

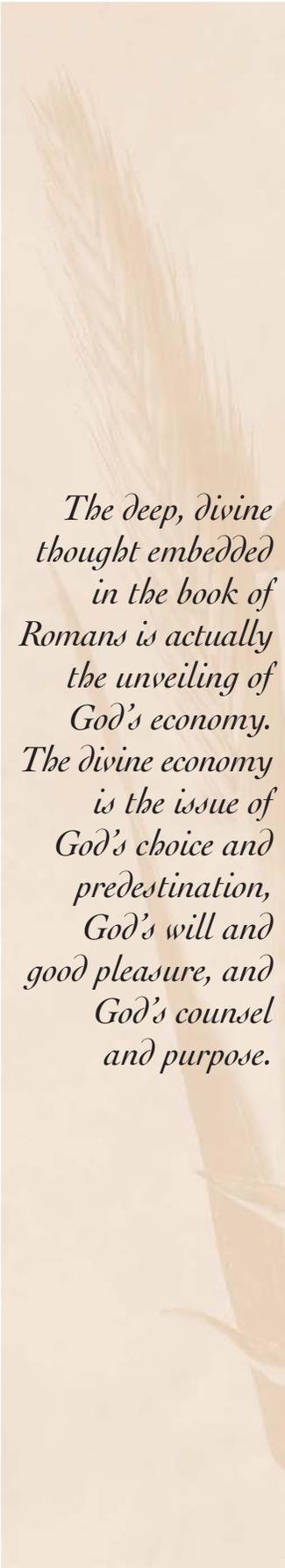
Romans 8— the Focus of the Divine Economy

by Ron Kangas

Woven into the text of Paul's Epistle to the Romans is a deep, divine thought—a thought concerning deification. Here the word *deification* denotes the revealed truth that God in Christ became a human being so that in Christ redeemed human beings may become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead for the eternal, corporate expression of divinity in humanity. This is what accurately may be called the high peak of the divine revelation. If we study the book of Romans in the light of God's will, desire, purpose, and economy unveiled in books such as John, Ephesians, Colossians, and Revelation, we will be able to trace this deep, divine truth, this peak of the divine revelation, in this Epistle.

In Romans we can see the revelation of God becoming a human being, and human beings becoming God in life and nature for the producing and functioning of the Body of Christ as the organism of the Triune God. The deep thought in Romans is that God became a man so that, in God's complete salvation, sinners under the righteous judgment of God may be redeemed, regenerated, sanctified, renewed, transformed, conformed, and glorified to become sons of God, who are the same as God in life and nature, to be the members of the Body of Christ expressed as local churches. God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh so that sinners—serpentine beings, children of the devil—could be redeemed, reconciled to God, and justified by Him through faith in order to receive eternal life and thus become children of God (8:3, 16; John 3:14-15; 1:12-13). God sent His own Son: this is God becoming a human being with the human life and nature. In Romans 1:3-4 we see a particular human being, the incarnated Christ as the Son of Man and a descendant of Abraham, being designated the Son of God in resurrection. This designation is not an assertion that the Lord Jesus is the Son in His divinity; rather, it is a revelation of a tremendous fact—that a genuine man, the Son of Man, became the Son of God in and with His humanity. Through His resurrection His humanity was glorified and uplifted into the divinity. In this way the Son of God with His divinity, who had become the Son of Man through incarnation, became the firstborn Son of God. As the Son of God in the eternal, immutable Godhead, Christ has only divinity, but as the firstborn Son of God in the divine economy, He possesses humanity as well as divinity. This means that Christ is the Son of God in two aspects: the aspect of His being the only begotten Son and the aspect of His being the firstborn Son. Whereas Romans 8:3 reveals God becoming man, 1:3-4 reveals man becoming God.

As the One who is God becoming man and man becoming God, the Lord Jesus is the prototype for the reproduction of Himself in His many brothers (8:29), who are simultaneously the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10). God sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3) so that sinners could be reconciled to God and justified by Him in order to receive eternal life (John 3:15) and



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thereby become children of God (Rom. 8:16). Jesus Christ the Lord, who came out of the seed of David according to the flesh, was designated the Son of God in His humanity according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead (1:3-4). Now the firstborn Son of God, the first God-man, is the prototype, the model, for the production of the many sons of God as the many God-men who, as members of the Body of Christ, are the same as the firstborn Son in life, nature, and expression. The purpose of God's complete salvation in its judicial and organic aspects (5:10), based upon the redemption accomplished by Christ in His vicarious death on the cross, is to have Christ reproduced in millions of believers so that they may become sons of God and members of the Body of Christ (12:4-5). Through God's organic salvation—salvation in life—carried out by the divine dispensing of the Triune God as life to redeemed and regenerated tripartite human beings, the children of God grow in life to become sons of God led by the Spirit (5:10; 8:2, 6, 10-11, 14). The sons of God, the many brothers of Christ as the firstborn Son of God (v. 29; John 20:17), are the many members of the Body of Christ, which is expressed as local churches (Rom. 12:4-5; 16:1, 4-5).

The Divine Economy

This deep, divine thought embedded in the book of Romans is actually the unveiling of God's economy. The divine economy (Eph. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:4) is the issue of God's choice and predestination, God's will and good pleasure, and God's counsel and purpose. In eternity past, before the foundation of the world, God the Father chose us in Christ to be holy, that is, to be constituted with the holy nature of God, thereby becoming the same as God in nature (Eph. 1:4). Also in eternity past God the Father predestinated us unto sonship, to having the life and position of actual regenerated (not merely legally adopted) sons (v. 5). To be holy and to be sons of God are to be the same as God in life and nature but, of course, not in the Godhead. The ultimate, eternal consummation of God's choice and predestination in eternity past will be the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity. Since the New Jerusalem is a great sign in Revelation as a book of signs (1:1), it surely is not a literal, physical city. On the contrary, the New Jerusalem is a corporate person, the bride of the Lamb; it is the holy city in fulfillment of God's choice in Ephesians 1:4, and it is the totality of the divine sonship (Heb. 2:10) as the fulfillment of God's predestination in Ephesians 1:5.

God's eternal intention to have the holy city Jerusalem is related to His will, good pleasure, counsel, and purpose, which issue in His economy—His plan and arrangement to dispense Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen people as their life, life supply, and everything so that they may become His glorious, corporate eternal expression. All positive things in the universe, especially human beings, were created because of God's will (Rev. 4:11). His will is the unique source, out of which all His other actions proceed. We were predestinated "unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5). The fact that God's good pleasure—the desire of His heart, what pleases God and what He longs to obtain for His own delight, happiness, and satisfaction—is of His will indicates that His will is the source. God's will is what He wants, what He wishes to do and wants to do. His good pleasure is embodied in His will; thus, His will comes first. For centuries this will was hidden in God as a mystery, but the mystery of His will was revealed to the apostles, as Paul declares, "Making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself" (v. 9). Here Witness Lee introduces the thought of God's purpose:

God's purpose is God's intent set beforehand. God's good pleasure was purposed in Himself (Eph. 1:9b). This shows that God's good pleasure is embodied not only in God's will but also in God's purpose. We have been predestinated according to God's purpose

of the ages, which is His eternal purpose (1:11a; 3:11). God's purpose is eternal. It is the eternal plan of God made in eternity past before the beginning of time (*Central* 33).

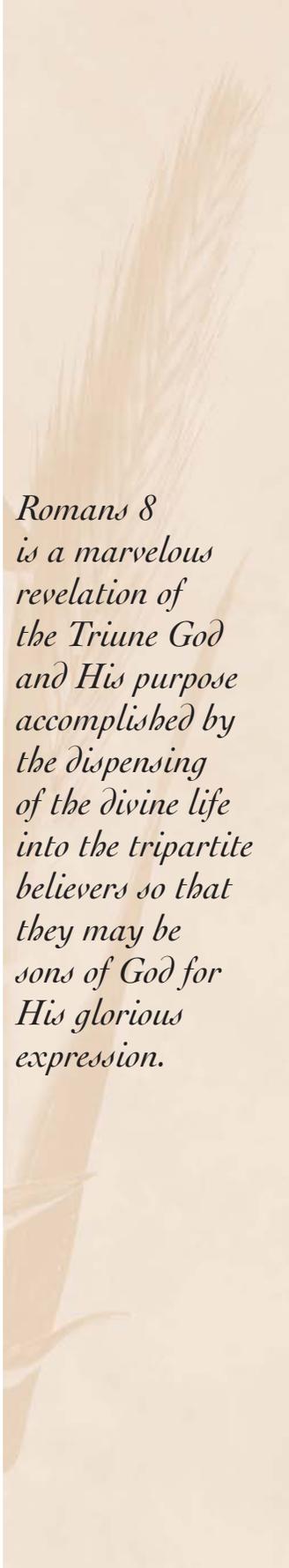
For the carrying out of His eternal purpose according to the good pleasure of His will, God held a council within Himself as the eternal Triune God, and the issue of this council is called "the counsel of His will" determined in Christ. "In whom also we were designated as an inheritance, having been predestinated according to the purpose of the One who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (1:11). God not only has a will, a good pleasure, and a purpose; He also has a way to fulfill His purpose. "God's will is His intention; God's counsel is His consideration of the way to accomplish His will or intention" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 11, note 4).

God's economy issues from God's will, purpose, good pleasure, and counsel. Based upon His will God made His purpose, and related to both His will and purpose is His good pleasure. The council held by the Divine Trinity made a decision, which is the counsel of God's will. With the divine counsel as the basis, God then made a plan with an arrangement, which is God's economy, His household administration. In simplicity, an economy may be defined as an arrangement for getting things done. The Greek word for *economy* is *oikonomia*, which literally means "house law," denoting a household administrative arrangement. Concerning the church as the house of God and the Body of Christ, God has a purposeful arrangement for the accomplishment of His eternal intention to have a corporate expression of Himself in His Divine Trinity through His chosen and redeemed people. This divine arrangement is for the divine dispensing—the process by which the processed and consummated Triune God as the Spirit imparts Himself into the believers as their life and life supply. The connection between arrangement and dispensing is illustrated by the Lord's using five loaves and two fish to feed thousands of people. First, He commanded the crowds to recline on the grass in an orderly way, and then, "looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds" (Matt. 14:19). The distributing of the loaves to the crowds was a kind of dispensing both objectively and subjectively; first, the food was given to the people objectively, and then they ate, digested, and assimilated it subjectively. Such a dispensing could not be carried out apart from an appropriate arrangement. Here is a picture of the divine economy involving God's plan, arrangement, and dispensing. The more we receive the dispensing of the Divine Trinity and are saturated with the divine element, the more we partake of the divine life and nature for His expression, thereby fulfilling God's will, purpose, good pleasure, and counsel, all of which become a reality to us through the divine economy.

