

The Whole Counsel of God
Study 9

THE CREATED CONSTITUTION OF MAN

***“Then the LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living being.”***

(Genesis 2.7)

Genesis gives us two accounts of the creation of man. We have examined the first account given in Gen 1.26-27. Now we turn to the second given in Gen 2.7. This second account opens up to us the view of the constitution of man. Here the theme of man having a body, soul and spirit is introduced in the Bible. In the present study, we will seek to establish a biblical orientation for our examination of what the Bible teaches about the human constitution.

A. GENESIS 2.7 IN CONTEXT: THE VANTAGE POINT FOR VIEWING THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION

Before we go into Gen 2.7, we must step back and see this verse in its context. This move will prove to be of vital importance in that it will give us the biblical vantage point for our study.

It is always wise to begin a study of a verse by looking at the context. What is true of the verse is true of the doctrine of man. Genesis 2 does not give us a view of man in himself. We are made to see man within the larger narrative that begins with Gen 2.4 and goes on to Gen 3.24. What we are taking note of in the creation account is true of the whole Bible. Man is never viewed in and of himself. The scriptures never isolate man as a subject. He is always presented in his living context, and we must gain our understanding of man in that setting.

1. The beginning of history (Gen 2.4)

The narrative begins with these words: “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created” (Gen 2.4). The Hebrew word behind the word *account* in the *NASB* is *thōlēdōth* which is used for the various genealogies in Genesis. The *KJV* has preserved this sense in its rendering of Gen 2.4: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.” The statement, “These are the generations of...” is found ten times in Genesis, and after the first occurrence it always introduces the generations of a family head. The genealogy is the record of the offspring that issued from the head (i.e., the patriarch). The history of that family is given in the story of the sons of the family head. This story follows the genealogy and is the historical account of that genealogical record. The backbone of Genesis is formed by these ten genealogical records. We must understand Gen 2.4ff. in light of this.

Genesis 2.4 does not introduce a second creation account in the sense of an alternative to Gen 1.1-2.3. The opening line of this verse indicates that now the subject is that which comes out of the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was related in Gen 1.1-2.3. Within the creation of the heavens and the earth, God made man, but in the creation of man that being through whom the history of the world would be made was brought forth from the earth.

Genesis 1.1-2.3 does not present to us a history of events on earth. God is above the universe and created all by his word. In the sequence of his creative acts, God made time (the seven days), but there is no historical development of events within this time. Genesis 2.4 introduces a completely different view. Here God created man within the creation. God acted in time and space as he created Adam and his personal

world (i.e., his living space) around him. God set up man to act and to take things within creation beyond God's work as creator. Man was set up to be a creature that makes history.

What we have seen from Gen 2.4 bears significantly on our study of the human constitution as presented in Gen 2.7. We are not given to see what it means for man to have a body, soul and spirit in terms of his own being. Rather, we are made to see how man was set up to act in creation and make history. As we read of his action, we see how this being's constitution works.

2. God in the history

Genesis 2.4 signals a shift in perspective. The first part of the verse speaks of "the heavens and the earth when they were created." This refers to the account of Gen 1.1-2.3 which presents the creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1.1 and 2.1). The second part of Gen 2.4 introduces a significant shift. Now, it is not "the heavens and the earth" but "earth and heaven". This shift reflects the different positions of God in his work as creator. In Genesis 1 God is above creation and not within it. He creates first the heavens and then the earth. In Genesis 2 we see God acting on earth.

a. The ground as the stage of history

The narrative begins in Gen 2.5-6 by taking note of the setting for the creation of man. Notice, that the condition of the earth is viewed. The ground did not produce of itself the agriculture needed to sustain human life. The earth needed man who would cultivate it to make it an environment to sustain human life. We must keep in mind that there is no thought of animals as a ready made supply of food for man. Man was to live directly from the ground via the plants that grow for food. But, to bring the productivity to this level, man who lives from the ground is needed to cultivate the ground. There is a basic and profound insight in this. The earth needs man to serve its role in sustaining human life. God created the world for man to work the earth so that the world can reach its created potential. Man needs creation, and creation needs man to develop its potential as the realm in which human life can live and unfold.

