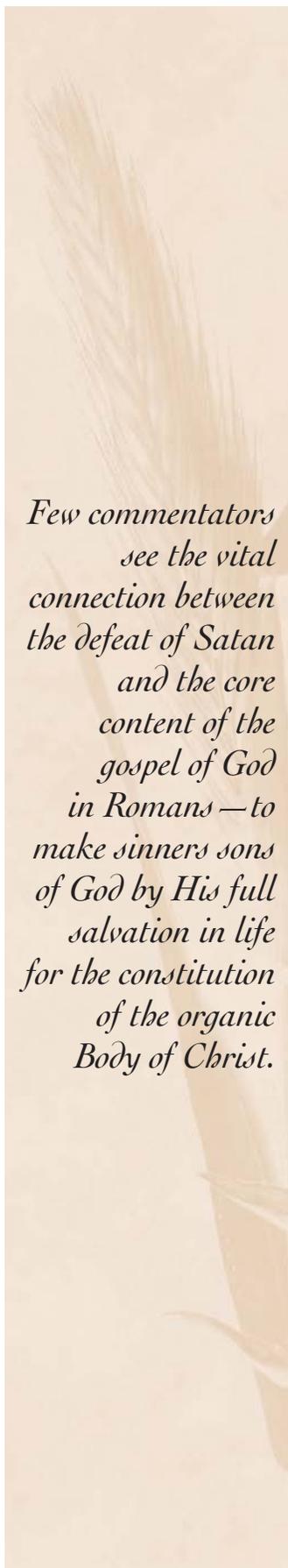
The God of Peace Crushing Satan under the Feet of the Believers: the Believers' Exercise of God's Dominion over His Enemy

by David Yoon

The Bible may be considered a record of three characters: God, Satan, and man. It presents an extensive revelation of the continuous warfare between God and Satan, from Satan's rebellion against God's throne to his ultimate destruction in the lake of fire (Isa. 14:13-14; Rev. 20:10). In this warfare Satan relentlessly schemes and struggles to usurp God's place and overthrow His eternal purpose. However, as the infinite, almighty Creator, God did not deign to lower Himself by fighting against His rebellious creature directly. Instead, God chose to deal with him by means of another created being—man—who, by becoming God's reproduction and representative, displays God's multifarious wisdom to Satan and his evil forces to their utter humiliation and defeat (Eph. 3:10).

Man's role in subduing God's enemy is implied in the declaration made by the Triune God in Genesis 1:26, which gives an account of the divine council concerning the creation of man: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." God's intention in His creation of man is to have a corporate entity to express Him in His image and to represent His authority by exercising His dominion over all the earth, especially over the creeping things, a category that includes the ancient serpent (3:14; Rev. 12:9; 20:2). In order to fulfill this intention, God dispenses Himself as the divine life into man, for only this life enables man to express and represent Him. For this reason, God placed the man whom He had created before two trees: the tree of life, which signifies God in Christ as life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which signifies Satan as the origin of death (Gen. 2:8-9). Regrettably, instead of receiving the life and nature of God, man was lured by Satan into partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thereby receiving the poisonous element of sin—the evil life and nature of Satan—and thus introducing sin and death into the human race (3:1-6; Rom. 5:12).

Although man, through Satan's deception, fell away from God's purpose into the bondage of sin and death, God never swerved from His determination to fulfill His purpose. Hence, the first gospel that God announced to fallen man promised that the seed of the woman, a human being, would crush the serpent's head, thus restoring man to God's original intention (Gen. 3:15). It is well known that this promise was initially fulfilled by the individual Christ, a God-man begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. As the long-promised seed of the woman, He destroyed the devil through His death on the cross (Gal. 4:4; Matt. 1:18, 20; Heb. 2:14). Less widely known is that in the closing remarks of what may be considered the fifth gospel in the New Testament, the gospel of God in the Epistle to the Romans, Paul alludes to the consummate fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3:15 by pronouncing the impending destruction of God's enemy under the feet of the corporate Christ, which is composed



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of the believers as His Body joined to Him as the Head: “Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). This proclamation bespeaks the inevitable accomplishment of God’s purpose to have a corporate man as the expression and enlargement of Christ to exercise His authority over His enemy.

The general consensus in scholarly discussion concerning Romans 16:20 is that Paul’s anticipation of the demise of Satan in this verse is an allusion to God’s promise concerning the destruction of the serpent in Genesis 3:15 (Brown 5). However, few commentators see the vital connection between the defeat of Satan under the believers’ feet and the core content of the gospel of God in Romans, which is to make sinners sons of God by His full salvation in life for the constitution of the organic Body of Christ. The majority of theological literature concerning Romans 16:20 treat God’s subjugation of Satan as a future event to take place at the end of the present age, understanding this verse mainly as a “powerful eschatological reminder” of God’s certain victory over Satan (Brown 1), which offers the believers “hope and a sense of empowerment over against evil and Satan” (Scholer 58).

This tendency is exemplified in Peter W. Macky’s article entitled “Crushing Satan Underfoot (Romans 16:20): Paul’s Last Battle Story as True Myth.” Macky claims that in this verse Paul intends to evoke the image of “God in Christ returning to earth in fiery form soon burning up the great human-faced dragon Satan, which then will end up as ashes under the feet of God’s people” (132). In Macky’s view, the principal effect of this verse, through which the believers can “imagine” God’s “final elimination of evil from the universe,” is to enable them to see that “present evil is only temporary” so that, despite the ubiquity of evil today, they may receive “emotional power” to make an “ethical decision” to overcome temptations in their life and stand firm against evil in the present (131-132). Certainly, Romans 16:20 has an eschatological dimension in that the ultimate fulfillment of Paul’s utterance in this verse concerning the crushing of Satan will take place consummately when he is cast into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev. 20:10). However, interpreting the crushing of Satan in Romans 16:20 solely as an eschatological event severs this verse from the governing thought of the Epistle, and it deprives us of the experience of ruling over Satan in the present age through God’s salvation in life. God’s destruction of Satan under our feet in verse 20 is much more than an eschatological promise regarding the ultimate fate of God’s enemy that offers hope and fortitude to resist evil and live an ethical life. More significantly, it is the culmination of the full experience of the gospel of God, the content of which is God’s complete salvation—the process by which we are judicially reconciled to God and organically saved in His life in order to reign in this life over every negative thing through our life union with Christ so that we may be the Body of Christ expressed in the local churches.

In light of this panoramic view of the gospel of God, our exercise of God’s dominion over His enemy is revealed in the Epistle to the Romans from four perspectives: reigning in life by the abundance of grace, being identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, enjoying the operation of the law of the Spirit of life, and experiencing the God of peace crushing Satan under the feet of the Body of Christ. Although all four aspects of our exercise of God’s authority over Satan are carried out both personally and corporately, the first three aspects are related mainly to the believers’ individual Christian life in which they partake of grace through an organic union with Christ and by contacting the Spirit of life, whereas the last aspect is concerned primarily with their corporate church life in which they participate in the life of the Body of Christ in the local churches, living in love, peace, and one accord with one another.

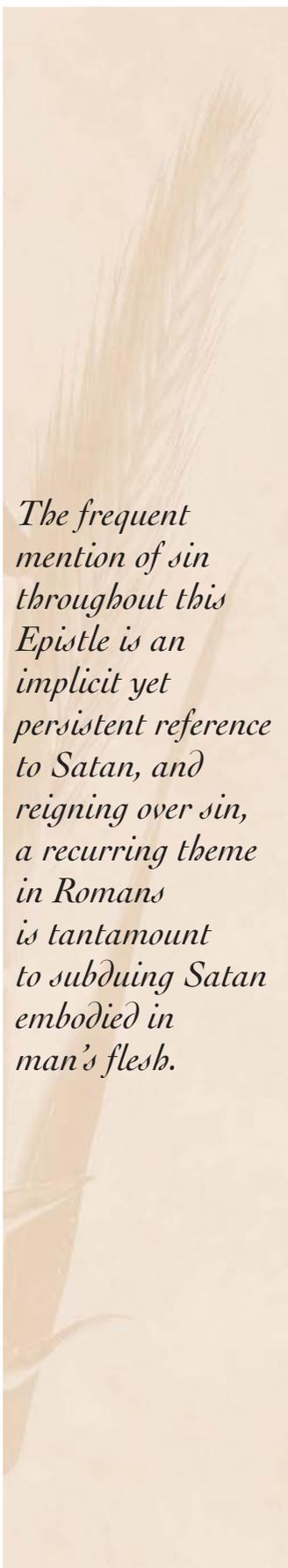
Reigning in Life over Satan as Sin and Death by the Abundance of Grace

In “Paul at the Ball: *Ecclesia Victor* and the Cosmic Defeat of Personified Evil in Romans 16:20,” Michael J. Thate observes that the promise concerning the subjugation of Satan

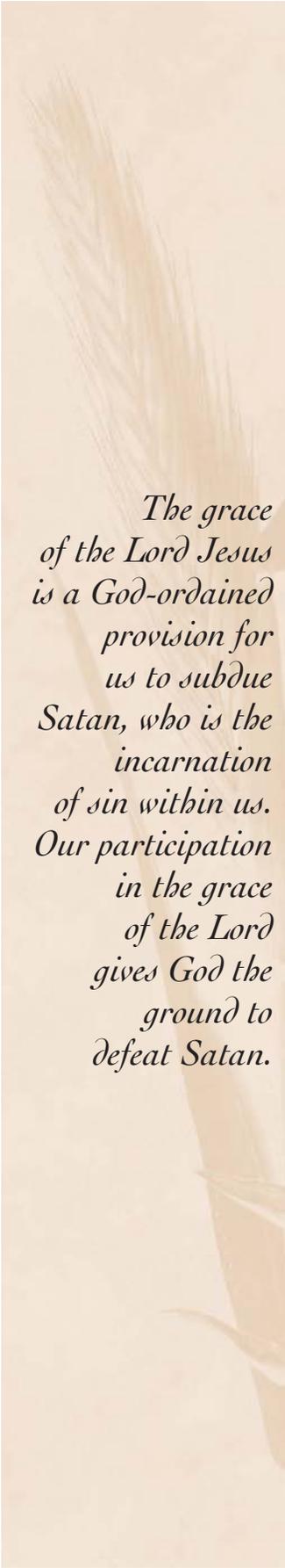
in 16:20 is “jolting,” given the lack of prior mention of Satan in the preceding parts of this Epistle and Paul’s startling silence on Satan at key points throughout Romans vis-à-vis the problem of sin (151-152). This observation is shortsighted because, as we will see, sin cannot be separated from the person of Satan. In fact, according to Paul’s view, sin is the embodiment of Satan who dwells within fallen man. Thus, the frequent mention of sin throughout this Epistle is an implicit yet persistent reference to Satan, and reigning over sin, a recurring theme in Romans, is tantamount to subduing Satan embodied in man’s flesh.