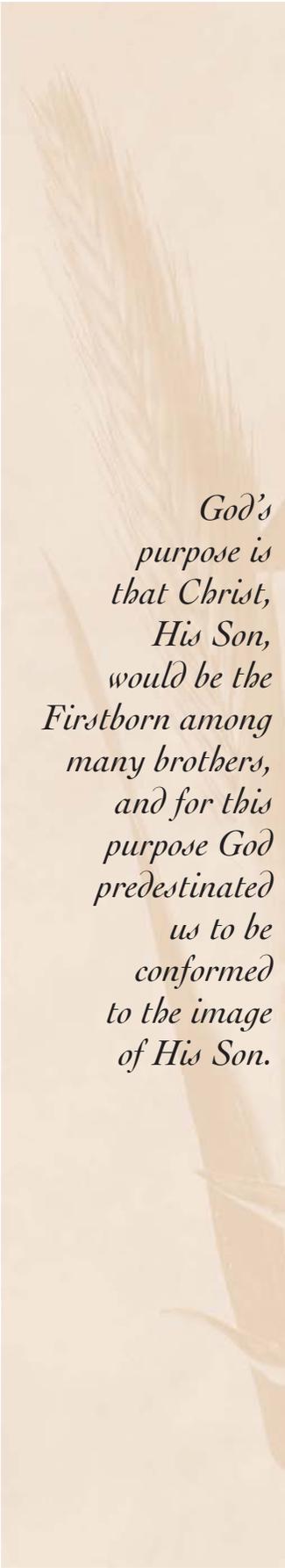
This brings us to Romans 8. If we study the crucial points in this chapter under the Spirit's enlightening and with the proper spiritual understanding, we will see that Romans 8 truly is the focus of the divine economy. Here we have a marvelous revelation of the Triune God and His purpose accomplished by the dispensing of the divine life into the tripartite believers so that they may be sons of God for His glorious expression. Christ in resurrection is the firstborn Son of God, and the sons of God, as the many brothers of the Firstborn, are being conformed to His image for the corporate expression of the Triune God. Romans 8 is deep, profound, and mysterious, especially in its revelation of the believers' experience of the Triune God becoming life to their entire tripartite being. What follows is an attempt to present a sketch of the crucial points in Romans 8, the focus of the divine economy, from the perspective of God's plan and arrangement to work Himself into us for the glorious, eternal expression of Himself.

God's Purpose

"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (v. 28). Although believers often quote this verse as ground for comfort in trials, all things work together for what God regards as good



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only for those who love Him and who are called according to His purpose. God is a God of purpose, which is related to His will and good pleasure. He created all things for His will so that He might fulfill His purpose (Rev. 4:11; Rom. 9:11). According to the good pleasure of His will, God made a purpose in eternity and for eternity, and thus, it is called His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). This purpose is centered in Christ and was made in Christ, with Christ, through Christ, and for Christ according to the will of God and the desire of His heart (1:9-11). Contrary to the common erroneous understanding, the goal of God's salvation is not an eternal abode in heaven but the fulfillment of God's purpose. God "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages" (2 Tim. 1:9). The purpose mentioned in Romans 8:28 is revealed in the following verse: "Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers" (v. 29). God's purpose is that Christ, His Son, would be the Firstborn among many brothers, and for this purpose God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. If we would be faithful to the Scriptures regarding predestination, we should follow Paul to declare that in Christ God predestinated us unto sonship (Eph. 1:5), and for Christ God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son as the Firstborn. Four matters here require close attention: brothers, Firstborn, image, and conformation.

Brothers

John 1:14, referring to the incarnated Word, who is God Himself, says, "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father." A second reference to the only begotten Son is in verse 18: "No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." The Son is the embodiment and expression of the Father, and thus He declares the Father. The only begotten Son was, is, and always will be in the bosom of the Father. As every believer knows, 3:16 testifies that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," a giving that, according to the immediate context, included the Son of Man being lifted up on the cross as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:4-9. Believing into the name of the only begotten Son is mandatory and nonnegotiable: "He who believes into Him [the Son] is not condemned; but he who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed into the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). In 1 John 4:9 we see that the manifestation of the love of God is intrinsically related to His sending of His Son: "In this the love of God was manifested among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might have life and live through Him." God has given to us eternal life, "and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (5:11-12).

The Son's being the only begotten Son refers to His deity, to His identity in the Divine Trinity, and to His eternal existence in the immutable Godhead. In the Godhead He alone—the only begotten Son—expresses God. This unique standing in His deity is unchanging; there never was a time when He was not the only begotten Son, and there never will be a time when He will cease to be the only begotten Son in the Godhead. For there to be a change in His status as the only begotten Son would entail a change in the eternal Godhead, but since God is immutable by nature, change in nature of any sort is impossible. Furthermore, this Son is the only begotten Son, and as such He cannot have brothers, and God the Father cannot have other sons.

According to John 20:17, the resurrected Jesus, the Son of God, said to Mary, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." The same Gospel that emphatically emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, is the only begotten Son of God presents this Son as referring to

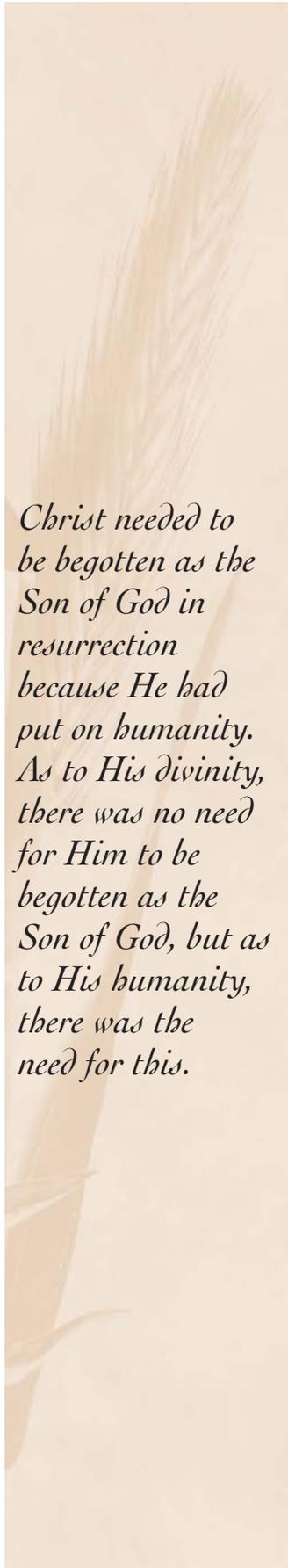
the disciples as His brothers and then testifying that His Father has become their Father. The only begotten Son—the unique Son who cannot have brothers—here reveals that He has brothers and that He and they have the same Father. The only begotten Son and His brothers: How are we to understand this?

The Gospel of John gives us at least three clues. The first is seen in 1:12-13: “As many as received Him [the Son of God as the true light], to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name, who were begotten...of God.” These children of God begotten of God are surely the brothers of the Son. The second clue is in 12:24, where the Son of God says, “Unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Clearly, the grain of wheat refers to the Son of God who, through incarnation, had put on humanity as the shell encasing His divinity. Instead of loving His human life and preserving it, He died a life-releasing death (19:34), in which the shell of His humanity was broken for the release of the divine life from within Him for the producing of many grains. The thought here is of the multiplication of the one grain into many grains for the Lord’s increase mentioned in 3:30. The many grains in 12:24 correspond to the brothers in 20:17. The remaining clue, like the first, involves birth: “A woman, when she gives birth, has sorrow because her hour has come; but when she brings forth the little child, she no longer remembers the affliction because of the joy that a man has been born into the world” (16:21). This birth of a man was the bringing forth in the resurrection of Christ of the one new man created by the Lord on the cross (Eph. 2:15). This corporate man (4:24) is composed of the resurrected Christ as the firstborn Son of God and the regenerated believers as His brothers, who are simultaneously the many sons of God (Heb. 2:10).

Firstborn

Having introduced the expression *firstborn Son*, we need to see how this designation is developed by Paul. Christ’s resurrection was His birth as God’s firstborn Son. Acts 13:33 reveals that to the man Jesus, resurrection was a birth. He was begotten by God in His resurrection to be the firstborn Son of God among many brothers, who had been predestinated to be conformed to His image for the corporate expression of God (Rom. 8:29). As we have pointed out, He was the only begotten Son of God from eternity in the Godhead and retains this unique status for eternity. Nevertheless, after His incarnation and through His resurrection He was begotten by God in His humanity (not in His divinity) to be God’s firstborn Son. This was prophesied in Psalm 2:7: “You are My Son; / Today I have begotten You.” Acts 13:33, which is Paul’s quotation of Psalm 2:7, indicates that Christ was begotten as the Son of God on the day of His resurrection. This develops the Lord’s word in John 16:21. The child in that verse refers to Christ as the firstborn Son of God, who was born, begotten, in His resurrection (20:17; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 1:6). The bringing forth in John 16:21 is the begetting in Acts 13:33, which reveals that the Lord Jesus was born, begotten, in resurrection to be the Son of God with respect to His humanity. Although Christ was already the only begotten Son of God in eternity past, it was still necessary for Him to be born in resurrection as the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:29).