The focus set on the ground in Gen 2.5-6 continues through the rest of the creation account. God begins his work by forming man from the ground. God is working from the bottom up. His next work is planting the Garden by causing trees to grow out of the ground (v 9). Man did not have to raise his own living environment. God did this as a gift to man. Next, God forms animals out of the ground (v 19). Finally, God puts man to sleep and forms the woman from his rib. In Genesis 3 God walks and speaks in the garden. All ends with man turned out of the Garden to toil on the ground and return to dust (3.17-19). Earth is the stage of history, and the vantage point for "the generation of the heavens and the earth" is from earth.

b. The divine title

With the shift from God creating the universe to God setting up history on earth, there comes a shift in the divine title. In Gen 1.1-2.3 God is called *Elohim*, whereas in the narrative of Genesis 2 and 3 he is called the LORD (YHWH) God (*Elohim*). In the OT, YHWH is God's name by which he is known in his covenant relationship with Israel (Exodus 3). The title YHWH designates God as the one who carries through what he is in his relationship with his people by his own self-determination as that is revealed in his word.

God is the creator of all who is above all (Genesis 1). He is also the God who steps into his creation to make history (Genesis 2). Genesis 2 shows how God takes his place on the stage of history, the ground. He stepped in by creating man in a personal relationship with him. This remains true for the rest of the Bible: God takes his place within the world in his relation to mankind. Only by his relationship with man is God in a relationship within time and space.

In Genesis 2.4-3.24, God holds the first and the last place. He sets up history by creating man, setting up his environment and giving man his mandate and duty. Man is then left to act on his own as a significant actor.

In his action, as he sins, he determines the course of history within the conditions set by God. God comes in and takes over and directs the course of history through his judgments. God ever has the first and the last word.

It is important for us to take special note of the setting for man's action in the world. The set up of history is not presented in Genesis 1. It is not the case that God is in heaven, above all and working by his powerful word, while man is left on earth to represent God and make history. This would leave to God the transcendent power and place of the creator and give man the role of determining the course of things on earth. Gen 2.4-3.24 shows us that man was set up to act and make history only in relation to God as LORD.

When we approach Gen 2.7 from the point of view of the personal and historical relationship that God set up with man, we begin to sense the weight of the simple description of the creation. The whole history of the Bible issues forth from Gen 2.7. God created man with his unique constitution so that through man God would be revealed as LORD. Genesis 2.7 opens up to us a view of man's created constitution. But, this is not out of an interest in human psychology. It is to lay the foundation of the unfolding relationship of God and man throughout history.

B. MAN AS PRESENTED IN GENESIS 2

So far we have moved around Gen 2.7. Now we will go into the verse. Here we must begin by deciding which question we will bring to our study. This verse gives us an outline of the make up or constitution of man: he has a body made from the ground, a spirit from God and a soul. So, it is legitimate to bring to Gen 2.7 the question, *what* is the constitution of man? If we do this, we will quickly be chased out of this text. Genesis 2.7 does not define or give any description of the key terms. For this we must go to the rest of the Bible, and we will do this in the next study. At present, we should only anticipate a point that will be demonstrated then. The breath of life in Gen 2.7 is the same as the spirit in man in other biblical passages. Also, the Hebrew behind "living being" in the *NASB* is the expression, living soul. That the thing formed from the dust is the body is obvious. So, body, soul and spirit are found in Gen 2.7.

Genesis 2.7 points to what is involved in the human constitution, but does not go further. What it does focus on is *how* the human being was constituted. Here the verse gives a full picture. We are bringing this question to our present study: how was man constituted? In the next study we will take up the question: what is his constitution?

1. How man was constituted

a. What Gen 2.7 shows

Genesis 2.7 first presents man's body. The view of the human body is not of its anatomy, form or function but of its material origin. God formed it of the dust from the ground. Man's material relationship to the ground is put into the foreground here.

The breath of life in man is presented next. Again we are not told what that breath involves. What is brought out is that God directly breathed it into man, and this direct in-breathing sets man off from animals that also have the breath of life. So, what is presented is the source of the breath of life in God and the intimacy of the communication of it.

At last we are told that man became a living soul. We are not told what a soul is but simply that man is a soul as a result of the breath of life being breathed into a body of dust. As a living soul, man has his own identity. He is not two things held together, a mixture of dust and spirit. Rather, in the combination of spirit and the body of dust man is a living soul or being.