Careful consideration of Paul’s use of the word *sin* in the book of Romans makes this clear. In Romans Paul addresses not only sins, the outward deeds of disobedience toward God and His word, but also sin, the inward nature that compels man to commit such deeds. From Romans 1:18 to 5:11 Paul deals mainly with sinful deeds, highlighting our justification by Christ’s redemptive death and His propitiating blood (3:24-26; 4:5, 25). From 5:12 to 8:13 Paul deals mainly with the sinful nature, shifting his focus from justification to the organic sanctification that we experience through the operation of the divine life within us. Verse 12 of chapter 5 says that through Adam sin entered into the world. As a result of Adam’s transgression, sin was wrought into the human race and became a subjective element of our constitution. A profound repercussion of Adam’s transgression is that all human beings not only have sinned but also “were constituted sinners” (v. 19). We are sinners not merely because of our actions but more intrinsically because of our constitution. In other words, we are not sinners because we sin; rather, we sin because we have been *constituted sinners*. In chapters 5 through 8 sin is personified; Paul’s language evokes an active agent who enters into the world, reigns in people’s mortal bodies, lords it over them, deceives them, kills them, and dwells in them (5:12, 21; 6:12, 14; 7:11, 17, 20). Although Paul does not explicitly equate indwelling sin with Satan, sin should be understood as such. On the one hand, the New Testament reveals that it is sin that rules, deceives, and kills human beings; on the other hand, it identifies Satan as the ruler of this world, who controls human beings, a liar who deceives them, and a murderer who kills them (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 8:44; Rev. 12:9; 20:3). As the first sinner in the universe, Satan is the originator and father of sin (1 John 3:8; John 8:44). Sin is Satan’s nature, and sinning is his character and practice. Hence, in the sight of God, sin is essentially Satan injected into man and operating within man. While Satan exists objectively as a spiritual being, a fallen angel, he also exists subjectively within us as indwelling sin. Having been sold under sin to be his slaves, all fallen human beings have sin as their master and are under the bondage and tyranny of Satan as sin (Rom. 7:14; John 8:34).

In Romans 5 through 8 Paul underscores the need to conquer not only sin but also death. Subduing Satan involves overcoming sin and death because he is the source of both sin and death. Death, the last enemy of God, is not only the might, the ultimate weapon, of Satan but also Satan himself, the archenemy of God (Heb. 2:14). According to Romans, death, like sin, reigns over humankind (5:17). Just as sin is Satan personified, death is also Satan personified. Romans 5 through 7 reveals that death is the issue of sin. In 5:12 Paul says, “Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned.” In 6:21 and 23 Paul states that the end of the things of which we are ashamed is death and that “the wages of sin is death”; in 7:5 he adds, “The passions for sins, which acted through the law, operated in our members to bear fruit to death.” Similarly, in 7:13 and 21 Paul declares that sin worked out death and killed him through the law. In 1 Corinthians 15:55-56 Paul likens death to a scorpion and sin to the scorpion’s sting. When we are stung by sin, Satan exercises his power of death, injecting the poison of death into us to kill us spiritually. The consequence of sin is not only the death that awaits every human being at the end of his life but also a present power that works within us today to bring us into the slavery of death. On the one hand, “sin reigned in death” (Rom. 5:21). This means that “sin reigns by the authority of death and brings



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in death by its reign. Thus, a sinner must die” (Lee, Recovery Version, 5:21, note 1). On the other hand, death reigns because of sin. Because of Adam’s transgression, “in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22). Death has been inaugurated as a king and now rules over every human being; hence, all human beings born in Adam are in the domain of this dreadful king.

In Romans 5:21 Paul presents a contrast between the satanic dominion of sin and the divine reign of grace: “Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” In verse 20 Paul sets forth grace as a counterpoise to sin: “Where sin abounded, grace has superabounded.” Paul echoes this contrast in 6:14 by declaring, “Sin will not lord it over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.” Even though sin may abound, sin should no longer have dominion over us, because we are under the reign of superabounding grace and therefore are no longer slaves to sin. Our overcoming of sin, which is the embodiment of Satan, is dependent upon our participation in grace in its superabundance. Andrew Murray observes, “Grace is not only pardon of, but *power over*, sin” (*Ministry* 58). In the same verse in which Paul foreshadows the crushing of Satan by the God of peace under our feet, he offers a benediction of grace: “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (16:20). This affirms that the grace of the Lord Jesus is a God-ordained provision for us to subdue Satan, who is the incarnation of sin within us. Our participation in the grace of the Lord gives God the ground to defeat Satan. We need to come forward to the throne of grace to partake of the superabounding grace of the Lord Jesus, for it is through our enjoyment of this grace that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet (Heb. 4:16; 12:28).

Romans 5 reveals that the grace by which we conquer sin is intimately associated with the divine life and Jesus Christ. Verse 17 says, “If by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ,” and verse 21 says, “Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Both these verses mention grace, life, and Jesus Christ, indicating that grace cannot be separated from the life of God and the person of Christ and that grace is inextricably bound up with life: in verse 17 the abundant grace received by us enables us to reign in life, and in verse 21 grace itself reigns unto eternal life. This reveals that our enjoyment of abounding grace results in the impartation of eternal life into us, by which we may rule over sin and death. Just as death is the issue of sin, life is the issue of grace. Not only does grace result in life; grace is life itself. This is implied by a unique biblical expression, uttered by the apostle Peter, that equates grace with life: “the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). The divine life that we received at the time of our regeneration is a kingly life, for it is the life of “the Lord our God the Almighty,” who “reigns” as King over all the earth (Rev. 19:6; Zech. 14:9). This royal life, which was dispensed into us at our regeneration, enthrones us to reign as kings over Satan, sin, death, and the world. The life of God within us is “the means, sphere, and element” of our kingship (Lee, *To Be Saved* 13). Since we may reign in the divine life as God does, “by reigning in life we become...God in life and in nature but not in the Godhead” (Lee, *Crystallization* 209).

The divine life overcomes sin. For this reason, 1 John 3:9 says that “everyone who has been begotten of God,” referring to a regenerated believer who is a child of God born of Him with His eternal life, “does not practice sin,” because the divine life as the divine seed, which does not allow him to live in sin, abides in him. As long as a regenerated believer lives by the divine life, “he cannot sin” (v. 9). The divine life also overcomes death. For this reason, Paul declares that the death in our mortal body is swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4; 1 Cor. 15:54). The abundance of grace that we receive in order to rule over Satan as sin and death and the abundance of the riches of God’s eternal life are one and the same. Hence, to partake of “grace upon grace” is to “have

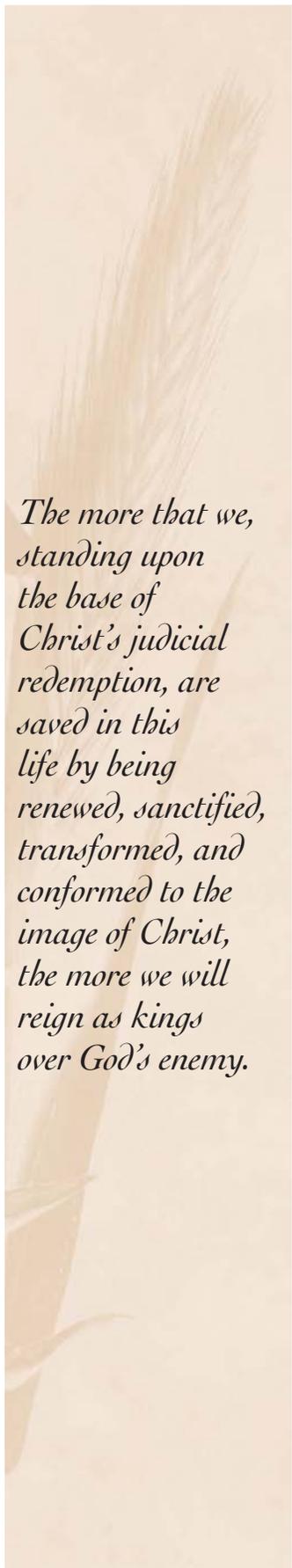
life and...have it abundantly” (John 1:16; 10:10); in other words, to receive the abundance of grace is to obtain life abundantly.

To reign in life over Satan as sin and death by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness is to be saved “much more” in the life of Christ, having been reconciled to God through the death of Christ (Rom. 5:17, 10). *The gift of righteousness* refers to judicial redemption, by which we were reconciled to God through the vicarious death of Christ and thus delivered from eternal perdition (3:24), and *grace* refers to the divine life, in which we are organically saved from Satan as sin and death in our daily life during the present age. To reign in life over Satan as sin and death is both the issue and proof of our experience of God’s complete salvation, which is composed of judicial redemption and organic salvation. The more that we, standing upon the base of Christ’s judicial redemption, are filled with the divine life and thus saved in this life by being renewed, sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of Christ, the more we will reign as kings over God’s enemy (6:22; 8:29; 12:2).

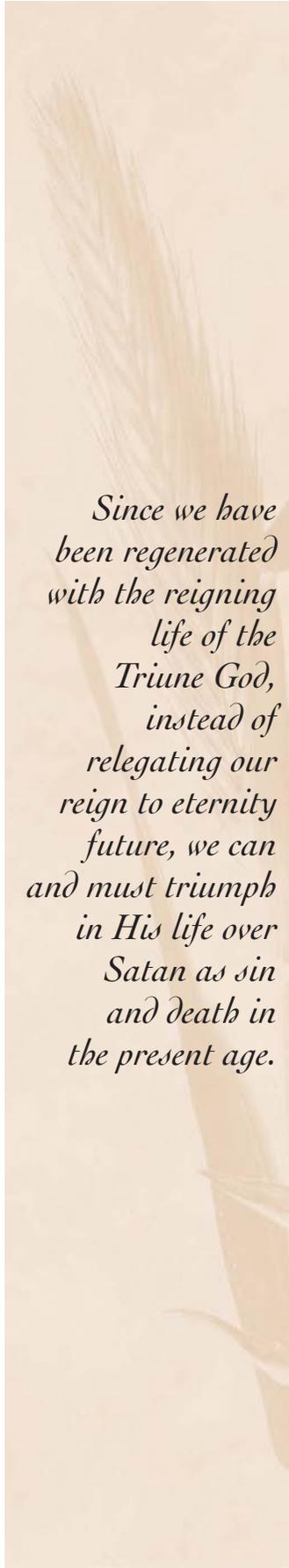
Grace, of which life is the main element, is intrinsically related to the person of Christ, who Himself is life (John 1:4; 11:25). Just as Peter’s appositional phrase *the grace of life* identifies grace with life, Paul’s appositional phrase in Romans 16:20, *the grace of our Lord Jesus*, equates grace with the Lord Jesus. Moreover, just as grace is personified as a king reigning in Romans 5:21, it is also personified as a worker laboring in 1 Corinthians 15:10: “I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God which is with me.” According to this verse, the grace imparted into Paul operated in him as he labored diligently for God’s interests, energizing him to carry out his ministry, which he could not accomplish in himself (Col. 1:29). In terms of its thought and construction, Paul’s declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:10 corresponds with his proclamation in Galatians 2:20: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.” Comparing *not I but the grace of God which is with me* with *no longer I... but...Christ who lives in me* reveals that the grace that labored within Paul was none other than the Christ who lived in him. This indicates that the superabounding and reigning grace in Romans 5 refers to Christ Himself as life dispensed into us and working within us so that we may reign over Satan as sin and death.