Christ needed to be begotten as the Son of God in resurrection because He had put on humanity. As to His divinity, there was no need for Him to be begotten as the Son of God in this way, but as to His humanity, there was the need for this. On the day of His resurrection the Lord Jesus was designated as the Son of God with respect to His humanity (1:3-4). Through incarnation God’s only begotten Son put on humanity and became the God-man. In resurrection this God-man, with His humanity, was born of God to be the firstborn Son of God. Prior to His incarnation God’s only begotten Son did not have the human nature but only the divine nature. However, in resurrection the firstborn Son has both the human nature and the divine nature.



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Whereas the only begotten Son in the Godhead cannot have brothers, the firstborn Son in God's economy does have brothers—the brothers mentioned by the Lord in John 20:17. In fact, the word *Firstborn* in Romans 8:29 indicates that in addition to the firstborn Son of God there will be other sons, the many brothers of the firstborn Son. Hebrews 2:10 speaks of many sons, and Romans 8:29, of many brothers. As believers in Christ, we all are sons of God and brothers of the firstborn Son. In resurrection, when the Firstborn was born, His brothers were born, regenerated, as unveiled in 1 Peter 1:3. We were all born at the same time—He as the firstborn Son and we as the many sons of God and the many brothers of the Firstborn.

Christ is the Son of God in two senses. On the one hand, in the Godhead He is the unique, unchanging, eternal only begotten Son of God, and as such, He does not have brothers. On the other hand, in the outworking of the economy of God to have many sons for the corporate expression of God, Christ is the firstborn Son, and as such, He has many brothers.

Image and Conformation

The image into which we are being transformed by the indwelling Christ as the Lord Spirit is the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ, who dwells in our regenerated human spirit.

God's purpose is that these brothers be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son. The Son of God is the effulgence of God's glory and the impress of God's substance (Heb. 1:3), and as such, Christ the Son, the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9), is "the image of the invisible God" (1:15). "God is invisible. But the Son of His love...is His image, expressing what He is. The image here is not a physical form but an expression of God's being in all His attributes and virtues" (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 15, note 1). Christ the Son is the visible expression of the invisible God (John 1:18). The meaning of God's declaration in Genesis 1:26—"Let Us make man in Our image"—is that human beings were created in the image of Christ and according to Christ for the corporate expression of God in Christ. The very Christ who expresses God now dwells in His regenerated believers as their life and hope of glory (Col. 1:27; 3:4), desiring that they be transformed into His image, something regarded by Paul as a normal spiritual experience: "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18). The image into which we are being transformed by the indwelling Christ as the Lord Spirit is the image of the resurrected and glorified Christ, who dwells in our regenerated human spirit. Transformation is not outward correction; it is an inward, metabolic change in our soul that enables us to express the Christ of glory for the Father's delight and the fulfillment of His purpose. Being conformed to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son in resurrection, is actually the solidification and full development of transformation in the process of the organic aspect of God's complete salvation, salvation in life (Rom. 5:10). Being conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son is our maturity in the divine life, through which we participate in God's divinity (not Godhead) by partaking of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Our destiny, as determined by God's predestination, is to be conformed to the image of His Son so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers, who are the same as He is in life, nature, and expression but, of course, not in the Godhead. By believing into the Son of God, we received eternal life, the life of God (John 3:15) and thus were born of God to be children of God, possessing the life and nature of God (1:12-13). As the divine life grows within us and transforms us, it spontaneously shapes us into the image, the form, of the firstborn Son. This is a crucial aspect of organic salvation, for to be conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God is to be saved in Christ's life from what we may call self-likeness, that is, the expression and appearance of the self (Rom. 5:10; Matt. 16:23-24). God's purpose is that through our being conformed to the image of Christ as the Firstborn, He will have, as the reproduction of the Firstborn, many sons exactly like Him for His expression. In this way Christ can be the Firstborn among many sons (Heb. 1:6; 2:10) so that God may obtain the corporate expression of Himself in His firstborn Son with the

many sons to accomplish His eternal purpose. We have been called by God according to this purpose, and it is for the accomplishment of this purpose that, under God's sovereignty and through the Spirit's intercession, all things are working together for good—for our being conformed to the image of Christ.

The Triune God in His Economy

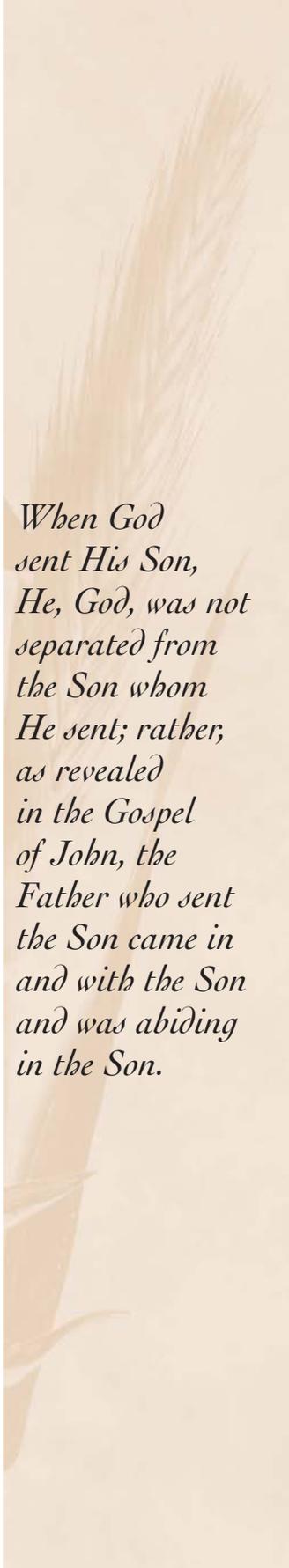
In Romans 8 the Triune God is revealed in His economy for our experience of Him. If we are interested merely in objective, systematic theology and thus view this portion of Romans as an abstract theological presentation of God in His essential and eternal Godhead, we will be hindered from seeing and benefitting from the unveiling of the Triune God in His economy for the fulfillment of His purpose. Actually, throughout the New Testament the Triune God is revealed not for doctrinal speculation but for the believers' spiritual experience that brings them into God's will, desire, intention, and purpose.

God

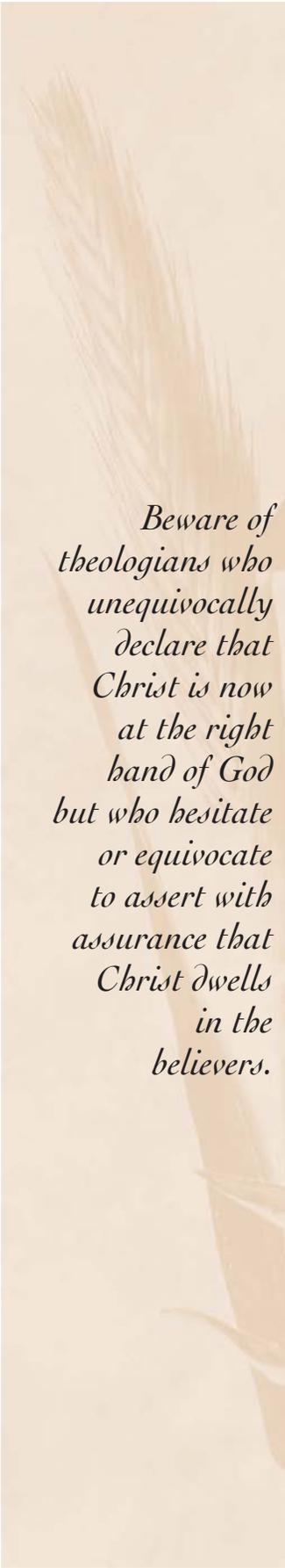
Romans 8 has much to say concerning God—God as God in His actions to fulfill His eternal purpose. Although God operates in time, with Him, the eternal One, there is no element of time. We need to keep this in mind as we read verse 30: “Those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those who He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.” From our perspective, glorification will be a future event, but from His divine perspective, God speaks of our glorification as an accomplished fact. In the fullness of the time (Gal. 4:4), God sent “His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). When God sent His Son, He, God, was not separated from the Son whom He sent; rather, as revealed in the Gospel of John, the Father who sent the Son came in and with the Son and was abiding in the Son (John 8:18, 28, 42; 14:10; 16:32). To see the Son was to see the Father who had sent the Son and was in the Son (14:9). Although John declares that the Word became flesh, asserting the marvelous truth of incarnation and refuting the heresy of Docetism, Paul says that God sent the Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin. The incarnated Son of God was God manifested in the flesh, but He was altogether without sin, and in His flesh the element of sin was not present. He had become flesh and was not in the mere likeness of the flesh, but, being without sin, He was in the likeness of the flesh of sin. Sinners not only commit acts of sin; the flesh of sinners is the flesh of sin. Because the Son was sent in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin, He, as the Son of Man, could be lifted up on the cross “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness” (3:14) and die as the reality of the sin offering, thereby enabling God to condemn “sin in the flesh.” The God who predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son sent His Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin and concerning sin. How marvelous! Furthermore, God is “the One who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom. 8:11) and who, through our regeneration, has truly become our Father, with whom we have a genuine relationship in the divine life and to whom we may cry, “Abba, Father!” (v. 15).

Christ the Son

Regarding Christ the Son, the truth in Romans 8 is parallel to that revealed in Colossians. “If therefore you were raised together with Christ,” Paul says in Colossians 3:1, “seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” Here we see clearly where Christ is—He is seated at the right hand of God. However, in 1:27 Paul assures us that “God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Clearly, Christ is both sitting at the right hand of God in the heavens and also dwelling in us as the hope of glory in our regenerated spirit. Sadly, many students of the New Testament,



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especially certain systematic theologians, believe the former—Paul’s word about the objective, transcendent Christ—but have difficulty testifying to the latter—Paul’s word about the subjective, indwelling Christ.