Genesis 2.7 shows us man is a composite being. Flesh from dust and spirit from God are joined together to make man the living being that he is. Thus man is related to the ground and to God. He is related downward and upward, and in this he is an authentic self who can relate to others.

b. The order of creation

We must also take careful note of the order in which God made man. The body from the dust comes first. The impartation of spirit from God is the second step. This sets the biblical understanding of man. The Bible does not present man as a spirit and then clothe that spirit with a body. If that were the case, then man would be a spirit who had a body. The fact that man was formed of dust and the breath of life was breathed into the material form means that man is flesh (or at an elemental level, dust) to which spirit is given. This is how he is seen in the OT. In pronouncing the death sentence on Adam, God said nothing like, "You are a spirit, and to the state of a disembodied spirit you will return." No, God said, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen 3.19). This agrees with what we saw in Gen 1.26. Man is introduced, not as the image of God but as Adam, the person from the ground (the *adamah*). As we will see in the next study, the OT view of man is that he is *flesh*. Angels are spirits, and people are flesh.

Man as a soul comes in third place in Gen 2.7. The soul and the spirit are not the same. Through the grant of spirit man as dust is made alive, and the result is the living soul that man is. What man is as having his own identity comes last. It is the result of the union of dust and spirit.

c. Dust and the breath of life

Once we see that we are identified by the body of dust, we can appreciate the significance of the fact that God breathed the breath of life into the formed dust. The dust has no life power. We are not to think that life is inherent in our flesh or that it comes to us from what we take from the world around us. This speaks in a special way to the modern way of thinking. The supposed scientific view limits itself to that which is empirical, i.e., what can be observed and handled, and will only deal with the body and its chemistry as formed by its physical environment. The phenomenon of life seen in the dynamics of organisms is viewed as that which emerges when matter is organized at a certain level of complexity. In the evolutionary outlook, the higher levels of organization are brought about by the way organisms interact with their material environment. Scientists have by no means discovered a set of laws that explains this. All they can do is grade organisms according to complexity and appeal to the hierarchy as their proof, and this is faulty reasoning. The many levels of complexity in organic life have to be explained. By itself, the hierarchy explains nothing. To make up for the lack of scientific law, long periods of time are appealed to, as if time can achieve what cannot be explained by proper scientific laws. The assumption that given enough time things can happen is not scientific.

We should also take note that the spirit of life with its source in God cannot be an object of scientific observation. All that we can observe with our eyes is the dynamic effect of the breath of life on the body. The Bible makes no claim that all that it says is within the realm of science, i.e., what people can observe objectively. At the source of all is the invisible realm of spirit, and this is not seen. It is a matter of faith (Heb 11.1). This applies totally to God who cannot be seen and in part to man who is related to God on one side of his constitution. As for science, what we can contend for is that honest science must acknowledge that the scope of scientific observation is limited. Science that wants to limit reality to the human field of vision is not truly scientific. It is an exercise in denial of the most important side of reality. The body formed of dust is within the field of scientific investigation. The spirit is not.

Genesis 2.7 rules out any doctrine that sees life emerging out of chemistry. Christians are not to try the back door to get into the club of secular science by appealing to the fact that God created matter (the dust) with such magical properties that life emerges as the dust is organized at higher levels. Then the verse would have to be rewritten as, "Then the LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground (i.e., organized matter at the level at which the phenomenon of life emerges), and man became a living soul." Man would be dynamically related to the ground and would be related to God only as the power forming the dust. Man's relationship with the ground would be his only relationship with God. This is exactly what Genesis 2 and 3 testify against. We should look into this more carefully.

We have pointed out that man is related downward, in his physical being, to the ground and upward, in his spirit, to God. We must be careful not to assume from this a kind of dualism in which man's relationship with the ground is opposed to his relationship with God. This would bring in a dichotomy of spirit and body. God is the creator of the earth, and this is covered in Gen 2.4. God created the heavens and the earth, and what Genesis 2 presents comes out of that. Also, God formed man out of the dust from the ground. This means that man's very body of dust is God's creation. The whole man, body, spirit and soul, is of God and for God. This is important. Man is not a split being as if he were made of two natures pulling in two directions. The breath of life from God made the dust alive so that the life given by God lives through the body.

The spirit and the body form a unity in man, but they establish the two ways man is related. At the source of his life, he is related directly to God and not to God via the ground. Through his body he is related to the world, and the body is the organ through which he lives out his life given by God. The whole spiritual discipline of man on earth is to establish in his own experience the true balance of his created relationships. He is never to take his life from the created order which is placed under his authority. He is ever to acknowledge and take his life from God, and live that out through his body in the world. This places him over creation.