The believers’ reigning in life through this abundant grace takes place in the present age, the coming age of the millennial kingdom, and in eternity. Yet once again, a commonly held misinterpretation denies a wonderful experience of Christ in the present. Many commentaries interpret our reigning in life in Romans 5:17 as an experience that will transpire only in eternity, a view that precludes our experience of reigning in life in the present age. This narrow interpretation of reigning in life stems mainly from an inaccurate understanding of life as an everlasting existence in heaven. For instance, in *The Interpretation of Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, R. C. H. Lenski, expounding verse 17, equates life in this verse with “heaven,” saying, “‘in life’ = sphere, all heaven is life...In heaven we shall not be subjects but ‘shall reign’” (376). In his *Notes on the New Testament* Albert Barnes also interprets the phrase *in life* as “the usual expression to denote the complete bliss of the saints in glory” (139). In accordance with this interpretation, he states, “The word *reign* is often applied to the condition of saints in heaven...It means that they shall be exalted to a glorious state of happiness in heaven” (139).

However, if we see that this ruling life refers to the spiritual, divine, kingly life of the Triune God imparted into us, we will realize that the operation of this life enables us to rule over all kinds of insubordination, including Satan’s authority over ourselves and others in this age (Matt. 5:28-30; 1 Cor. 6:12; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 6:10-17; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). This is in addition to the overcoming believers’ reigning with Christ over the nations of the world in the coming millennial age as His co-kings (2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Heb. 2:5-6; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:6; 3:21; Luke 22:30) and all the believers’ reigning with God in Christ over the nations in eternity (Rev. 21:23-24; 22:5). In harmony with



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this thought, John Gill, commenting on Romans 5:17, insightfully points out that although the believers “will reign in eternal life, . . . sit on thrones, wear crowns, and possess a kingdom of glory for ever and ever,” they nevertheless also “now reign in spiritual life over sin, Satan, and the world” (158). In *An Outline of the Epistle to the Romans*, C. A. Coates, remarking on the same verse, similarly observes that even though the saints will reign with Christ “in the world to come” and will be “dominant then,” they nonetheless are now “to reign in a power of life that is superior to all the influences of lawlessness” and “are to be morally dominant now *by Him*” (99). In Coates’s view, this is because “the realisation” of our reigning in life “involves the deliverance which is unfolded in chapters 6, 7, and 8” (99). In a similar vein, Andrew Murray refers to grace as “the life-power of God” within us and underscores that reigning over sin by this grace should be our present experience on earth:

The grace that reigns through Jesus Christ enables us to gain victory over sin in our life here below.

Salvation does not, as many think, mean a life of falling and rising again. No, it is God’s will that His children should be conquerors in their life here upon earth. But on one condition—that they should day by day live in the abundance of grace that is to be obtained at the Throne of Grace. (*Secret 15*)

Our dominion over Satan, sin, and death in this age is presented clearly in Romans. In chapter 5 Paul speaks of reigning in life and by grace in the context of being delivered from the satanic tyranny of sin and death in the present age (vv. 10, 12-21). In 6:12 and 14 Paul underlines the need for us to conquer sin, charging us not to let sin reign in our mortal body nor to let sin lord it over them. In 8:2 Paul testifies that the law of the Spirit of life has freed (not will free) him from the law of sin and of death. In 14:17 Paul proclaims that the kingdom of God, the authority of God, into which we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan, the authority of Satan, is (not will be) righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Col. 1:13; Acts 26:18). Since we have been regenerated with the reigning life of the Triune God, instead of relegating our reign to eternity future, we can and must triumph in His life over Satan as sin and death in the present age.

Being Identified with Christ in His Death and Resurrection

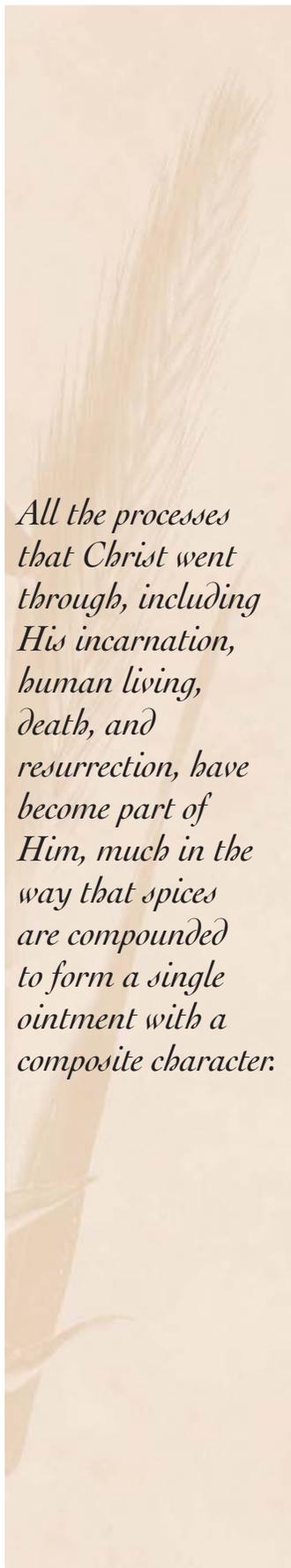
According to Romans 5:17, the believers reign over Satan as sin and death not only “in life” and by “the abundance of grace” but also “through the One, Jesus Christ.” This indicates that we do not exercise authority over God’s enemy through ourselves but only through our union with Christ, who is both grace and life. Paul develops this thought in Romans 6, which unveils that we can conquer sin and death because, through our incorporation into Christ, we are organically identified with Him in His death and resurrection. Immediately after pointing out that we should not live in sin since we have died to sin (vv. 1-2), Paul indicates that our continuing in sin stems from our ignorance of the truth that we as believers “have been baptized into Christ Jesus” and thus “into His death” (v. 3). In his commentary on this verse in *The New Testament for English Readers*, Henry Alford notes that being baptized into Christ should be understood as being baptized “into participation of” or “into union with” Him (886). Here Paul’s expression *into Christ* implies the mystical union with Him that we enjoy as the result of being incorporated into Him. Baptism into Christ is not a ritual but a spiritual reality; the practice of baptism is a visible testimony of the invisible fact that by believing into Christ we have been immersed into Him and grafted into Him (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 11:17). In 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47 Paul refers to Adam as the first man, the first Adam, and to Christ as the second man and the last Adam. The fact that Christ is the second man and the last Adam implies that Christ is the last man; there is no third man. Therefore, in the sight of God, there are only two men in the universe: Adam and

Christ. In our natural birth we were born in Adam, but by believing and being baptized into Christ, we were transferred out of Adam into Christ and thus were identified with Him in a union of life. Paul affirms our union with Christ in Romans 7:4 when he speaks of our being “joined” to “Him who has been raised from the dead.” Even though in Adam we were under the tyranny of sin and death; in Christ, that is, in our life union with Christ, we can reign in life over Satan as sin and death.

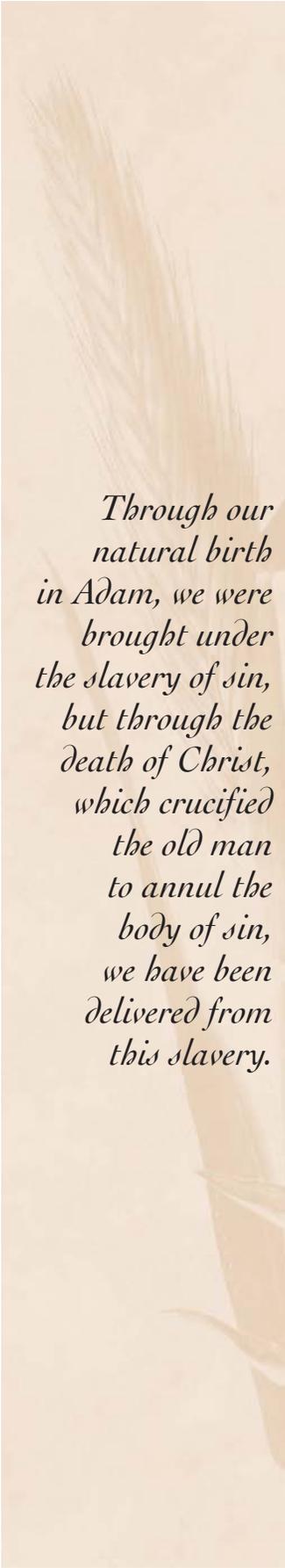
The Christ into whom we have been incorporated through faith and baptism is the crucified and resurrected One, who overcame sin and death. In Romans 6:3 Paul says that the believers who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death. The death of Christ, which terminated every negative thing in the universe, including Satan, sin, the old man, the flesh, and the world, cannot be separated from the person of Christ (Heb. 2:14; John 1:29; Rom. 6:5; Gal. 5:24; 6:14). Just as we are the totality of everything that we have experienced in our human life, Christ today includes all the processes that He underwent. This is because all the processes that Christ went through, including His incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, have become part of Him, much in the way that various spices are compounded to form a single ointment with a composite character (cf. Exo. 30:23-25). Today the resurrected Christ possesses the element of His God-expressing human living, the element of His all-terminating death, and the element of His life-giving resurrection (1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:45b). To be baptized into such an all-inclusive Christ is to be baptized into His all-resolving death, thereby becoming identified with Him in His death, which “has separated us from the world and the satanic power of darkness and has terminated our natural life, our old nature, our self, our flesh, and even our entire history” (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 6:3, note 3). By being incorporated into Christ and participating in His effective death, we can conquer Satan, sin, the flesh, and the world.