These remarks might prepare us to consider soberly what Paul says in Romans 8:34 and 10. Verse 34 says, “It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.” Undoubtedly, the interceding Christ is at the right hand of God. In verse 10 we see the other side of the twofold truth regarding where Christ is today: “Christ is in you.” Indisputably, the resurrected Christ is in us. Beware of theologians who unequivocally declare that Christ is now at the right hand of God but who hesitate or equivocate to assert with assurance that Christ dwells in the believers, often sidestepping the truth by claiming that Christ is not actually in us but is represented by the Spirit, who is in us. Such a circumlocution is blatant tritheism and a dreadful failure to hold to the perspicuity of the Word of God. The truth regarding Christ the Son in Romans 8 is twofold: Christ is at the right hand of God, and Christ is in us. Honest and faithful Christians believe and testify both aspects of this marvelous, yet mysterious, twofold truth.

The Spirit

Romans 8 presents various designations of the Spirit. Verse 2 speaks of the Spirit of life, whereas verse 5 refers to the Spirit, a denotation of the Spirit of God after Christ was glorified through His resurrection (John 7:39). Romans 8:9 says, “You are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Yet if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Him.” On the one hand, the Spirit of God dwells in us; on the other hand, we have the Spirit of Christ. Verse 11 continues, “If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.” In verse 14 Paul again speaks of the Spirit of God, and in verse 16 he mentions the Spirit witnessing with our spirit. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit (v. 23), and the Spirit joins in to help us in our weakness and intercedes for us (vv. 26-27). These designations indicate that in Romans 8 the Spirit is actually the all-inclusive Spirit—the Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the One, the Spirit who witnesses, and the Spirit who intercedes.

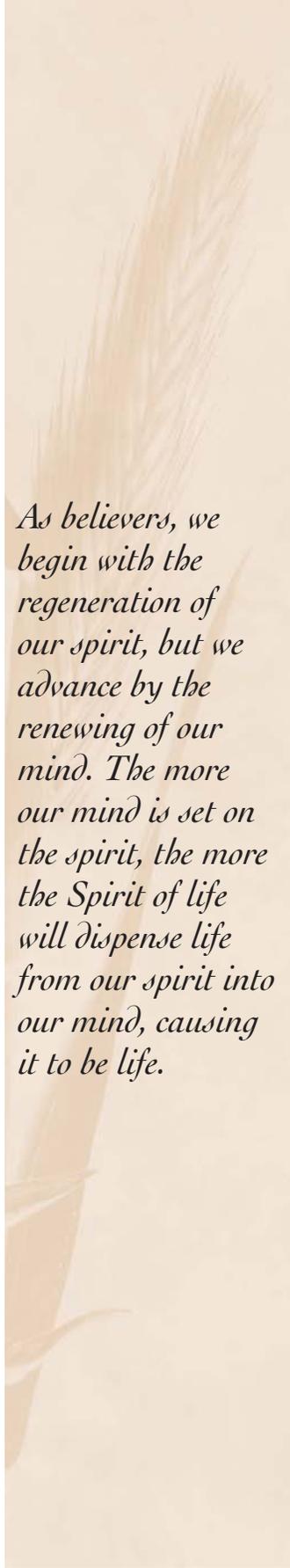
At this juncture let us consider the indwelling of the Spirit in relation to Christ being in us. First, Paul tells us that the Spirit of God dwells in us (v. 9) and that the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us (v. 11), and then he assures us that Christ is in us (v. 10). This creates a problem for those who, under the influence of tritheism, attempt to separate the three persons of the Triune God. Who dwells in us who have believed into the Son of God? Is it the Spirit of God who is in us, or is it Christ Himself who is in us? To be sure, no believers with a minimal amount of spiritual experience and understanding would claim that two (or even three—Eph. 4:6) dwell in them, for if we have any inner consciousness of the Lord’s indwelling, we would confess that only One dwells in us. Actually, it is the Triune God in His economy who dwells in us—the Father in the Son as the life-giving Spirit. This is not traditional theology, but it is the truth revealed in the New Testament.

The Divine Dispensing of the Divine Life

As the Triune God dwells in us, He dispenses Himself as life into our tripartite being—spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). God created human beings in His image for His expression and gave them dominion for His representation and the defeat of the enemy (Gen. 1:26-27). This purpose cannot be fulfilled by the created human life itself, even prior to the fall, but by the divine life signified by the tree of life (2:9). God’s intention was that the one who had a human life by creation would partake of

the fruit of the tree of life and thereby partake of the divine life through regeneration. Human beings need regeneration not merely, and actually not mainly, because they are sinful but primarily because, as creatures, they do not have the divine life required to express God with His image and to represent Him with His authority. The divine, eternal life—the life of God—is the life emphasized in John and Romans. Life was in the Word, and the life was the light (John 1:4). The Lord came that we might have the divine life (10:10), and He laid down His human life in order to release the divine life for our participation (12:24). Christ Himself is the resurrection and the life (11:25). Paul knew that the Christ who is the resurrection and the life lived in him (Gal. 2:20), and he lived because of Him (John 14:19), eventually coming to realize that Christ was his life (Col. 3:4). The experiences of the divine dispensing of the Triune God related in Romans 8 are focused on the dispensing of the divine life into our entire being. “The spirit is life because of righteousness” (v. 10). The spirit here, which is distinct from the soul (Heb. 4:12), is the regenerated, enlivened human spirit indwelt by the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). The Greek word for *life* here is *zoe*, which is used by John and Paul to denote the divine life, the life of God. According to Paul’s understanding, the regenerated human spirit is not merely alive or living—the spirit is now life itself. The Spirit of life has been mingled with the human spirit as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17), and now this mingled spirit is life. The spirit is life because of righteousness, a thought of immense significance. God cannot righteously impart Himself as life into unrepentant, unbelieving sinners. Eternal life can be given to human beings only when God’s righteous requirements have been satisfied, something that is humanly impossible. However, the Righteous died on behalf of the unrighteous (1 Pet. 3:18), making it possible for God to justify us through faith in Christ and then dispense Himself as life into our spirit. This is why Paul mentions “one righteous act unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18). Justification is the means; life is the goal. “Justification is not an end in itself; it is for 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 to us” (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 2, note 2). Because of Christ who is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30), our spirit is life.

Through God’s continual dispensing, this life is spreading from our regenerated spirit into our soul (represented in Romans 8 by the mind) and eventually into our mortal body. Although this is God’s intention, it requires our cooperation, our response to His inner operation: “The mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace” (v. 6). How our mind functions in relation to our spirit is truly a matter of spiritual death or spiritual life. As believers, we begin with the regeneration of our spirit, but we advance by the renewing of our mind (12:2). In fact, for the church as the new man, we need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind, that is, renewed in our mind, as the mingled spirit, which is life, spreads into and permeates our mind. Instead of being passive, we need to exercise inwardly to set our mind on the spirit. The more our mind is set on the spirit, the more the Spirit of life will dispense life from our spirit into our mind, causing it to be life. Since the mind is the leading part of the soul, life will spread from our mind into our emotion and will, causing these inward parts to be saturated with life. Eventually, life will be imparted into our physical body: “If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you” (8:11). Because of sin, our body is “the body of this death” (7:24), a mortal body. Prior to the Lord’s coming and our resurrection, our body remains mortal and cannot actually become life; however, the divine life may be imparted to our mortal body, even when it is weary, weak, and sick, if we cooperate with the Spirit of life. For our mind to be life, we must set our mind on the spirit. For life to be dispensed into our mortal body by the One who raised Jesus from the dead, we must allow the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead to make home in our being, not only to reside there. In this verse it is the entire Triune God who dispenses life into us: the One who raised Jesus from the dead, Christ Jesus, and His



As believers, we begin with the regeneration of our spirit, but we advance by the renewing of our mind. The more our mind is set on the spirit, the more the Spirit of life will dispense life from our spirit into our mind, causing it to be life.

Spirit who indwells us. This is the Triune God in His economy dispensing Himself as life into His tripartite redeemed and regenerated elect.

Knowing and Experiencing Christ in Resurrection

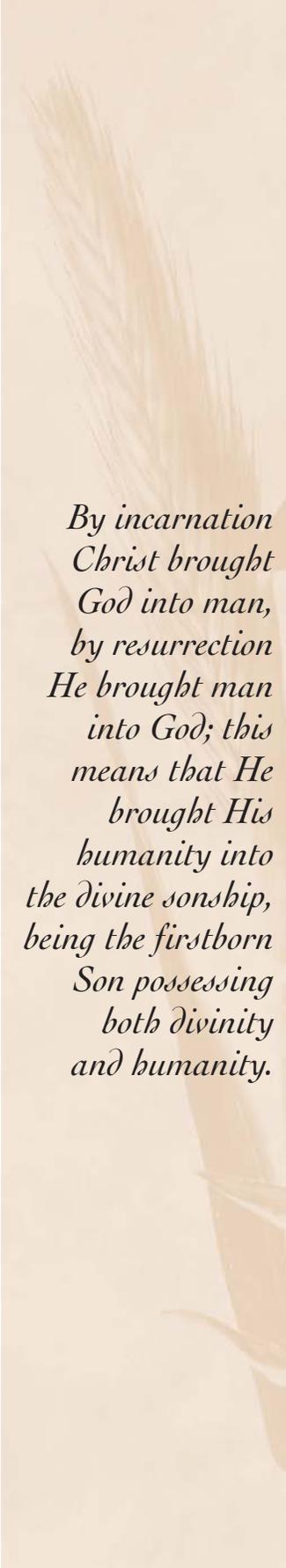
The reference to resurrection in verse 11 is one of many indicators that knowing and experiencing Christ is related to resurrection and that honoring God as the God of resurrection is a central matter in Romans. The book of Romans reveals the intrinsic significance of the resurrection of Christ (1:3-4; 14:9; 6:4). God is the One who gives life to the dead; this is God's great power of resurrection—the power that Abraham experienced when he offered Isaac according to God's command (4:17; Heb. 11:17-19). Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, that is, through the manifestation of divinity (Rom. 6:4; 1:4; 8:34). Considering Christ as God, the New Testament tells us that Christ Himself rose from the dead (14:9; John 10:17-18). Regarding Christ as man, the New Testament says that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11, 34; Acts 2:24; 3:15).