For man to maintain his transcendence over the lower creations around him, he must glorify God as God. If he refuses to do this, he will sink and place himself under the world around him, serving the creature rather than the creator. Paul lays out this gruesome reality in Romans 1.

2. Activating the human constitution

Man was created as body with spirit to be a living soul in order to live and act in the world. The narrative that follows from Gen 2.7 shows how God set up man's life, and the order of this narrative answers to the order in which God made man. God created man and then set him up so that he would activate his constitution.

a. Man in relation to the ground (Gen 2.8-16)

Man continually takes his physical being from the ground by having to maintain his body by eating of that which grows from the ground. This is the first thing for which the creator provided. We read in Gen 2.8-16 that the first thing God did after creating man was plant the Garden for man to cultivate and keep (Gen 2.15) and from which he could freely eat (v 16). Man who is from the ground lives from the ground. The material creation provides man with his occupation and sustenance.

Genesis 2.15-16 sets a fundamental law of human existence on earth. God gave man the work of cultivating and keeping the garden, and on the basis of this he gave him the freedom to eat. The apostle Paul stated this as a principle of discipline in 2Thess 3.10: "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either." Paul carried this creational principle set in the Garden of Eden over to the spiritual ministry (1Cor 10.3-11; 1Tim 17-18). Life in this world is in the body and must ever be under the order set in creation. The notion of a spiritual life that is uprooted from the ground in that it takes the means of life without having undertaken the duty of gainful labour is ungodly. There is no room for a life of spiritual pursuit that is not founded on the relationship between man and the ground set in creation. This is an essential part of the doctrine of man.

b. Man in relation to God (Gen 2.17)

The planting of the Garden for food (Gen 2.9a) is followed by the notice that there was the tree of life in the midst of the Garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2.9b). Verses 15-17 are parallel to this. God gave man his mandate to keep the Garden and eat from the trees (vv 15-16) and the prohibition against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v 17).

As we have seen, the theme of the trees for food concern man's relation to the ground. The two trees concern man's relation to God. The theme of life and death takes up what God gave to man in breathing into him the breath of life. The tree of life shows that when God gave man the breath of life, man was not given immortality. God gave him life, and he could live forever by eating of the tree of life. This is very significant for our understanding of Gen 2.7. We saw that on the side of the body, God set up man to maintain his life in an active relationship with the ground. Now we see the same on the other side of man's constitution. God breathed into man the breath of life so that man became alive, but he had to be maintained in life. Life was not a matter that man could leave in the past. He was engaged in the ongoing relationship of life, and for this he had to turn to that which was outside of him.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil touches on the grant of life in Gen 2.7 in two ways. Through this tree God set before man the possibility of losing life, of dying. The tempter pointed out the other way the tree of the knowledge of good and evil touched on God's relationship with man. By eating of it, mankind would be like God (Gen 3.5), and God verified this in Gen 3.22. God alone was the source of life for man, and man was not to take the place of God.

God gave man the relationship of life and then gave him an active role in that relationship. Man cultivated and kept the Garden and ate of it, but this food only maintained his body. It did not maintain his life. Adam would only be maintained in life by obedience to God's command which called man to deny himself that which belongs to God only.

c. Man in relation to other souls (Gen 2.18-25)

The third aspect of man in Gen 2.7 is his living soul. His relationship with other living souls is taken up in Gen 2.18-25.

In the OT, animals along with human beings are living souls. The Hebrew word for soul is *nephesh*, and the expression "living souls" is used for animals in Gen 1.20-21, 24. This same expression is used for animals in Gen 2.19.

In the OT, man is not set apart from animals by having a soul or a spirit. Animals are called souls and have spirit, the breath of life from God. The difference between man and animals is set in the way God created man. Of the animals it simply says, "Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast..." (Gen 2.19). In being formed from the ground they are like man. This is verified by human observation. The human body is from the ground just like that of animals. But notice that there is no mention of God breathing into animals the breath of life. Where the creation account sets man apart is in the directness and intimacy by which God imparted the breath of life or spirit to man. What man is as a soul is the result of spirit given to him. With a more intimate and fuller connection with God in life, man is a soul that is superior to animals. Man's soul is categorically above that of animals because of his superior endowment of the spirit of life.