In Romans 6:4-5 Paul expands upon this notion by revealing the believers’ joint death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. In verse 4 Paul says that we have been buried with Christ through baptism into His death and have been resurrected just as He was so that we might walk in newness of life. In verse 5 Paul says that “if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection.” In his *Commentary on Romans*, Frederic Louis Godet suggests that the growth spoken of in verse 5 implies the thought of grafting. He translates this verse as follows: “For if we have become one and the same plant [with Him] through the likeness of His death, we shall be also partakers of His resurrection” (242). In Godet’s view, the Greek word translated “grown” denotes “the organic union in virtue of which one being shares the life, growth, and phases of existence belonging to another” (243). By virtue of the union of life between two trees accomplished by grafting, one tree partakes of the life and characteristics of the other. This indicates that by faith and baptism we have been grafted into Christ; we are organically united with Him and may partake of His life and characteristics (11:24): “In the organic union with Christ, whatever Christ passed through has become our history. His death and resurrection are now ours because we are in Him and are organically joined to Him” (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 6:5, note 1). In Romans 6:5 *the likeness of His death* and *the likeness of His resurrection* correspond, respectively, to *baptized into His death* and *newness of life* in verses 3 and 4; furthermore, *walk in newness of life* in verse 4 corresponds to *reign in life* in 5:17. God in Christ condemned sin in the flesh through His death, and Christ nullified death through His devil-destroying death and death-swallowing resurrection (Rom. 8:3; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:42-43). Through our organic union with the crucified, buried, and resurrected Christ, we may grow together with Him in the likeness of His sin-condemning death and His death-nullifying resurrection so that we may walk in newness of life, reigning in life over Satan as sin and death.

In Romans 6:6-13 Paul explores the implication of the believers’ identification with Christ in His death and resurrection as it relates to their victory over sin and death. In



All the processes that Christ went through, including His incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, have become part of Him, much in the way that spices are compounded to form a single ointment with a composite character.



Through our natural birth in Adam, we were brought under the slavery of sin, but through the death of Christ, which crucified the old man to annul the body of sin, we have been delivered from this slavery.

verse 6 Paul further considers the significance of being baptized into Christ's terminating death: "Knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves." *Our old man* refers to the natural life of fallen humankind, and *the body of sin* refers to the body indwelt and enslaved by sin, "the sinning instrument utilized by the old man to express himself by committing sins" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 6, note 4). The death of Christ as the last Adam, the final member of the adamic race, terminated the old man, thereby releasing the body of sin from the yoke of its former master and rendering this body of no effect. Thus, having been freed from sin, we are no longer under the bondage of sin to serve sin as slaves (v. 18). Through our natural birth in Adam, we were brought under the slavery of sin, but through the death of Christ, which crucified the old man to annul the body of sin, we have been delivered from this slavery. For this reason, a believer "who has died" together with Christ "is justified from sin" (v. 7); he is cleared, discharged, and freed from "both the nature of sin with its power and its pain, and the sinful acts with their history and their judgment" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 7, note 1). In other words, having died with Christ and having been justified from sin, a believer is "no longer indebted to sin or obligated to it" (Lee, *Conclusion* 1616).

In Romans 6:8-11 Paul relates Christ's death and resurrection to the believers' reigning over sin and death. In verse 8 Paul reiterates the believers' life union with Christ in His death and resurrection: "Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him." In verses 9 and 10 Paul says, "Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more; death lords it over Him no more. For the death which He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life which He lives, He lives to God." The crucified Christ with whom we have died has died to sin. Further, the resurrected Christ with whom we may live dies no more and lives to God. After Christ entered into death, death did its utmost to detain Him but to no avail. Death could not hold Him, for He as the indestructible resurrection life rose from the dead, thereby conquering death (Acts 2:24; 10:40-41). Thus, death lords it over the risen Christ no more. In Revelation 1:18, as "the living One," He testifies of His everlasting triumph over death: "I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades." In our organic union with Christ who died to sin, conquered death, and now lives to God, we are free from the dominion of sin and death.

After unveiling the truth that we, the believers, are organically joined to the Christ who died to sin and lives to God, Paul charges us to reckon ourselves to be "dead to sin, but living to God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:11). Here reckoning is not a psychological exercise based on a mental understanding of biblical doctrine; it is an act of faith produced by a realization of the divine revelation in the Holy Word under the Spirit's illumination. In other words, reckoning refers to a spontaneous consideration by faith that issues from seeing with the enlightened eyes of our heart the divinely revealed facts concerning our joint crucifixion and resurrection with Christ (Eph. 1:17-18). We are in a life union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and just as Christ died to sin and lives to God, we should consider ourselves dead to sin and living to God in Christ. After presenting the truth concerning our identification with Christ in His death and resurrection and after enjoining us to reckon ourselves dead to sin and living to God according to these truths, Paul exhorts us to no longer present ourselves and our members as "weapons of unrighteousness to sin" but to present ourselves to God as alive from the dead and our members as "weapons of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13). In the war between God as righteousness and Satan as unrighteousness, instead of presenting our members as slaves unto uncleanness and lawlessness, we should present our members as slaves to God as righteousness (vv. 14, 18-19, 22). As a consequence of such a reckoning and such a consecration, "sin will not lord it over" us, for we are under God in Christ as grace, having been "freed from sin" and "enslaved to God" (vv. 14, 22).

According to Romans 6:11, the reality of being dead to sin but living to God is experienced

only “in Christ Jesus,” in the sphere of our organic union with Christ. Christ died to sin but lives to God; Christ dies no more, and death lords it over Him no more (vv. 9-10). Thus, it is in Christ that we have died to sin but live to God, and it is in Christ that we die no more and that death lords it over us no more (v. 11). For this reason, Andrew Murray asserts that the blessings concomitant with Christ’s death and resurrection are ours “only as we are and abide IN CHRIST JESUS” (*Like* 173):

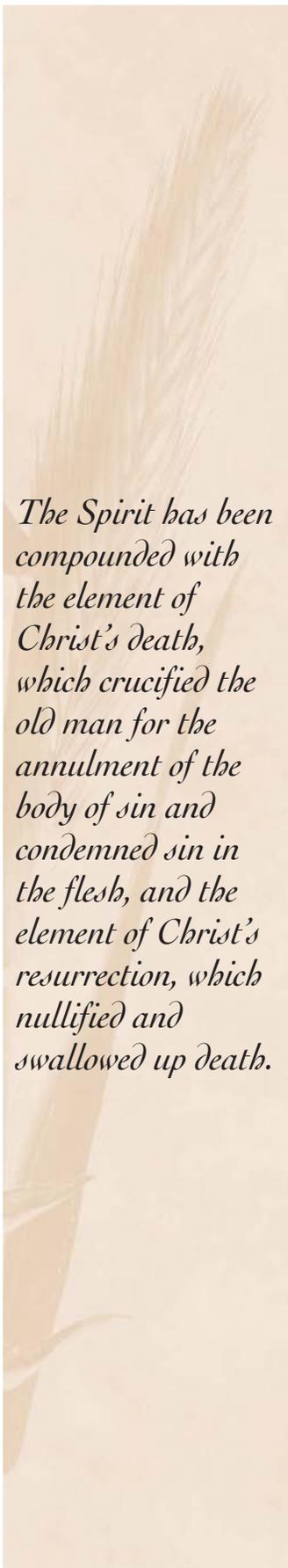
The death unto sin, the life unto God, are His (see ver. 10), are IN HIM, accomplished, living, actual, mighty realities; it is as we are IN HIM, and know ourselves to be in Him, and so come away out of ourselves to be and abide in Him only and always, that the blessings which there are in Him will, in the most simple and natural way possible, spontaneously become ours in experience, and that we shall be strengthened in faith to claim and enjoy them. (171)

In order to participate in Christ’s transcendent victory over sin and death, we first need to see by revelation and substantiate by faith the eternally established truth that we are in Christ Jesus, and then we must abide in Christ and thereby remain in constant contact with Him (1 Cor. 1:30; John 15:5). Apart from abiding in Christ, no matter how desperately we endeavor to reckon ourselves dead to sin and living to God or how ardently we attempt to present our members to God, such undertakings will not enable us to rule over sin and death. It is only by abiding in Christ that we may enjoy Christ in His sin-condemning crucifixion and His death-conquering resurrection and thus reign over Satan as sin and death.

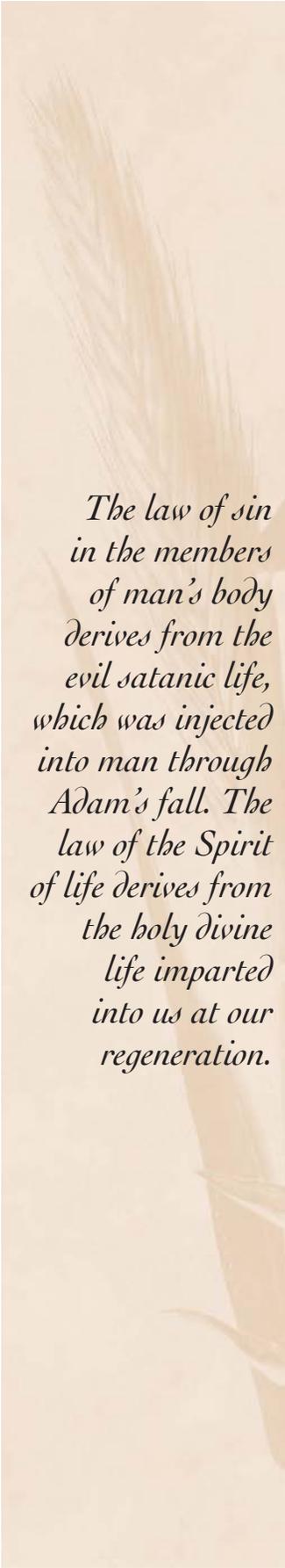
The Law of the Spirit of Life Freeing the Believers from the Law of Sin and of Death

In Romans the revelation concerning our exercise of authority over God’s enemy in our Christian life is crystallized in Paul’s triumphant declaration in Romans 8:2: “The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death.” Romans 5 unveils that our participation in abundant grace and the divine life enables us to rule over Satan as sin and death. Given Paul’s emphasis in chapters 5 and 6 on grace as the principal provision by which we rule over sin and death, we might expect Paul to state in 8:2 that the law of the *grace* of life has freed him from the law of sin and of death. However, Paul declares that the law of the *Spirit* of life has freed him. This indicates that in Paul’s view the grace of life is nothing less than the Spirit of life. The Spirit, whose distinct function in the economical Trinity is to guide the believers into all the divine reality, is at once “the Spirit of life” and “the Spirit of grace,” thus making Christ as life and grace real to us (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Heb. 10:29). Since both life and grace are attributes of the Spirit, the way to overcome sin and death in the divine life and by the abundance of grace is by partaking of the bountiful supply of the Spirit (Phil. 1:19).