The Lord Jesus was raised from the dead for our justification (Rom. 4:25). Christ's resurrection proves that God's requirements were satisfied by Christ's death for us, that we are justified by God because of Christ's death, and that in Him, the resurrected One, we are accepted before God (3:24). As the resurrected One, He is in us to live for us a life that can be justified by God and is always acceptable to God (8:10; Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 5:9).

Christ in His humanity was designated the Son of God out of the resurrection of the dead, and His resurrection was His birth as God's firstborn Son (Rom. 1:4; Act 13:33). By resurrection His human nature, which He had put on through His incarnation, was sanctified, uplifted, and transformed; therefore, by resurrection He was designated the Son of God with His humanity, and now and for eternity, He possesses humanity as well as divinity (Heb. 1:5). Whereas by incarnation Christ brought God into man, by resurrection He brought man into God; this means that He brought His humanity into the divine sonship, being the firstborn Son possessing both divinity and humanity. As Romans 8 reveals, this resurrected Christ, the Firstborn, is the prototype, the model, for producing God's many sons (vv. 29-30).

In resurrection Christ is the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit (vv. 9-10). Christ's resurrection was His transfiguration into the life-giving Spirit in order to enter into the believers (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:18; John 14:16-17). The reality of resurrection is Christ as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 20). Not only has Christ become the life-giving Spirit, but when He comes to us, He comes as the Spirit, the pneumatic Christ (John 20:21-22). When we receive Christ today, we receive not only the redeeming Christ but also the life-giving Christ; now we enjoy the redeeming Christ, the Lamb, and the pneumatic Christ, the Spirit (1:29; 20:22; Rom. 8:3, 9). If we know and experience Christ as the pneumatic Christ, we will be brought into resurrection and live in resurrection (John 11:25; Phil. 3:10). The pneumatic Christ is the indwelling Christ; in resurrection Christ as the life-giving Spirit is in the believers (Rom. 8:9-10; John 14:16-17; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27). The book of Romans unveils crucial aspects of the believers' experience of Christ in His resurrection life (4:24; 10:9; 6:4-5, 8-9; 7:4; 8:11). We believe on God who has raised Jesus our Lord from the dead; the faith that is accounted to us as righteousness is our believing on God, who righteously judged Christ for our sins, righteously put Him to death in our place, and righteously raised Him from the dead (4:3, 9, 22, 24-25). If we confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in our heart that God has raised Him from the dead, we will be saved (10:9). Christ's being raised from the dead was invisible; hence, it requires our believing.

Although Christ's death has redeemed us, it is His life in resurrection alone that can



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save us (3:24; 5:10). Only when we believe in the great miracle that God performed in Him in raising Him from the dead can we be both redeemed and saved (6:4; 10:9). After baptism we become a new person in resurrection, and we walk in newness of life (6:3-4). Resurrection is not only a future state; it is also a present process (8:11). To walk in newness of life is to live today in the realm of resurrection and to reign in life (6:4; 5:17). Living in the realm of resurrection is a living that deals with all that is of Adam in us until we are fully transformed and conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God (12:2; 8:29). Romans 6:5 says that we will be in the likeness of Christ's resurrection; this does not refer to a future, objective resurrection but to the present process of growth. Just as the element of Christ's death is found only in Him, so the element of Christ's resurrection is found only in Christ Himself; He Himself is resurrection (John 11:25). After experiencing a proper baptism, we continue to grow in and with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection; this is to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4-5).

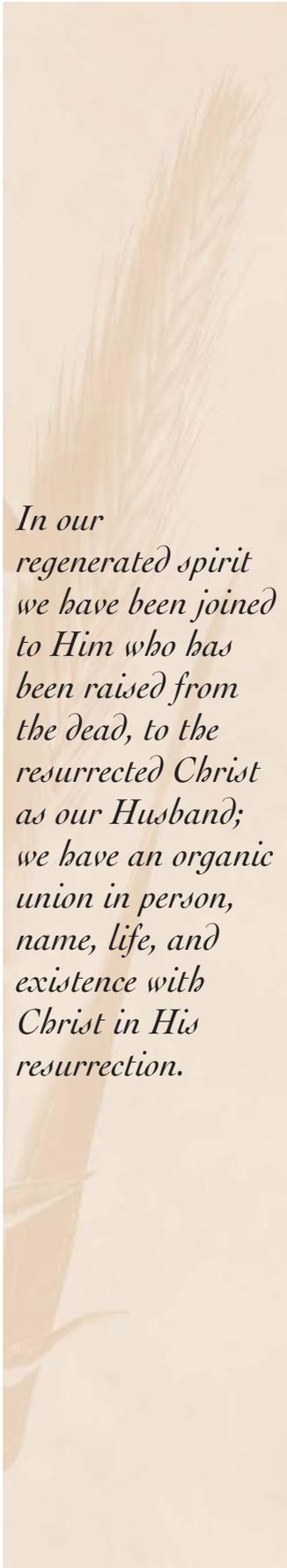
In His resurrection Christ is transcendent over corruption and death; since we are one with Him in this resurrection, we also are transcendent over corruption and death (vv. 8-9). In our regenerated spirit we have been joined to Him who has been raised from the dead, to the resurrected Christ as our Husband; this joining indicates that in our new status as a wife, we have an organic union in person, name, life, and existence with Christ in His resurrection (7:4). Now if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal body and to our entire tripartite being so that we may carry out God's will to have the Body of Christ (8:2, 6, 10-11; 12:1-2, 4-5). This wonderful Christ who is resurrection is actually in us so that we may now live a resurrected human life in union with Him.

"In Christ"—an Organic Union

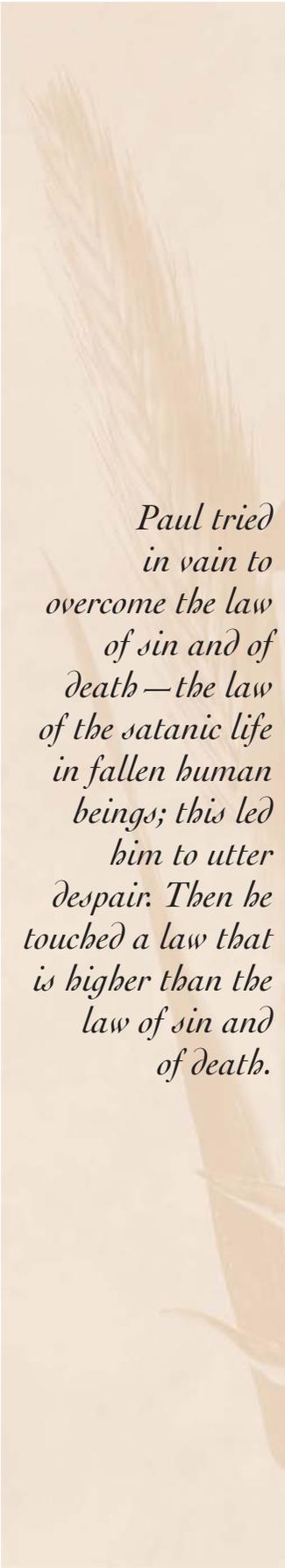
According to the revelation in Romans, the believers have faith in Christ and have been baptized into Christ, and as a result they are now "in Christ" (12:5). "There is now then no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). The relationship that God desires to have with human beings is that He and we be joined together and thus become one in an organic union (6:3-5). God wants the divine life and the human life to be joined together as one life; this oneness is an organic union, a union in life—a grafted life (11:17-24). God created us for the purpose of entering into us to be one with us and to make us one with Him. God's intention is radically different from the religious notion that God desires nothing more than a multitude of people who worship Him at a distance without being inwardly one with Him.

In grafting, two similar lives are joined, and they grow together organically. Because our human life was made in the image of God and according to the likeness of God, it can be joined to the divine life. The human life is not the divine life but resembles the divine life, and the human spirit is not the divine Spirit but is similar to the divine Spirit. The human life can be joined to the divine life, and the human spirit can be joined to the divine Spirit. In order to be grafted together with us, Christ passed through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit to be joined to the regenerated human spirit. When we believed into Christ the Son of God, we received Him into us as the divine life so that we could have a union with Him in the divine life—a union illustrated by the Christ as the true vine and the believers as the branches grafted into the vine (John 3:15; 15:4-5).

In keeping with Paul's word in 1 Corinthians 1:30, we may say with assurance that it is of God that we are in Christ Jesus. This is our standing in Christ before God, and we affirm it by faith. The reality of being in Christ is with the Spirit in our spirit; when



In our regenerated spirit we have been joined to Him who has been raised from the dead, to the resurrected Christ as our Husband; we have an organic union in person, name, life, and existence with Christ in His resurrection.



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we are in our spirit, we are truly living in the organic union with Christ. As regenerated believers, we should exercise our spirit to live a grafted life, living by our spirit, which has been grafted with Christ, and allow the pneumatic Christ to live in us. In so doing, we need to avoid embracing the inaccurate teaching regarding what has been called “an exchanged life”—the doctrinal notion that the God-created human life is somehow eradicated and replaced by the divine life. Instead of an exchange of lives, there is the joining, the grafting, of lives. Because Paul knew this, he could say that Christ lived in him and that he lived by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20). Paul and Christ had one life and one living. In this grafted life the human life is not eliminated but is strengthened, uplifted, enriched, and resurrected by the divine life. Furthermore, in the grafted life—in the organic union signified by the vine with its branches—we are joined to Christ in the way of coinherence, that is, of mutual indwelling (John 14:20; 15:1). In the organic union the vine and the branches coinhere; the branches abide in the vine, and the vine abides in the branches (vv. 4-5). Christ lives in us, and we live in Christ. As Paul makes abundantly clear, in Christ there is no condemnation, but, as we will now see, there is operation of the highest law in the universe (Rom. 8:1-2).

