

Message Six

**The Shaping Function of the Law of the Spirit of Life
and the Goal of God's Economy**

Scripture Reading: Rom. 8:2, 26-29

- I. God's goal in His economy is to produce many sons for His corporate expression—Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26; 4:5-7; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 21:7.**
- II. The function of the law of the Spirit of life is to shape us, to conform us to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:2, 29:**
 - A. Every kind of life has four basic features: the life-essence, the life-power, the life-law, and the life-shape.
 - B. The law of the Spirit of life regulates the shape of life; this shaping function of the law of the Spirit of life requires the growth of life, for the law of the Spirit of life functions only as life grows.
 - C. The shaping by the law of the Spirit of life is the meaning of *conformed* in Romans 8:29.
 - D. Eventually, through the function of the law of the Spirit of life, we all will become mature sons of God, and God will have His corporate expression—Rev. 21:7, 10-11.
- III. God accomplishes His economy by dispensing Himself into us as the law of the Spirit of life to make us the reproduction of the firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:2, 29:**
 - A. The firstborn Son of God is the prototype, the standard model, for the mass reproduction of the many sons of God, who are His many brothers, to constitute His Body for God's corporate expression—1:4; 8:14, 29; 12:4-5.
 - B. God's way to make us the reproduction of the firstborn Son of God is to work His living prototype, the firstborn Son, into our being—Eph. 3:16-17a.
 - C. The firstborn Son of God, as the indwelling prototype, automatically works within us as the law of the Spirit of life to conform us to His image—Rom. 8:2, 29.
 - D. The Body of Christ as the one new man is the corporate reproduction of the firstborn Son of God—12:4-5.
- IV. Conformation, which is higher than transformation, denotes the shaping of life—8:29; 12:2:**
 - A. Transformation is inward and is a matter of essence; conformation is outward and is a matter of shape.
 - B. Transformation involves a change in form, whereas conformation involves the shaping of this form into a certain image—the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God.
- V. As the divine life grows within us and transforms us, the law of the Spirit of life functions spontaneously to conform us to the image of Christ, the firstborn Son of God—8:2, 29:**
 - A. God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son so that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers—Eph. 1:5; Rom. 1:4; 8:29:

1. Before the foundation of the world, God predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son; this means that conformation is our destiny.
 2. We are to be conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son, Christ as the first God-man, that we may be a group of God-men who are exactly like Him—1 John 3:2.
 3. Through conformation, God will obtain the corporate expression of His firstborn Son with His many sons to accomplish His eternal purpose—Eph. 3:11.
- B. To be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God is to be saved in life from self-likeness, that is, from the expression, the appearance, of the self—Rom. 5:10:
1. As Christ is the embodiment and expression of God, so self is the embodiment and expression of Satan—Matt. 16:21-24.
 2. The expression of the self is self-likeness; we all need to be saved in the life of Christ from such an expression.
 3. When we have been saved from our self-likeness and have been fully conformed to the image of Christ as the firstborn Son of God, we will be sons of God in reality, and in every respect we will bear the appearance of God's sons—Heb. 2:10.
- C. In order to be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son for God's corporate expression, we need to be delivered from peculiarity—1 John 3:2:
1. Peculiarity, the final expression of our natural life, is our biased and warped characteristics.
 2. Our peculiarity frustrates us from the richer experiences of Christ, from living Christ, and from being built up as the Body of Christ—Eph. 3:8; 4:16; Phil. 1:20-21a.
 3. The ground within us for Christ has been subtly and hiddenly usurped and possessed by our peculiarity; thus, peculiarity is a terrible antichrist in our being.
- D. If we would be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God, we need to be conformed to Christ's death by the power of His resurrection—Phil. 3:10:
1. Christ's death is a mold in which we are being shaped into His image as the firstborn Son of God.
 2. Unless we are conformed to the death of Christ, we cannot be conformed to the image of Christ.
 3. As we are undergoing the process of transformation and conformation, we are being conformed to the death of Christ.
- E. The Spirit intercedes for us and all things are working together for us, that we may be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son—Rom. 8:26-29:
1. The Spirit intercedes for us that we may be fully conformed to the image of Christ—vv. 26-27.
 2. Christ is the pattern, and the Spirit prays that everything that happens to us will mold us into this pattern, into the image of God's firstborn Son.
 3. God the Father is sovereign, arranges everything, and knows what is best for us; He answers the Spirit's intercession by causing all things to work together for good—that we would be conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God for the corporate expression of the Triune God—vv. 28-29.