The Spirit of life who releases us from the law of sin and of death is revealed in Romans 8 as the Spirit of Christ, the realization of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ (vv. 3, 11), with whom we are identified to conquer sin and death as shown in chapter 6. The Spirit has been compounded with both the element of Christ’s death, which crucified the old man for the annulment of the body of sin and condemned sin in the flesh, and the element of Christ’s resurrection, which nullified and swallowed up death. In verse 13 Paul exhorts us to put to death by the Spirit the practices of the body, that is, to allow the Spirit to apply Christ’s effective death to these practices, so that we may live and thus enjoy the riches of Christ as life. In verse 11 Paul says that the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us and that the God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to our mortal bodies through His indwelling Spirit. Thus, our bodies may receive the supply of resurrection life and be sustained by this life, which swallows up the element of death in our bodies. Our joint death and resurrection with Christ, which enable us to rule over sin and death,



The Spirit has been compounded with the element of Christ’s death, which crucified the old man for the annulment of the body of sin and condemned sin in the flesh, and the element of Christ’s resurrection, which nullified and swallowed up death.



The law of sin in the members of man's body derives from the evil satanic life, which was injected into man through Adam's fall. The law of the Spirit of life derives from the holy divine life imparted into us at our regeneration.

are realized only in the Spirit. Apart from living in the Spirit, we cannot experience the historically accomplished fact of being crucified and resurrected with Christ. It is only by contacting the Spirit that we can genuinely experience the co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Christ, which enable us to exercise dominion over Satan as sin and death (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5).

Romans 5 and 6 unveil that we are delivered from the dominion of sin and death through our organic union with Christ. Similarly, Romans 8:2 indicates that we are liberated from sin and death in Christ Jesus, that is, through our union with Him in the divine life. Since the Spirit is the reality of Christ, our organic union with Christ is practically realized by the Spirit of life who is joined to our regenerated human spirit to form a mingled spirit (vv. 4, 16; 1 Cor. 6:17). In Paul's mind those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1) are those who are in their mingled spirit, their human spirit born of and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (v. 9; John 3:6). In the same breath Paul speaks both of Christ being in us and of the Spirit of God dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9-10), for it is the Spirit who makes Christ real within us. Hence, to abide in Christ is, in actuality, to walk according to the mingled spirit (v. 4). Likewise, to reign in life over sin and death (5:17) by walking in newness of life (6:4) is to walk according to the mingled spirit (8:4). Therefore, our triumph over sin and death is dependent upon our walking according to the mingled spirit, our human spirit mingled with the Spirit of life, who frees us from the bonds of sin and death.

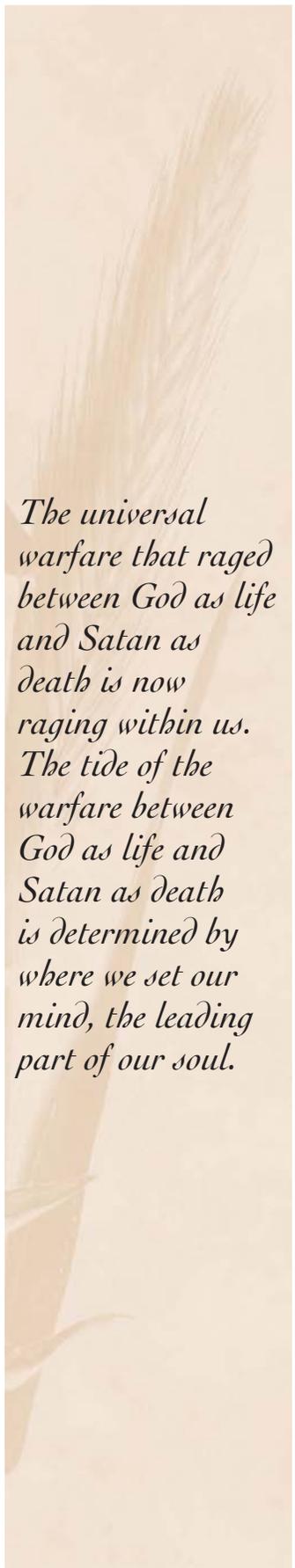
In Romans 7 and 8 Paul provides a personal account of his fruitless effort to keep the written law of God and his subsequent discovery of three subjective laws within him: the law of sin and of death, the law of the mind, and the law of the Spirit of life. As "a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees," a member of a sect known for its devotion to the law of Moses, and as one who advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in his race (Acts 23:6; Gal. 1:14), Paul fervently endeavored to keep the Mosaic law in order to please God (Rom. 7:22). While thus engaged, he became aware of two subjective laws at war within him: (1) the law of his mind, which responded to the law of God by trying to fulfill its demands and do good; and (2) the law of sin in his members, which fought against and eventually defeated the law of the mind, making him a captive to the law of sin (v. 23-25). Under captivity to the law of sin, Paul cried out in despair at the futility of his effort to free himself from this law and sought an Emancipator who could rescue him from the body of death: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Under the Spirit's enlightenment, however, he discovered the Emancipator, and his anguished sigh of hopelessness became a jubilant pronouncement of deliverance: "Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25). Paul's deliverance from the law of sin and of death was through none other than Jesus Christ, who operated in him as the law of the Spirit of life.

In order to echo Paul's declaration of emancipation, we, like Paul, must first understand the nature of these three laws: the law of good, the law of sin and of death, and the law of the Spirit of life. Unlike the law of God in the Old Testament, these laws are not a series of commandments inscribed on tablets of stone. Rather, Paul uses the word *law* in the sense of a natural principle, inherent power, and spontaneous function belonging to a certain life. Moreover, each of these laws corresponds to a person (vv. 23, 25; 8:2). The law of good in the mind of man's soul derives from the natural human life bestowed at God's creation and refers to the natural man in his soul. The law of sin in the members of man's body derives from the evil satanic life, which was injected into man through Adam's fall, and refers to Satan in man's fallen body. The law of the Spirit of life derives from the holy divine life imparted into us at our regeneration and refers to Christ as the Spirit in our regenerated spirit. Thus, every regenerated believer is host to two other parties who operate in him as two competing laws: "Both Satan and God, after entering into our being and dwelling in us, work within us not by outward, objective activities but by an inward, subjective law" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 2, note 1).

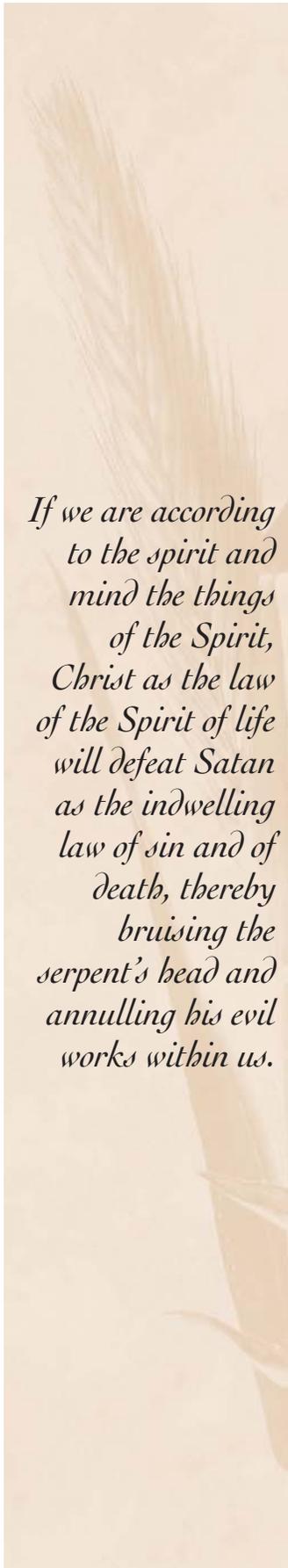
Satan as the law of sin and of death in our members defeats and subdues the natural man in our soul, thereby causing us to commit sins and bringing us into spiritual death. Although Satan is the “strong man,” the Lord Jesus as the Son of God is “stronger” than he and thus “overcomes him” for us (Luke 11:21-22); “greater is He who is in [us],” the indwelling Christ, than “he who is in the world,” Satan (1 John 4:4). As “God over all, blessed forever,” the Lord is “God the Most High” and “God the Almighty” (Rom. 9:5; Gen. 14:20; Rev. 19:15). He has the highest and most powerful life in the universe, and the law of His life is the highest and most powerful law. Hence, the Lord as the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit transcends, overpowers, and nullifies Satan as the law of sin and of death in our members.

Every believer has the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life in his regenerated spirit and Satan as the law of sin and of death in his corrupted body. These laws correspond, respectively, to the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (the tree of death) in Genesis 2:9, recreating the scene of the garden of Eden within each believer. In Genesis both the tree of life and the tree of death were outside of man. However, through Adam’s transgression, Satan as the tree of death has been mixed with our flesh, and through our regeneration, God in Christ as the tree of life has been mingled with our spirit. Hence, the universal warfare that raged between God as life and Satan as death in the garden of Eden is now raging within us. Just as Adam had a free will to choose between the two trees, the tree of life and the tree of death, we have a free will to choose between the two laws, the law of life and the law of death. The choice that confronted Adam in the garden of Eden between God in Christ as the tree of life and Satan as the tree of death now confronts every believer. The current tide of the universal warfare between God as life and Satan as death is determined by where we set our mind, the leading part of our soul. For this reason, shortly after speaking of the law of the Spirit of life overcoming the law of sin and of death in Romans 8:2, Paul states in verses 6 and 7 that “the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace” and that “the mind set on the flesh is enmity against God.” If we set our mind on the flesh and live in the flesh, we cede ground to Satan, but if we set our mind on the spirit and live in the spirit, we give God the ground and hasten His ultimate victory. In verse 13 of the same chapter Paul echoes this notion: “If you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.” If we live according to the flesh, we will experience the working of Satan as the law of sin and of death and thus suffer spiritual death, but if we live according to the spirit, crucifying the deeds of the body by the indwelling Spirit, we will enjoy the working of the Triune God as the law of the Spirit of life and thus participate in Christ as life. If we would exchange our pitiful cry of defeat under the operation of the law of sin and of death for a joyful song of triumph under the operation of the law of the Spirit of life, we must walk according to the spirit, the dwelling place of God in Christ as the Spirit, and not according to the flesh, the residence of Satan as sin and death (v. 4).