The Law of the Spirit of Life

After his tremendous struggle recorded in Romans 7, Paul made a remarkable discovery concerning law—not the law of God or the law of good but the law of life, which is essentially related to the Spirit of life. “The law of the Spirit of life has freed me in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and of death” (8:2). By the exercise of willpower, Paul had tried in vain to overcome the law of sin and of death—the law of the satanic life in fallen human beings; this led him to utter despair. Then he touched a law that is higher than the law of sin and of death; this higher law is the law of the divine life.

A law is something that operates by itself, by its inherent, intrinsic power. In every life there is a law. Where there is a life, there is also the law of that life; life is inseparable from the law of its life. Every kind of life is not only governed by a law—every life is a law. God’s life is the highest life, and the law of this life is the highest law, far transcending the law of good in the mind and the law of sin and of death in the flesh.

Romans 8 shows that God’s life is given to us to be our law. The two laws in Romans 8:2 are not commandments but principles; these laws operate by nature. These two laws—the law of sin and of death and the law of the Spirit of life—are operating within us; their work is according to law, not activity. We need to realize that God has given us not only life—He has given us the law of life. God’s life within us operates spontaneously in the way of a law. There is a new law within us—the law of the life of God! Every believer should learn to trust not only in life but also in the law of life.

Being enlightened through a careful study of Romans 8, an earnest, seeking Christian needs to discover the law of God’s life and live by this law of life; this is the Christian life. The Triune God who has been processed and consummated in His economy and is now the Spirit dwelling in our spirit is the law of the Spirit of life. The life that a Christian receives is a law, and the Christian life is a spontaneous living according to the law of life. If we see this, we will also see that being a Christian is not a strenuous exercise; on the contrary, we should cease from our self-effort and allow the law of the inner life to operate within us. Our faith consists of God’s life operating within us through a law; this operation results in our being able to live out the Christian life as described by Paul, the one presented by the Lord as a pattern for all believers (1 Tim. 1:16). Day by day we need to learn to trust in the law of God’s life, allowing this law to operate in us in a spontaneous way and knowing that God delivers us from the law of sin and of death through the operation of the law of the Spirit of life.

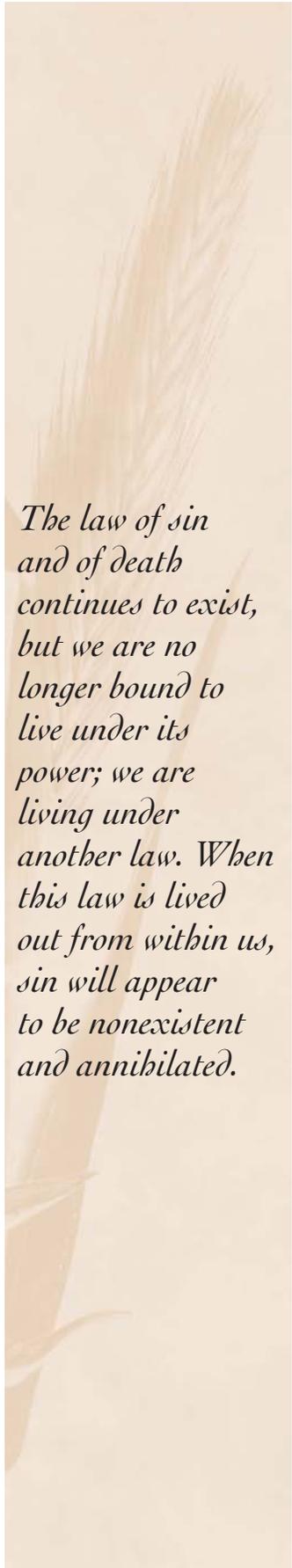
A Christian should not live according to the power of his will but according to the law of the Spirit of life. There is a law of sin and of death within us that the power of the will has no control over and that can never be overcome. No one can resist the law of sin by the power of the will, nor can anyone resist the law of sin by willing to do good. To live by the will is to try to be what we are not, to attempt to be a certain type of person when we are not. Because a law is spontaneous, there is no need for the will to assist it. In the Christian life an important principle is to live not by one's own will but by the law of the Spirit of life. Walking according to the law of life is spontaneous; we should simply and calmly trust in the law of life within us. The law of life within spontaneously regulates and carries us on; as we go along with this law, we experience life and peace.

Paul discovered that there is a law—the highest law in the universe—that can contend with the law of sin and of death—the law of the eternal, uncreated, indestructible life of God. Through our regeneration, in which we received eternal life (John 3:3, 5-6, 15), God has given us a life-law; this law remains the same all the time—it never changes. The law of sin and of death continues to exist, but we are no longer bound to live under its power; we are living under another law, the law within us that delivers us from the law of sin and of death. When this law is lived out from within us, sin will appear to be nonexistent and annihilated, and the power of death will seemingly disappear. Our great need is to learn from Paul in Romans 8 to follow the law of life within us. If we see the law of life, we will cease from willpower and self-effort and simply allow the law of the divine life to bring us to experience the reality of Isaiah 40:31: “Those who wait on Jehovah will renew their strength; / They will mount up with wings like eagles; / They will run and will not faint; / They will walk and will not become weary.”

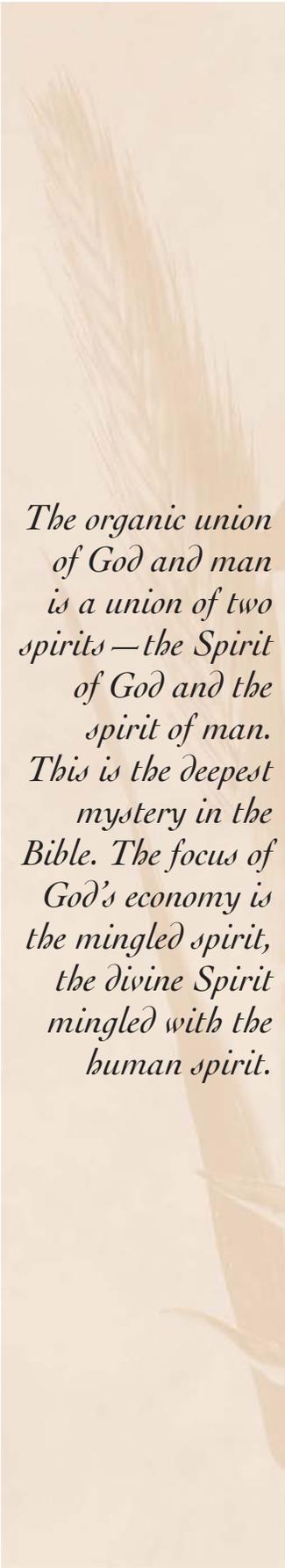
The Mingled Spirit

If we would have an experiential knowledge of the law of the Spirit of life, we need to be “according to the spirit” (Rom. 8:5), that is, to have our entire being according to the spirit. “When we are according to the spirit, our walk also is according to the spirit. In this spirit the indwelling law of the Spirit of life, that is, the processed Triune God Himself, works within us spontaneously and frees us from the law of sin and of death” (Lee, Recovery Version, v. 5, note 2). This spirit is not merely the human spirit nor the divine Spirit but the mingled spirit, a most crucial matter that merits close attention. As we will see, the mingled spirit is the regenerated human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the life-giving Spirit as one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The mind set on this mingled spirit is a mind of life and peace (Rom. 8:6). When we walk, having our daily living in all aspects, according to the mingled spirit, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us (v. 4).

The way to have a proper understanding of this mingled spirit is to learn, from Paul's Epistles, that God's desire is to mingle Himself with us so that He becomes our life, our nature, and our content and so that we become His corporate expression (John 14:20; 15:4-5; Eph. 3:16-21; 4:4-6, 16). The mingling of God and redeemed humanity is an intrinsic union of the elements of divinity and humanity to form one organic entity, yet the elements remain distinct in the union, and a third element is not produced. The will of God is the mingling of God with man, and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose depends on the mingling of divinity and humanity (1:5, 9; 3:11). The Lord Jesus Christ is the mingling of God and man (Luke 1:31-35), and the Christian life is the mingling of divinity and humanity. Thus, to be a Christian means to be mingled with God, to be a God-man (2 Tim. 3:17). In His economy God mingles Himself with us to become one entity with us (1 Cor. 6:17). We may be saved in the divine life (Rom. 5:10) to the extent that we and God are completely mingled as one, having one life and one living (John 15:4-5; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21).



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The Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5) is the enlargement of Christ, the enlargement of the One who is the mingling of God and man (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16). We need to understand the Body of Christ from the perspective of the mingling of divinity and humanity (vv. 4-6). In the Gospels the mingling of God and man produced the Head; in Acts the enlargement of the mingling of God and man produced the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16). We may say that in Ephesians 4:4-6 four persons—the Body, the Spirit, the Lord, and God the Father—are actively mingled together. The Father is embodied in the Son, the Son is realized as the Spirit, and the Spirit is mingled with the believers. This mingling is the constitution of the Body of Christ. The processed and consummated Triune God mingles Himself with His chosen people in their humanity, and this mingling is the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ (v. 3; John 17:21-23). The New Jerusalem will be the ultimate consummation of the mingling of God and man (Rev. 21:2).

The mingled spirit is so central and crucial to the outworking of the divine economy that regarding it we need to go beyond doctrine to genuine spiritual unveiling, light, and sight (Eph. 1:17-18). It is imperative that we have the divine view of the mingled spirit as the mingling of the divine Spirit with our regenerated human spirit. The Father is in the Son, the Son is the Spirit, and the Spirit is now mingled with our spirit (John 14:9-10, 16-18; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17; Rom. 8:16). The organic union of God and man is a union of two spirits—the Spirit of God and the spirit of man (1 Cor. 2:11-16). The union of these two spirits is, we may accurately affirm, the deepest mystery in the Bible. The focus of God’s economy is the mingled spirit, the divine Spirit mingled with the human spirit. Whatever God intends to do or accomplish is related to this focus (Eph. 3:9, 5; 1:17; 2:22; 3:16; 4:23; 5:18; 6:18). Moreover, the mingled spirit is both the Spirit of the Lord and our spirit (Rom. 8:4; 2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). The mingled spirit is a spirit that is one spirit with God and that is the same as God in His life and nature but not in His Godhead (1 John 5:11; 2 Pet. 1:4).