Man's apartness from animals is activated in Gen 2.18-20. When the animals were brought before man, it is man that named the animals and not the other way around. This remains true to this day! In naming the animals, Adam defined them by what they were to him and in his eyes. But, Adam did not find any of these living souls as "a helper suitable for him."

Adam's need was for company. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." The animals left Adam in his loneliness. Adam himself discovered that in these souls he did not find the company that he needed. He could not be in that communion of life which is the full interchange of all that he was. The animals only gave Adam the experience of ruling over souls, over living beings, as God had purposed in Gen 1.26.

To meet Adam's need, God formed the woman from him. When she was presented to him, Adam named her. The name he gave and the poem he composed on the occasion show that in her he found one who matched his being fully. As Gen 1.27 shows, both male and female were created in the image of God, and together they received the mandate to subdue the earth and to rule over animals (Gen 1.28).

God created man to be a living soul, but this raised a need. Adam needed a relationship in which life could be fully shared and all that he was could be activated. In Gen 1.26 we read that God made man in his image to have man rule over the animals. This means that animals activated Adam's created capacity to rule over living beings. The fact that they are inferior to man establishes man naturally over them. But, those capacities that Adam had to which animals cannot respond were not activated in the relationship of man to animals. For this, Adam needed a partner that shared his full nature.

In the past, the subject of mankind's relationship to animals and of the relationship between male and female has not been a major theme (if it was even taken up) in the doctrine of man. Times have changed. The doctrine of evolution has overturned the categorical difference between man and animals that we see in scripture. Along with this, pagan worldviews have made a major comeback, which have fuelled philosophical opposition to and subversion of what has been accepted for long as the biblical truth and Christian view on animals.

Along with this tide, we also have to contend with the way feminism has challenged the biblical teaching on the male and female relationship. This challenge has not been left to the domestic and economic spheres. It has moved into the churches, and the onslaught has been taken to the Holy of Holies in the Highest to perform a gender change in the revelation of the Most High. God designed us so that we reflect on earth what is in heaven. This works in a reverse way in our sin. If we change things on earth, we will under the pressures of our created constitution have to change our thoughts about what is in heaven.

The study of biblical doctrine is not to be abstract. It must be pursued to realize the truth on earth in the life of believers and of the church. So, we will have to take up the relationship between man and animals and the subject of male and female in the divine human relationship. For now, we will only point out that in the relationships of living beings, man must activate what God has made him as a living being.

C. MAN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF GEN 2.7

1. The image of God and the human constitution

Genesis 1.26-28 gives the first account of the creation of man. Here we do not see man. We only hear God speaking as he deliberates within himself (v 26) and as he gives his decree for man (v 28). From these verses we learn what man is in the purposes of God. God made him in his image, and this established man's relationship with God. God made man to rule over the earth, and this determined man's relationship with the world.

In Gen 2.7 we do not hear God speaking from above. Rather, we see God making man within creation. Here we see man as we know him in our experience. His physical body which we can see and handle is made from the ground. The breath of life is breathed in by God. We all experience this breath in the experience of life. It is experienced as the mysterious life force within us. Like breath, it is invisible but felt and experienced. The result of God's creative activity is man as a living soul who has his own identity. He is a "self" who relates to all around him.

Genesis 2.7 shows us how what man is in God's purposes (as stated in Gen 1.26) is realized in man's make up. In our earlier study, we noticed that man was set off from animals by the nature of the word of the creator. God simply decreed that the earth bring forth animals (Gen 1.24) and made them "of the earth" (v 25). But, when it came to the creation of man, God turned within and deliberated: "Let Us make man in our image..." (Gen 1.26). This is answered by the difference between the creation of man and animals in Genesis 2. God breathed into the nostrils of the human form the breath of life (2.7). God gave man spirit or the life breath directly from within himself. When it comes to God making animals, all it says is that God formed them out of the ground. The close link between the human spirit and God points to what it is in man that makes him the image of God.

The full endowment of the breath of life from God made the human body alive. The human body makes man a part of the physical world, and through this body the spirit imparted from God makes man live and function as God's image in the world.

Genesis 2.7 is not so much about the elements that make up man as about how in his constitution man is related. God set up man's world in such a way that all that went into his creation and what he became was to be activated. Man was created as a related being, related to the earth, to God and to other living beings. In this related existence, man is to live out what it means for him to be the image of God. There is a practical point to this. Man is what he is by God's doing and not by his own, but he must live out what God has made him. The balance of our existence is one of being and doing. When we teach something about what we are, we must give instruction on what we are to do.