Since our mingled spirit is the habitation of the Triune God, who is the law of the Spirit of life, our mingled spirit is the unique realm in which we overcome Satan, who is the law of sin and of death, and tread him underfoot (Luke 10:19). First John 5:4 ties our divine birth through regeneration to our overcoming of the world, saying, “Everything that has been begotten of God overcomes the world.” It is significant that this verse does not speak of “everyone” but “everything.” This thought is clarified in John 3:6, which speaks concerning our rebirth: “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” In view of this verse, strictly speaking, that which is begotten of God in 1 John 5:4 refers not to a regenerated believer in a general sense; instead, it refers specifically to the mingled spirit of the regenerated believer. This is confirmed by 1 John 5:18, which says, “Everyone who is begotten of God does not sin, but he who has been begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one does not touch him.” In light of verse 4, both he who has been begotten of God and the one whom the evil one does not touch refer



The universal warfare that raged between God as life and Satan as death is now raging within us. The tide of the warfare between God as life and Satan as death is determined by where we set our mind, the leading part of our soul.



If we are according to the spirit and mind the things of the Spirit, Christ as the law of the Spirit of life will defeat Satan as the indwelling law of sin and of death, thereby bruising the serpent's head and annulling his evil works within us.

to a regenerated believer whose spirit is born of the Spirit of God and who overcomes the world. When we live in our mingled spirit, the evil one cannot touch us. After the serpent deceived Adam and Eve to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God judged the serpent by cursing him to creep on his stomach and eat dust all the days of his life, thereby limiting the sphere of his move to the earth and his diet to the earthly things (Gen. 3:14). If we live in our flesh, we will remain on the earth in the serpent's company, thus becoming dust as food for him to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). But if we live in the high tower of our mingled spirit (cf. Prov. 18:10), we will experience an organic union with the ascended Christ, who passed through and is even higher than the heavens (Heb. 4:14; 7:26). In our regenerated spirit we enjoy the reality of living transcendentally in the highest position in the universe, seated in the third heaven with the ascended Christ, far above all rule and authority and power and lordship, which refers primarily to God's enemies, including Satan and his spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:2; 1:20-21; 6:10-12). God subjected all things, including Satan, under the feet of the ascended Christ (1:22). Because we are joined in our spirit to Christ in His all-transcending ascension, Satan is under our feet when we live in our spirit, and we rule over him, trampling him underfoot (Rom. 16:20).

The experience of Christ as the law of the Spirit of life in our mingled spirit subduing Satan as the law of sin and of death in our flesh is the answer to Charles Wesley's insightful appeal in his renowned hymn "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," in which he calls for Christ as "the woman's conqu'ring seed" to "bruise in us the serpent's head," "Adam's likeness now efface," and "stamp" His own "image in its place" (*Hymns*, #84). On the one hand, the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent was objectively fulfilled when the incarnated Christ as the seed of the woman destroyed the devil through His death on the cross, simultaneously judging and casting him out as the ruler of this world (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14; John 12:31; 16:11). On the other hand, this prophecy is being fulfilled in us subjectively when Christ as the law of the Spirit of life in our spirit conquers Satan as the law of sin and of death in our flesh. We need to subjectively experience this fact in our daily life. When we set our mind on our mingled spirit, the indwelling Spirit of reality turns the objective fact of Christ's destruction of Satan and his works on the cross into our subjective experience (John 16:13; cf. Rom. 8:13). First John 3:8 says, "The Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." In this verse *the works of the devil* refers not only to his outward, objective works in the environment to tempt and damage us but also to his inward, subjective operation within us as the law of sin and of death. In order to undo the works of the devil in the latter category, Christ as the Son of God not only died on the cross to take away the sin of the world but also resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit in order to enter into us, where He now operates as the law of the Spirit of life to overcome the law of sin and of death (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 15:45b). If we are those who are according to the spirit and mind the things of the Spirit, Christ as the law of the Spirit of life will defeat Satan as the indwelling law of sin and of death, thereby bruising the serpent's head and annulling his evil works within us (Rom. 8:5).

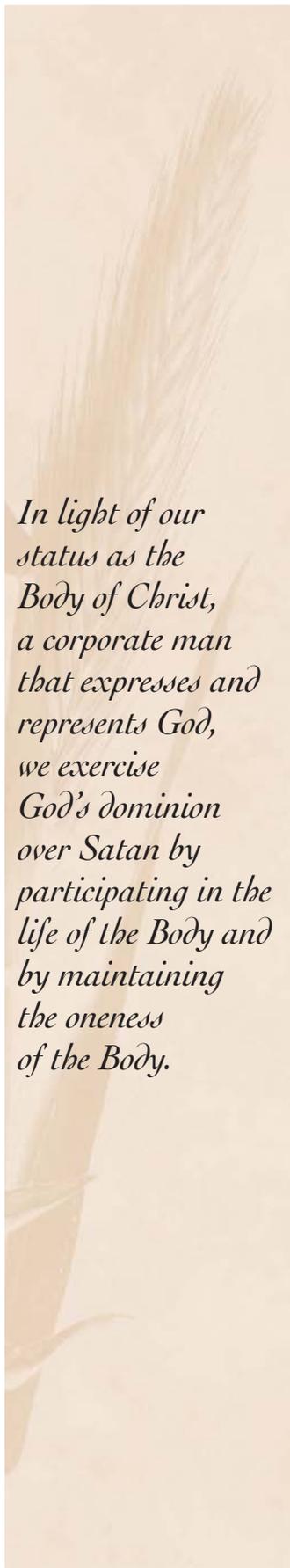
The law of the Spirit of life fulfills God's purpose as presented in Genesis 1:26. As this law, Christ, the One anointed and appointed to carry out the divine economy, fulfills God's original intention for a corporate man to have God's image and dominion, that is, to express Him and represent Him. Romans 8 reveals that Christ as the law of the Spirit of life not only conquers Satan as the law of sin and of death, thus exercising God's dominion over His enemy, but also gradually and progressively dispenses the divine life into our spirit, soul, and body, conforming us to the image of God's firstborn Son and thus producing God's enlarged expression in His many sons (vv. 6, 10-11, 29). When an organism undergoes the process of growth, the law of the life within it spontaneously functions to shape it into its characteristic form. Likewise, as the divine life grows within us, the law of this life works to organically shape us into the image of the

Firstborn, removing every vestige of the fallen adamic life and likeness, saturating every part of our tripartite being with the life of the glorified Christ, and making us His corporate reproduction. At our regeneration Christ as the life-giving Spirit was sown into our spirit as the seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15 for the destruction of Satan in our being, as well as the incorruptible seed mentioned in 1 Peter 1:23 for the impartation of God's life into us. By walking according to our mingled spirit, we allow Christ as the seed of the divine life to grow within our heart and give the law of the Spirit of life free reign to operate in us. This effaces Adam's likeness and stamps Christ's image into our entire being. Through the operation of the law of life within us, we will become mature sons of God and living members of the Body of Christ, who are not only His fullness for His expression but also His kingdom for His representation (Rom. 12:4-5; 14:17; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19).

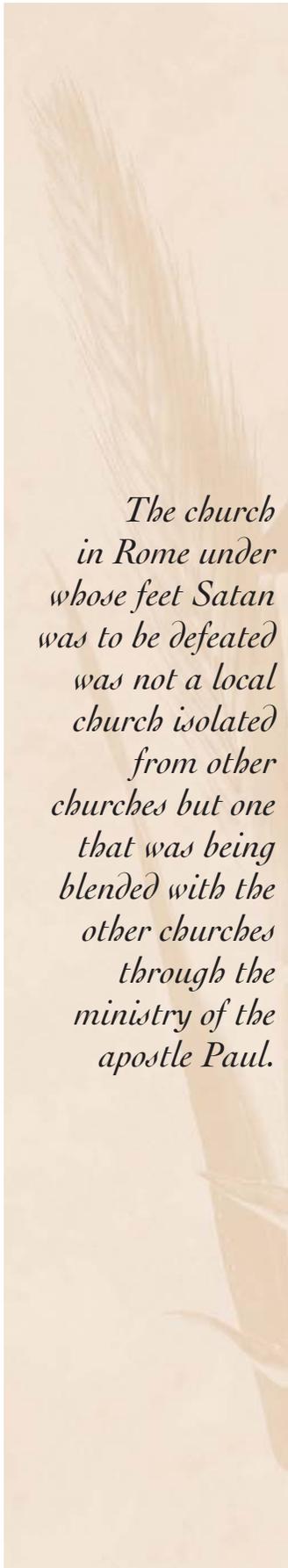
The Corporate Dimension of the Believers' Reign over Satan

Romans 5 through 8 reveals mainly the believers' application of God's authority in conquering Satan as sin and death in our individual Christian life. Nevertheless, these chapters also indicate that our exercise of God's dominion over His enemy is not exclusively personal; it is also corporate. According to 5:17, it is not *he* but *those* who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness who reign in life over sin and death. In Romans 6 Paul repeatedly uses the plural pronouns *we*, *us*, and *our* in speaking of our union with the crucified and resurrected Christ, highlighting the corporate nature of our freedom from the tyranny of sin and death: "All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death"; "if we have grown together with Him in the likeness of His death, indeed we will also be in the likeness of His resurrection"; and "our old man has been crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be annulled, that we should no longer serve sin as slaves" (vv. 3, 5-6). Although in 8:2 Paul testifies concerning his experience of the law of the Spirit of life from a personal perspective, he inserts this testimony in a group of verses directed at the believers in general—"those who are in Christ Jesus," "us, who...walk according to the spirit," and "those who are according to the spirit" (vv. 1, 4-5, emphasis added). This indicates that Paul's experience is not an exception but an example of the normal experience shared by believers who abide in Christ by walking according to their mingled spirit. Paul's consistent portrayal of the believers' reign over Satan as sin and death as a corporate experience is in accord with his momentous declaration in Romans 12:5, which explicitly refers to us as members of Christ's unique Body—the first such mention in the New Testament: "We who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another." In light of our status as the Body of Christ, a corporate man that expresses and represents God, Romans 12—16 unveils that we exercise God's dominion over Satan by participating in the life of the Body and by maintaining the oneness of the Body.