The divine Spirit and the human spirit are mingled as one within us so that we can live the life of a God-man, a life that is God yet man and man yet God, a life in which the divine attributes are expressed in and through the human virtues (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19-21). This kind of living is actually Christ living again, as He did in Paul, within and through His redeemed and regenerated believers. The God-man living is the living of the two spirits, the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, joined and mingled together as one (1 Cor. 6:17).

Amazingly, the mingled spirit is the key to the Christian life (Rom. 8:4; Eph. 2:22), for the more we live and move in the mingled spirit, the more the law of the Spirit of life is free to operate within us to enable us to express Christ and to cause us to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God (Rom. 8:2, 29). To be proper Christians, therefore, we need to know that the Lord Jesus today, as the embodiment of the Triune God, is the Spirit indwelling our spirit and is mingled with our spirit as one spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45; 6:17). By being one spirit with the Lord, we can experience Christ as the all-inclusive One revealed in 1 Corinthians and take Him as our life, our life supply, and our everything in living the Christian life for God’s goal—the building up of the Body of Christ, which consummates in the New Jerusalem (1:2, 24, 30; 2:8, 10; 3:11; 5:7-8; 10:3-4; 11:3; 12:12; 15:20, 45, 47). It should not come as a surprise that God’s unique requirement of us as believers is that we live and walk by the Spirit in our spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:18). Ultimately, the Bible requires only one thing of us—that we walk according to the mingled spirit (Rom. 8:4). The key to everything in the Christian life is found in the all-inclusive life-giving Spirit who is in our regenerated spirit and who has become one spirit with our spirit (Phil. 1:19; 4:23; 2 Tim. 4:22). To live in the spirit is to let Christ fill and saturate us until He permeates our whole being and is thereby expressed through us (Eph. 2:22; 3:16-21). To realize this is to enter into the heart of Romans 8, a chapter that is the focus of the divine economy.

Children, Sons, and Heirs

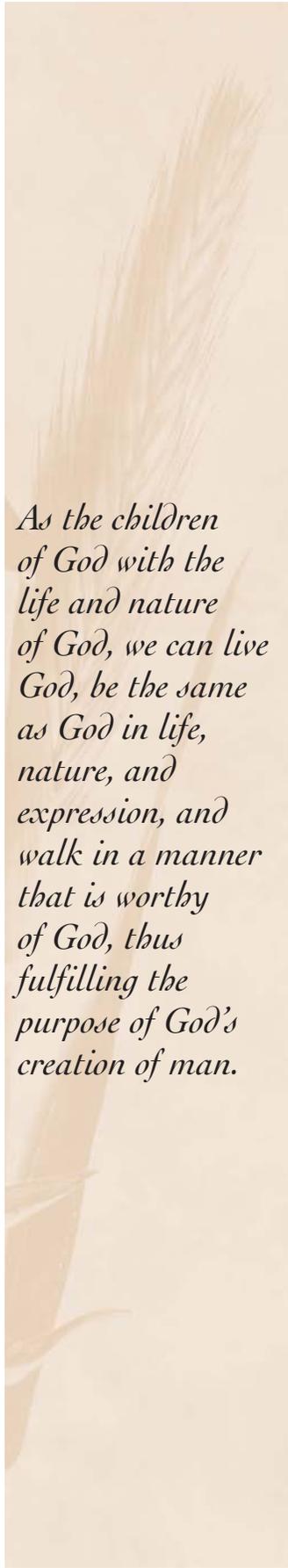
As the believers in Christ walk according to the mingled spirit, thereby allowing the law of life to operate without hindrance, they will grow in the divine life from children to sons and from sons to heirs (vv. 14, 16-17, 23). Being children of God is our initial, or primary, relationship with God; we need to grow to become sons of God, and then we need further growth unto maturity in order to become heirs of God.

“The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). As believers in Christ the Son of God, we have been born of God the Father, the source of life, to be children of God with the life and nature of God (John 1:12-13; 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:4). The greatest wonder in the entire universe is that human beings could be begotten of God and sinners could be made children of God (1 John 2:29—3:1; Rom. 5:19; 8:16, 21, 23). The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we who were once children of the devil are now the children of God (John 8:44; 1 John 3:1-2, 10; Rom. 8:16). Even when we are weak or backsliding, we still have the deep conviction that we are children of God, for once we have been born of God, we have eternal life and are His children forever (John 1:12-13; 3:6, 15; 10:28-29). The Spirit witnesses with our spirit; the two spirits are one and witness together that we are children of God. Such a witnessing testifies to us and assures us that we are children of God, who possess His life (1 John 3:1-2). The Spirit witnesses to our most basic and elementary relationship with God, namely, that we are His children, not that we are His sons or His heirs; therefore, this witnessing of the Spirit begins from the time of our spiritual birth, our regeneration (John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5-6). As the children of God with the life and nature of God, we can live God, be the same as God in life, nature, and expression, and walk in a manner that is worthy of God, thus fulfilling the purpose of God’s creation of man (Eph. 5:1-2, 8; Matt. 5:48; 1 Thes. 2:12; Gen. 1:26).

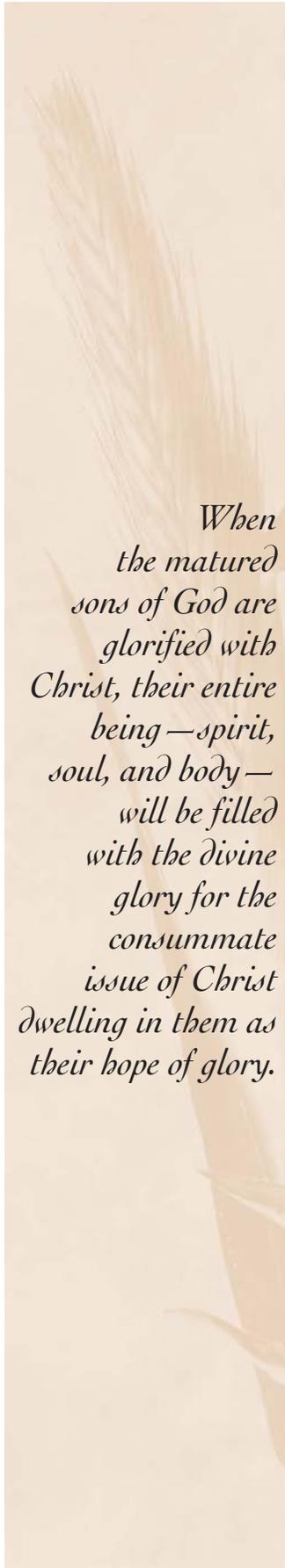
The children of God have been regenerated of God the Spirit to become God-men, belonging to the species of God to see and enter into the kingdom of God as the realm of the divine life (John 3:3, 5-6). God has a good pleasure to make us, His children, the same as He is in life and nature but not in His unique Fatherhood (Eph. 1:5, 9; 5:1-2, 8; 1 John 1:5; 4:8, 16). Because we have been born of God, we are the same as God in life, nature, and expression but not in the Godhead (Rom. 8:2, 10, 16; 2 Pet. 1:4).

As children of God, we are God-men, we belong to the species of God, and we are in the kingdom of God, the realm of the divine species (John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5). Our second birth caused us to enter into the kingdom of God to become the species of God, for God truly is our Father in life (vv. 3, 5-6). Now as children of God with the life and nature of God, we are God-men in the kingdom of God (Rom. 8:16; 14:17).

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (8:14). God’s eternal purpose is to have many sons for His corporate expression; the New Jerusalem is the aggregate of the divine sonship for the eternal, corporate expression of the Triune God (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:7; Rev. 21:7). According to the revelation of the entire New Testament, God’s economy is to produce sons by dispensing Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen and redeemed people; Christ’s redemption brings us into the sonship of God (Eph. 1:5, 7, 10; 3:9; Rom. 8:11, 14). God’s economy is to make us sons of God, inheriting the blessing of God’s promise, which was given for His eternal purpose to have sons for His corporate expression (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:29). This is in keeping with the central thought of the book of Romans that in His salvation God is making sinners His sons with His life and nature so that they may become constituents of the Body of Christ for His corporate expression (3:23; 8:14, 29; 12:4-5). We, the believers in Christ, are, first, children of God, and then we gradually grow up to become sons of God (Gal. 3:26; 4:6).



As the children of God with the life and nature of God, we can live God, be the same as God in life, nature, and expression, and walk in a manner that is worthy of God, thus fulfilling the purpose of God’s creation of man.



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Sons are the children of God who are in the stage of the transformation of their souls (Rom. 8:14; 12:2). God’s sons have not only been regenerated in their spirit and are growing in the divine life, but they are also living and walking by being led by the Spirit (8:14). Having received the spirit of sonship with the sonship, they have the life, the position, the right, the privilege, and the blessings of a son (v. 15; Gal. 4:5-6). All the sons of God will be brought into glory; this is our destiny (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:21).

“If children, heirs also; on the one hand, heirs of God; on the other, joint heirs with Christ” (v. 17; Gal. 3:29; 4:7; Titus 3:7; Eph. 1:11, 13-14, 18; 1 Pet. 1:3-4). Christ is the Heir of all things, and we, the children of God, are destined to be joint heirs with Christ, for we are heirs with Him to inherit God in His glory as our inheritance (Heb. 1:2; Rom. 8:17; Acts 26:18). As the designated Heir, Christ will inherit all things in God’s economy, including the earth, the kingdom, and the throne; all that God is and has is for Christ’s possession (Heb. 1:2; Psa. 2:8; Dan. 7:13-14; Luke 1:32; Matt. 11:27; John 16:15).