2. Goal and process

There is one significant difference between Gen 1.26-28 and Genesis 2. In the first creation account, God stated the purpose and goal of mankind's existence on earth—he is to reign. The gospel of Jesus and the eschatological vision and hope of the NT take up this goal. The goal of history is the realization of God's purpose that mankind reign. It is the kingdom of God.

The second creation account is marked off by the lack of any statement of purpose or goal. Rather than hearing God speak, we simply see the process of his action. The creation of man moves through three steps (Gen 2.7). This is followed by God planting the Garden for man (vv 8-14). When God speaks, he simply gives instructions for man's action in the Garden (vv 15-17). No goal is set. Then God engages man in the formation of his relationships (vv 18-25). After this, man acts and God steps in to direct history (Gen 3). God does not set the final goal but ordains the course of life in the fallen world (vv 14-19). From mankind's exile from the Garden (vv 20-24), the history of the world that we know takes off.

The focus on the events making history is set in Gen 2.4. Genesis 1.26-28 decrees the end from the beginning. Genesis 2.4ff. sets in motion the process from the beginning toward that end. The study of the human constitution must take its direction from this. Man was created as body, soul and spirit to be fully engaged in the process of the unfolding of God's relationship with the world. The scriptures only give us insights into the human body, soul and spirit in the process of man's living, dying and final rising. We must avoid the temptation of trying to dissect man and separate the three. Rather, we must learn what is involved in the body, soul and spirit by observing and analysing man in the process of human experience. But, we can only see this as man is seen in relation to God and in light of God's word.

3. God and man

We should also reflect on the role of God in Genesis 2. Man does not make history on his own. It is God who stepped into time and space to make history through his personal relationship with man. Here we must get the balance of the relationship right. It is not that man was there, as if he emerged from the ground, and then God joined him and took up a relationship in time. No, God as the LORD stepped in and in the very formation of man as body, soul and spirit put himself into a personal relationship within the world. In this relationship, God has the first and the last word, and man is given a significant role within God's action.

We must always keep in mind that man was set up in creation by his very constitution within a relationship with God. Man's being is only correctly understood if it is seen as aligned with God as God has created him, and this includes his whole being. It is a serious error to view man only within his physical environment. The secular scientific outlook makes this mistake. This secular outlook is a systematic spiritual suicide. The dimension of spirit is systematically denied. What is seen of man as a living being is reduced to the ground—to chemistry and the influence of the physical environment. Life is denied, for nothing is tolerated that is above matter, and the state of being alive is reduced to the level of what does not live. Without spirit, the soul dies. Man as a living being explains life away. He is clever, in fact a genius, in doing this, but how foolish!

The human mind has also erred on the other side in the false spiritual outlook that wants to see man as an essentially spiritual being in relation to the divine but divorced from his relationship to the earth via his body. This outlook has no true grasp of what spirit is or who God as the LORD is. It looks to what is nonmaterial, but it does not see the reality of spirit. The spirit that God imparted to man is not something that is at odds with the body or that pulls away from it. Rather, it makes the body alive and sets man up to live in his body to do God's will within the world. This is vital for true godliness. The Spirit of God makes our spirits alive so that life works in us to sanctify our bodies which will eventually be resurrected.

The human mind will err in all possible ways. We have looked at the error of seeing the body apart from the spirit and of pursuing the realm of spirit and the relationship with the divine in a divorce from the body. Both are death. Many people have a more naïve outlook. They simply see themselves in terms of their living soul. They only focus on their ego and see the world as it relates to them and their needs and wants. This mindset can be raw and thoughtless in those that take no thought of what is beyond themselves. But, it can be in the heart of professing Christians. God's love and will, church and the world and all other things are only integrated in the self (see 2Tim 3.1-5).

If we try to define ourselves from within ourselves, we will focus on one or another aspect of our experience as human beings. If we define ourselves by God the creator, we will see all sides of our being integrated in God's relation to us and to the world. Genesis 2.7 gives a comprehensive view of our make up and puts all of its aspects into the right order and unifies us as a whole.

What the Bible teaches about creation is foundational for all of life and for all of God's revelation and work. God always builds squarely on the foundation of creation. This gives Genesis 2.7 a key role in the way we understand ourselves and the way God works in us.