Given Paul's focus on the practical living of the Body of Christ in these chapters, we should note the pivotal role of the Body as the means to fulfill Paul's promise in 16:20: "Now the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly." The Greek word translated "your" in this verse is plural, not singular, implying that God will crush Satan not under the feet of an individual believer but under the feet of the corporate Body of Christ, which in this Epistle is represented practically by the believers in Rome. Regrettably, many Christians are unwittingly preoccupied with signs, wonders, and miracles as the primary weapons in the spiritual warfare against Satan and do not realize that this warfare is waged and won not by independent and individualistic believers but by those who are built with one another as fellow members of the Body. According to Matthew 16:18, the gates of Hades, referring to Satan's power of death, will not prevail against the church of Christ, the Body of Christ, which is built by and with Christ as the indestructible divine life. Satan may prevail against isolated believers, those who are not built up in the church, but he can never defeat the church as the Body built up



In light of our status as the Body of Christ, a corporate man that expresses and represents God, we exercise God's dominion over Satan by participating in the life of the Body and by maintaining the oneness of the Body.



*The church
in Rome under
whose feet Satan
was to be defeated
was not a local
church isolated
from other
churches but one
that was being
blended with the
other churches
through the
ministry of the
apostle Paul.*

with Christ as life. By being built up as the church, the Body of Christ, we afford God the opportunity to crush Satan under our feet.

God subdues Satan by means of the Body of Christ by virtue of the organic union in life between Christ and His believers. In Romans 12:5 Paul speaks of “one Body in Christ,” revealing the Body of Christ in a universal sense as an organic entity that exists in a union of life with Christ. Peter W. Macky affirms this point, stating that in Paul’s mind, the feet of the believers in Romans 16:20 should be understood as Christ’s own feet, given the incorporation of Christ as the Head and the believers as the Body. In Macky’s view, since Paul indicates in Romans 12:5 that we are “identified with” and “incorporated in” Christ as His Body, the Christ through whom God conquers Satan “embodies in himself all believers” (126). In other words, while the conquest of Satan “will be God’s doing through Christ,” “all believers, as members of his body” will be “taking part in that event” (128). God’s intention in giving man dominion is fulfilled by the corporate Christ, which is composed of Christ as the Head united in life with the church as the Body.

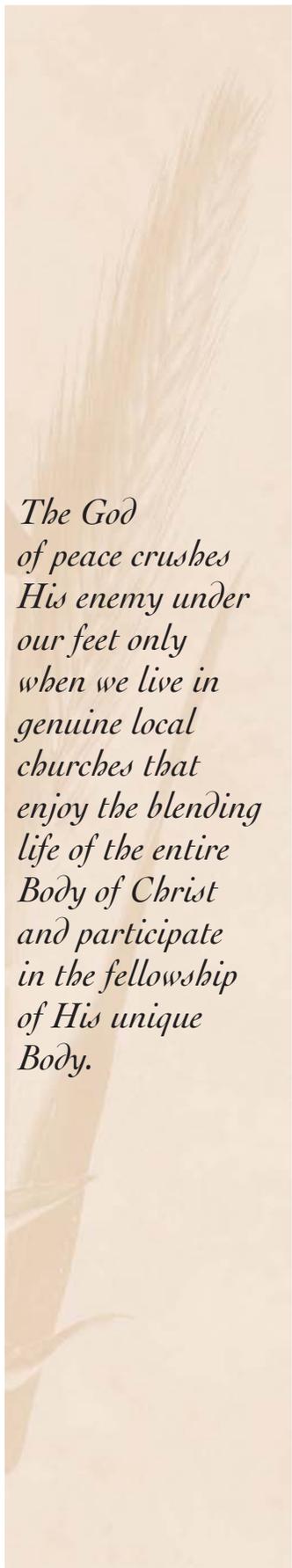
Although Macky commendably states that “the body of Christ will crush” Satan underfoot (126), his commentary falls short by failing to mention that, according to the gospel of God in Romans, the genuine life of the Body is realized in local churches. In Romans 16 Paul repeatedly uses both the expressions *the church* and *the churches*, implying that the unique Body of Christ, the universal church of God, is expressed as local churches in distinct localities on earth. In this chapter Paul mentions “the church which is in Cenchrea,” a local church as the expression of the one Body in the city of Cenchrea, and he speaks of “all the churches of Christ” and “all the churches of the Gentiles,” both of which refer to collections of individual local churches (vv. 1, 16, 4). Similarly, from Paul’s salutations in this chapter, we learn that the church in Rome met specifically in the house of Prisca and Aquila and that the church in Corinth met in the house of Gaius (vv. 3, 23). Since Paul addresses this Epistle to all the saints in Rome (1:7), *your feet* in 16:20 specifically refers to the feet of the believers who met as the church in Rome, a local expression of the unique Body (v. 5). This means that Satan is crushed under the feet of the local churches as the practical expressions of the mystical Body of Christ.

Consistent with the fact that God subdues Satan by means of the built-up Body of Christ, the church in Rome under whose feet Satan was to be defeated was not a local church isolated from other churches but one that was being blended with the other churches through the ministry of the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 12:24). Through the recommendations and greetings of the saints in these churches, which speak “not only of the concern among the saints but also of the fellowship among the churches” (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 16:1, note 1). Paul deliberately brought the local churches into the fellowship of the unique Body of Christ. Displaying his considerable familiarity, tender affection, and high esteem for each of the saints who coordinated with him in his labor for the churches, Paul commends and greets twenty-seven saints one by one, including his fellow workers in Christ Jesus, his beloved in the Lord, his fellow prisoners who were his fellow apostles, and a brother’s mother. The apostle endeavored to blend the saints together on several levels. First, he blended the saints within the church in Rome by exhorting them to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (v. 16). Next, Paul blended the church in Rome with another local church, the church in Cenchrea, by commending a deaconess of the church in Cenchrea to the saints in Rome, informing them of her service for many saints and asking them to receive her as a noble saint and assist her on any occasion of need (vv. 1-2). Further, as “an apostle of the Gentiles” (11:13), Paul blended the church in Rome with the churches of the Gentiles by acknowledging in verses 3 and 4 that “all the churches of the Gentiles” were grateful to Prisca and Aquila for their willingness to risk their necks for the apostle and for the churches. Ultimately, in verse 16 he greets the church in Rome on behalf of “all the churches of Christ,” thereby blending the church in Rome with all the local churches

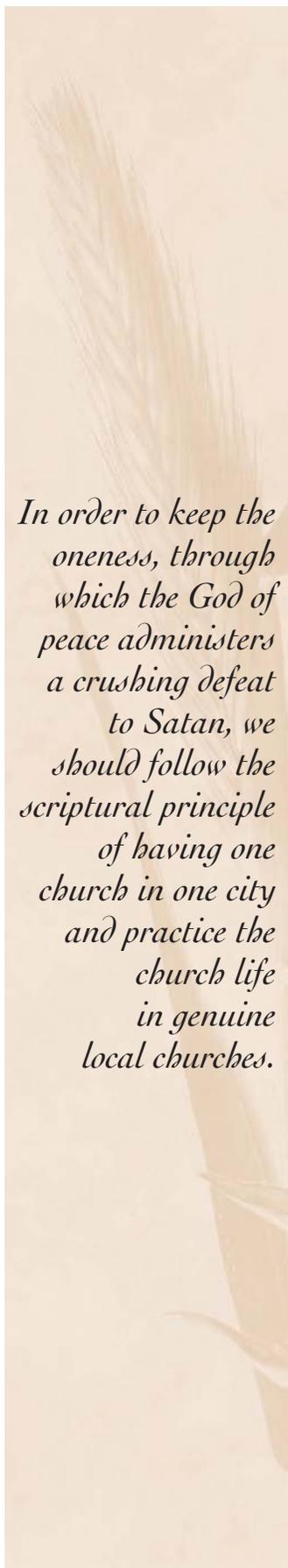
on earth and affirming the reality of the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ among all the churches. In verses 21 through 23 Paul greets the church in Rome on behalf of a number of saints who were with him in the church in Corinth, once again bringing two particular churches into mutual fellowship. Significantly, Paul's promise concerning the destruction of Satan under our feet appears in the midst of his greetings, which he wrote in order to blend the local churches with one another in the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ and thereby usher them into the reality of the Body. Although in chapters 5 through 8 Paul extensively discusses overcoming sin and death, which are the embodiment and might of Satan, he does not speak directly of defeating Satan until chapter 16, which presents the local churches in the context of the universal Body of Christ. This is because God's enemy is ultimately defeated by the Body of Christ practically expressed in local churches and blended in the universal fellowship of the Body. In other words, the God of peace crushes His enemy under our feet only when we live in genuine local churches that enjoy the blending life of the entire Body of Christ and participate in the fellowship of His unique Body.

The blending of the churches in the fellowship of the Body of Christ is indispensable to the keeping of the oneness of the Body in the uniting bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Hence, we need to consider the significance of Paul's particular reference in Romans 16:20 to the God of peace as the One who crushes Satan under the feet of the believers. In the first eight chapters of Romans, which are primarily concerned with the individual Christian life, peace is revealed mainly as the result of being justified by God out of faith, the issue of the believers' enjoyment of grace, and the result of their setting their mind on the mingled spirit (1:7; 5:1; 8:6). In the last five chapters of this Epistle, which are primarily concerned with the Body life practiced in the proper church life, peace is referred to mainly as a characteristic of the relationship among the members of the Body of Christ and is related to maintaining the oneness of the Body of Christ. In these chapters Paul exhorts us to live in peace, as far as it depends on us, with all men (including all the fellow believers), to "pursue the things of peace and the things for building up one another," and to serve Christ in the kingdom of God (the Body of Christ), which is defined in terms of peace among the believers (12:19; 14:17-19). This indicates that in Paul's understanding, *peace* in 16:20 refers to Christ as "our peace" in Ephesians 2:14—the peace made by Christ on the cross through which the Jewish and Gentile believers were created into one new man and reconciled in one Body to God (vv. 15-17). Christ as the peace between the believing Jews and Gentiles is the oneness of the new man, the Body of Christ. In order for us as the Body of Christ to subdue Satan under our feet, we must allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in our hearts and maintain absolute peace and oneness with one another (Col. 3:15).

Romans reveals that the apostle Paul endeavored to preserve the oneness of the Body of Christ between Jewish and Gentile believers to the end that they would execute God's crushing judgment upon Satan. In 3:29-30 Paul speaks of the God not only "of the Jews" but also "of the Gentiles," the one God who justifies both "the circumcision out of faith" and "the uncircumcision through faith." Similarly, in 10:12-13 Paul refers to Christ as the same "Lord of all," who is "rich to all who call upon Him," irrespective of their distinctions as Jews or Greeks. In order to show that Christ brings together the Jews and the Gentiles into one Body, the apostle states in 15:8-9 that Christ has become not only a servant of the circumcision (the Jews) to confirm the promises that God gave to their fathers but also a servant of the Gentiles so that they may glorify God for His mercy. In the same principle, Paul states in verse 12 that even though Christ is the root of Jesse, who, as the father of David, signifies the Jewish people, He will also be the ruler of the Gentiles and the One on whom the Gentiles will hope. Thus, just as the One who is the Lord of all and the God of both the Jews and the Gentiles has received all the believers, reconciling them to Himself in one Body, we must receive all genuine believers, regardless of their doctrinal concepts or religious practices (Eph. 2:16; Acts 10:36; Rom. 14:3; 15:7). It is only by receiving all the genuine



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believers according to God in Christ that we may demonstrate and keep the oneness of the Body and the peace of the one new man, the corporate man who crushes Satan under his feet.