Christ, the firstborn Son of God, is the appointed Heir of God, and we, the many sons of God, have been saved to be joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). An heir is one who is of full age according to the law (the Roman law is used by Paul as an illustration) and who is qualified to inherit the father’s estate (Gal. 4:7). In order to become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, we need to grow in life unto maturity (v. 7; Heb. 5:14—6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-7). Heirs of God are the sons of God who are fully matured in every part of their being and thus are qualified as legal heirs to claim the divine inheritance (Rom. 8:17, 21, 23). The sons of God become heirs of God through the Triune God—the Father, who sent forth the Son and the Spirit; the Son, who accomplished redemption for sonship; and the Spirit, who carries out the sonship within us (Gal. 4:4-7). The particular condition for us to be heirs is that we grow in life to become sons and then pass through suffering so that we may be glorified to become legal heirs (Rom. 8:17). Genuine growth in the divine life requires suffering (1 Pet. 2:19-21; 3:14, 18; 4:1, 12-13, 19; 5:1, 9; 2 Pet. 1:5-7). The more we suffer with Christ, the more we grow and the faster we are matured to be joint heirs with Christ.

Glorification

In Paul’s view expressed in Romans 8, the children of God and the sons of God will eventually be glorified and enter into the glory of God. All the sons of God will be brought into glory; this is our destiny. Glory is the expression of God, God expressed in splendor. We will be glorified with Christ with “the coming glory to be revealed upon us” (v. 18). The present creation, which is in its present state of corruption, eagerly awaits “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (v. 21). The fact that God’s goal in His organic salvation is our glorification is indicated by Paul’s use of *glorified* in verse 30: “These He also glorified.” When the matured sons of God are glorified with Christ, their entire being—spirit, soul, and body—will be filled with the divine glory for the consummate issue of Christ dwelling in them as their hope of glory (Col. 1:27). “This is the ultimate step in God’s complete salvation, wherein God obtains a full expression, which will ultimately be manifested in the New Jerusalem in the coming age and in eternity” (Lee, Recovery Version, Rom. 8:30, note 2).

In order to appreciate Paul’s word in Romans 8, we need a view of the glory of God in the broad context of the economy of God. The glory of God is intrinsically related to the economy of God (Eph. 1:6, 10, 12, 14; 3:21; 5:27). This is evident in the following statements based on divine revelation:

—The Triune God is a God of glory (Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17; 3:14, 16; 1 Cor. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Pet. 4:14).

—God’s eternal goal is to bring His many sons into glory (Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 1:5-6, 12, 14).

—We were created by God in His image in order that we may express Him in His glory (Gen. 1:26; Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6).

—God created us as vessels unto honor, prepared unto glory; we were predestinated in His sovereignty to be His vessels to express what He is in glory (Rom. 9:21, 23).

—To sin is to fall short of God’s glory and thus to express sin and the sinful self and to love the glory of man more than the glory of God (3:23; John 5:44; 7:18; 12:43).

—Christ’s redemption has fulfilled the requirements of God’s glory (Rom. 3:24-25; Heb. 9:5; cf. Gen. 3:24).

—Through the gospel of the glory of Christ, God has called us by and into His eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Thes. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:3.)

—The all-inclusive Christ, who was glorified in His resurrection and who is the life-giving Spirit, dwells in us as the hope of glory (John 7:39; Luke 24:26; Acts 3:13; Col. 1:27; 3:4, 11; 1 Cor. 15:45).

—As we inwardly behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the Lord’s image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

—The goal of God’s organic salvation, and the last stage of this salvation, is glory—our glorification (Heb. 2:10; Rom. 8:17, 21, 30).

—When we are strengthened with power by the Father of glory through His Spirit into the inner man, when Christ makes His home in our hearts, and when we are filled unto all the fullness of God, there is glory to God in the church (Eph. 3:14-21).

—The Lord Jesus prayed that we would enter into the highest stage of oneness—the oneness in the divine glory for the corporate expression of the Triune God (John 17:22).

—The building of God is the Triune God wrought into us so that we may become His glorious corporate expression (Eph. 2:21-22; 3:17, 19, 21; 4:16; 5:27; cf. Exo. 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezek. 43:4; Hag. 2:7, 9).

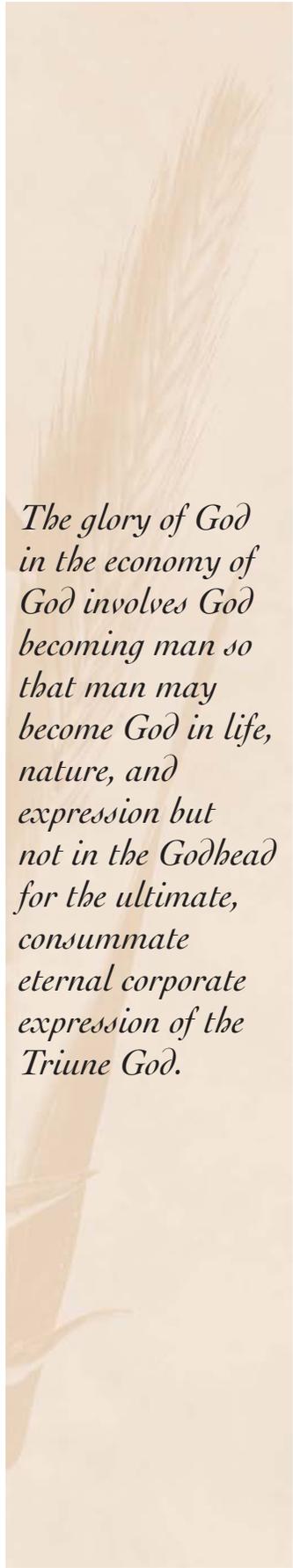
—When Christ as the Son of Man returns with His overcomers, He will come in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27).

—Since the kingdom of God and the glory of God are inseparable, the glory of God will be manifested in the coming kingdom (6:13; 16:27; 26:64; 1 Thes. 2:12; Rev. 5:13).

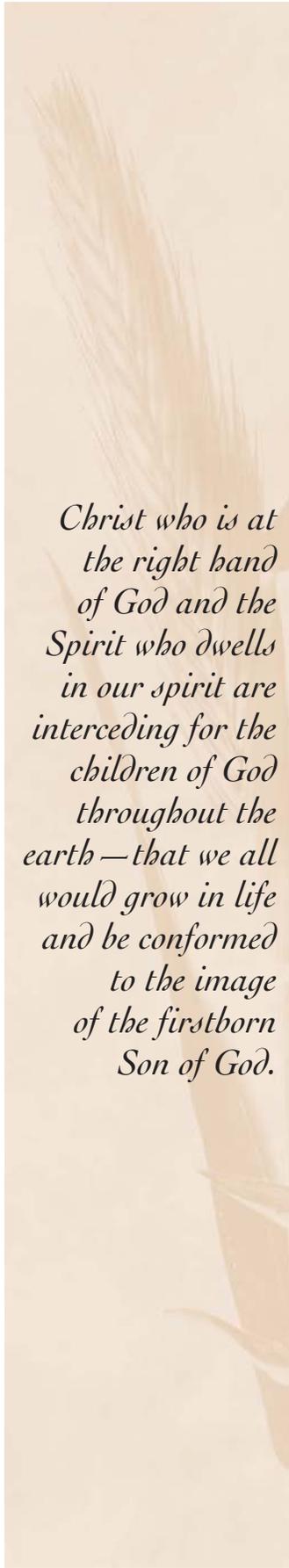
—An outstanding feature of the New Jerusalem is that it has the glory of God, His expression; the entire city of New Jerusalem will bear the glory of God, which is God Himself shining out through the city (Rev. 21:10-11).

—The glory of God in the economy of God involves the high peak of the divine revelation—God becoming man so that man may become God in life, nature, and expression but not in the Godhead for the ultimate, consummate eternal corporate expression of the Triune God (John 1:14; Col. 3:4; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 21:10-11).

—The goal of God’s economy is that we all shine forth His glory (vv. 11, 23-24).



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Christ who is at the right hand of God and the Spirit who dwells in our spirit are interceding for the children of God throughout the earth—that we all would grow in life and be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God.

—For eternity the glorified sons of God will be “to the praise of the glory of His grace” and “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

We, the believers in Christ, chosen vessels unto glory, were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, and as those who have been predestinated, called, and justified, we will be glorified and will manifest the radiant God of glory for eternity. In the eyes of God, the outcome of His organic salvation is certain, and to convey this assurance the Spirit led Paul to write, “Those whom He predestinated,...called,...justified; these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). Romans 8 unveils much more than things working together for good and our being inseparable from God’s love, as precious as these may be. In Romans 8 is the focus of the divine economy from predestination to glorification. Surely, even now, the Christ who is at the right hand of God and the Spirit who dwells in our spirit are interceding for the children of God throughout the earth—that we all would touch the law of the Spirit of life and allow it to function, would grow in life from children to sons and from sons to heirs, and would gradually be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God in the hope that soon our Lord, the King of glory (Psa. 24:7-10), will come with His overcomers to end this age, bring in the manifestation of the kingdom, and cause the glory of God to fill the earth. Until then may many join Paul in Ephesians 3:21 in proclaiming, “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.” **LFC**

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Counteracting the Judicial and Organic Effects of the Fall

When man fell, he destroyed the image that God created for him and lost the position of receiving God as life...In addition, God had barred the way to the tree of life by the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). We were unable to be reconciled again to God and to enjoy salvation in life until Christ died for us and redeemed us.

Christ’s redemption by His vicarious death and His salvation in life first redeems fallen men so that they may be justified by God and reconciled to Him (Rom. 8:30). In addition to this, He regenerates, sanctifies, renews, transforms, and conforms them to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 1:17b; 6:19b, 22b; 12:2; 8:29). This conformation to the image of the Son of God begins from regeneration. After regeneration there is sanctification. After sanctification there is renewing, and the renewing brings in transformation. When all these items are added together, you have conformation to the image of the Son of God. Furthermore, we will be made the sons of God (8:19) that Christ may become the Firstborn among many brothers (8:29). Thus, God gains a corporate expression, the mingling of His firstborn Son with His many sons. In this way, we are enabled to enjoy God’s salvation in life and are delivered from the expression of the natural life, having no self-boasting or self-esteem, and are conformed to the image of the Son of God.

From *Salvation in Life in the Book of Romans* by Witness Lee, pp. 36-37