Paul illustrates the peace that existed between the Jewish and Gentile believers in speaking of the fellowship of love between them in 15:25-27. Under Paul's ministry the Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution to aid the saints in Jerusalem (v. 26). As debtors to the Jewish saints for having shared in their spiritual blessings, the Gentile saints, out of their earnest concern, were pleased to serve the Jewish saints in material things, offering their possessions as an expression of love for the needy saints in Jerusalem (v. 27; cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-8). This genuine fellowship in love and concrete expression of concern are tangible evidence of the peace between the Jewish and Gentile saints, which gives God the ground to crush His enemy under their feet.

In order for us to crush God's enemy underfoot as the Body of Christ, we need to maintain the peace of the one new man, the oneness of the unique Body. The fact that oneness is an essential attribute of the Body of Christ is evidenced by Paul's usage of the phrase *one Body in Christ* in Romans 12:5, which implies that "the Body can only exist and survive in the oneness" (Lee, *Further Consideration* 24). The purpose of the practice of the local churches revealed in Romans, which reflects the consistent pattern in the New Testament of having one church per city, is not merely to facilitate the gathering of believers living within designated areas of geographical proximity; ultimately, it is to preserve the oneness of the Body and prevent division. Since the Body of Christ is one at a universal level, a genuine local expression of this Body must express the unique oneness that characterizes the universal Body of Christ. In order to keep this oneness, through which the God of peace administers a crushing defeat to Satan, we should follow the scripturally ordained principle of having one church in one city and practice the church life in genuine local churches.

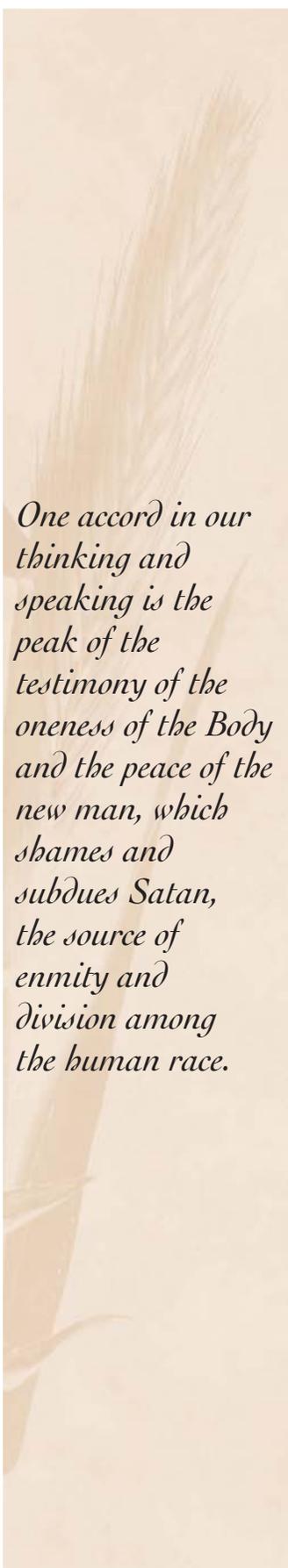
Given the vital importance of maintaining the oneness of the Body of Christ for the defeat of Satan, it is not surprising that shortly before speaking of crushing Satan under the feet of the Body in Romans 16:20, Paul exhorts us to "mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching" which they have learned and to "turn away from them" (v. 17). Many commentators observe a connection between Paul's benediction concerning the destruction of God's enemy by the God of peace in verse 20 and his admonition regarding the divisive persons in verse 17, but they point out only that dealing with dissenters, who are "Satan's instruments" (J. Murray 237) and Satan's "servants and emissaries" (Ford 309), constitutes a precondition for conquering Satan. Most of these commentators come short of pointing out the intrinsic connection between these two verses: that our conquest of Satan depends on the preservation of the oneness of the Body of Christ and that we must not tolerate division, because to do so damages the oneness. If we do not mark and turn away from those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching of God's New Testament economy, we may be infected by the spread of the "germs" of division and thus lose the oneness of the Body, forfeiting our ability to trample Satan underfoot. But if we refuse such divisive ones, we will keep the unique oneness of the Body and thus experience the God of peace crushing Satan under our feet.

In contrast to the division and confusion injected into the Body by the dissenters, Romans 12 through 16 presents a beautiful portrait of the normal Christian life required for the proper church life, in which the believers, who are being transformed by the renewing of their mind through the working of the divine life within them, preserve and display the oneness of the Body (12:2). Since the Body of Christ builds itself up in love, we should love one another warmly in brotherly love, without hypocrisy, owing "nothing to anyone except to love one another" and taking the lead in showing

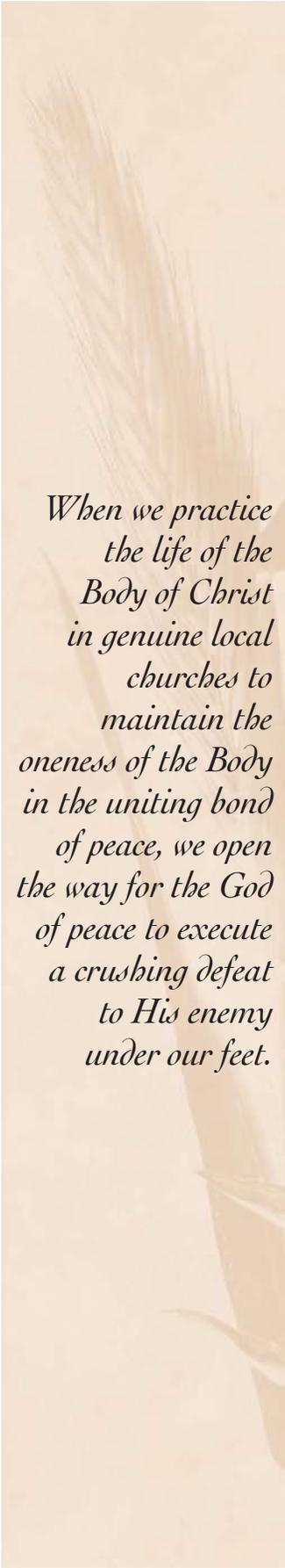
honor to one another (Eph. 4:16; Rom. 12:9-10; 13:8). We should express the genuineness of our love for the saints by contributing to their material needs and pursuing hospitality for their sake (12:13; cf. 1 John 3:17-18). Taking the feeling of the Head of the Body toward His members as our own, we should also rejoice with those who rejoice, instead of envying them, and weep with those who weep and not disdain them (Rom. 12:15; cf. Phil. 1:8). Instead of despising or judging the fellow members of the Body on account of differences in doctrines or practices, we must receive one another according to God in Christ, without bias and to the glory of God, and walk according to love, lest we put a stumbling block or cause of falling before them and thus destroy the ones for whom Christ died or the work of God within them (Rom. 12:10; 14:1, 3, 13, 15, 20). Instead of pleasing ourselves, we should please the fellow believers by bearing their weaknesses in order to help them to be built up in the Body, just as Christ did not please Himself but pleased the Father by bearing the reproaches of men on the Father's behalf (15:1-3). We need to "be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus" so that "with one accord" we may "with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 5-6). We need to be "joined in soul," "think the same thing in the Lord," and "speak the same thing," thereby reversing the long-standing curse of division pronounced at Babel, where God judged the Satan-instigated rebellion of the entire human race by confounding their language and scattering them over the surface of the earth (Phil. 2:2; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:10; Gen. 11:1-9). Such absolute one accord in our thinking and speaking, based on our thorough union with Christ, is the peak of the testimony of the oneness of the Body and the peace of the new man, which shames and subdues Satan, the source of enmity and division among the human race.

Conclusion

Paul's prophecy at the end of the Epistle to the Romans that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet points to the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose to have a corporate man who bears His image to manifest His glory and exercises His dominion to deal with His enemy. The book of Romans reveals that, as the Body of Christ, we are a corporate new man who exercises God's authority over Satan in four aspects. First, although in Adam all fallen human beings suffer under the reign of sin and death, which are, respectively, the embodiment and might of Satan, the believers in Christ may reign in life over Satan as sin and death by the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness. The divine life overcomes sin and death. Since the divine and reigning life of the Triune God that we received at our regeneration crowns us as kings to rule over all things, we need to exercise our divine kingship today by receiving grace in its abundance, that is, by being filled with the riches of Christ as life. Second, we are freed from the dominion of sin and death by being identified with Christ in His effective death, which crucified our old man, thus annulling the body of sin, and His powerful resurrection, which nullified and swallowed up death in victory. We may overcome sin and death because we are organically united with the Christ who died to sin, lives to God, and dies no more and over whom death lords it no more. In order to realize this unshakable fact in our experience, we need to abide in Christ, reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin but living to God and presenting ourselves to God as alive from the dead and our members as weapons of righteousness to God. Third, Christ as the law of the Spirit of life, the innate power and function of the divine life in our regenerated spirit, frees us from the law of sin and of death, the innate power and function of the satanic life in our fallen body. We may enjoy this glorious freedom when we set our mind on and walk according to our mingled spirit—our regenerated human spirit joined to the Spirit of life into whom Christ's sin-condemning death and His death-conquering resurrection have been compounded. Fourth, the God of peace subdues Satan under the feet of the organic Body of Christ expressed as local churches that are blended with one another in the universal fellowship of His Body. When we practice the life of the Body of Christ in genuine local churches to maintain the



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oneness of the unique Body in the uniting bond of peace—loving and honoring one another, receiving one another according to God in Christ, rejecting every form of division, being of the same mind toward one another according to Christ, and glorifying God with one accord and one mouth—we open the way for the God of peace to execute a crushing defeat to His enemy under our feet. May the God of peace hasten the fulfillment of Paul’s promise concerning the destruction of Satan in us as we daily enjoy the superabounding grace of life, remain in the organic union with Christ, walk according to the mingled spirit, and participate in the life of the Body of Christ in the local churches. **AFC**

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