

Christ—Our Wisdom and Righteousness

*“Of him are ye in
Christ Jesus, who
of God is made
unto us wisdom,
and righteousness,
and sanctification,
and redemption.”
—I Corinthians 1:30*

BEGINNING WITH THIS issue of *The Dawn*, each month during 2013 we will be examining various aspects of the subject, “The Mind of Christ.” This phrase is taken from the words of Paul in I Corinthians 2:16, which reads, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” Paul, in another place, says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5) Indeed, it is only as we develop a mind and mindset similar to that of our Master, that we will be faithful to our Heavenly Father.

An honest and humble appraisal of ourselves must lead to the inevitable conclusion that, as members of the fallen and sinful race of mankind, we have nothing of virtue or character by which we

can commend ourselves to God with any hope of being acceptable to him on the basis of our own righteousness. This means that our sonship privileges in his family are only possible through the abundance of his grace in providing a way whereby he could be “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:26) Salvation, and all the divine blessings incidental thereto, are ours not because of our own merit, but because of the Heavenly Father’s love in giving his son to be our Redeemer. Well has the apostle put it, saying, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”—Eph. 2:8

The value of salvation is appreciated most by those who, having a proper evaluation of their own undone condition, realize their great need for it. Indeed, the riches of divine favor are represented in the provision the Heavenly Father has made through Christ. Those who come to God in simple faith and full devotion, may not only enjoy peace with him, but have access to the inner chambers of his grace, and therein rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5:1,2) This “great salvation,” the apostle explains, began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.—Heb. 2:3

The First Advent of Christ marked the opening of the age during which the high, or heavenly, calling of those who were to reign with him in glory was to operate. Not until he came and shed his blood as the Redeemer of mankind would it have been possible for anyone, no matter how earnestly he may have tried, to meet the conditions laid down for those who are called to glory, honor and immortality.

CHRIST—OUR WISDOM

Not only was Christ the first one to walk in the narrow way that leads to immortality, but only through his merit, and by virtue of his counsel and example, is it possible for others to walk acceptably in the same narrow way. One of the very fundamental ways in which we are to follow after his example is to seek the same quality of heavenly wisdom that he possessed. As our opening text emphasizes, Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption, or deliverance. In other words, he is all and everything to us that is necessary in order that we may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with him in the heavenly reward offered to the saints during this age. He is our ultimate example and standard in all things, and it is necessary that our mind be patterned after him.

One of the titles the Scriptures give to Jesus is that of Counselor. (Isa. 9:6) If we are to be truly wise it is essential that we follow the instructions and counsel of Christ. The wise man Solomon said, “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psa. 111:10; Prov. 9:10) To reverence God implies respect for his words of enlightenment and instruction, a respect that will lead us to fully obey his divine will.

The quality of reverence for God is necessary from the very beginning of our approach to him, for it means that we recognize his greatness and our own nothingness—his perfection of holiness, and our own depravity and unrighteousness. To recognize this is the true foundation of wisdom’s structure, for it implies a willingness and desire to put aside our own imperfect viewpoints and ways

and to accept instead the counsel and will of the Heavenly Father.

As we first approach God in this wise attitude of humility, desiring to be taught of him, one of the first lessons we learn is his wondrous provision through Christ. It is this provision, despite our imperfections, whereby we are able to enjoy the blessings which his grace promises to all who long to be in harmony with him—those who “pant” after him “as the hart panteth after the water brooks.”—Ps. 42:1

An honest recognition of our own imperfections, hence the need of Christ as our Redeemer, is the first step in wisdom’s way, but we need also to recognize the wisdom of making a full consecration of ourselves to do the Father’s will. The recognition of our own lack of wisdom would be largely in vain should we fail to devote ourselves fully to him who has promised to give to his own that wisdom which is from above. (James 1:5; 3:17) While the Word of God is filled with all the necessary counsel to make us truly wise, its instructions become the guiding star of our lives only when we give ourselves unreservedly in consecration to the doing of the will of God represented therein.

Christ is our wisdom in this fuller sense also because he is to us the living Word of God. That is, in the perfect example of his life, we have patterned for us the manner in which God’s instructions apply in the lives of the consecrated. He is the Captain of our salvation, the Forerunner, the Head of the body, who, being guided by the words of God himself, has shown us the true meaning of those instructions as they affect the lives of those who are following in his footsteps.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

The Apostle James gives us an overall picture of heavenly wisdom, saying that it is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17) In Christ we have a revealing example of the manner in which these various elements of heavenly wisdom operate in one who is fully devoted to the doing of God’s will. Earthly wisdom functions along lines quite contrary to the principles mentioned by James. It is selfish, therefore its objective is to promote self, frequently at the expense of purity, and often by strife, arrogance, and stubbornness. Where selfishness reigns supreme, it resorts even to cruelty to attain its ends, while personal favoritisms and hypocrisy are considered virtues if they can be used to attain the ends sought by the selfish heart.

How different, as the apostle has shown, is the heavenly wisdom which is in harmony with the divine character of love. How wonderfully did Christ display the love qualities of heavenly wisdom as he went about in the divine service doing good. Christ was first “pure.” He was this by nature, even as a child, having been born perfect. His moral and intellectual purity was sealed by his obedience to the Law Covenant. He was pure also in his wholehearted devotion to the divine will from the time of his consecration at Jordan until the very end of his earthly pilgrimage. With Jesus, it was not a case of doing some things for self and some things for God. He was all for the doing of his Father’s will only, and fully in harmony with the instructions of the written Word wherein that will was revealed.

Neither men nor devils could turn the Master aside from the purity of a wholehearted, absolute devotion to his Father's will. Satan, the prince of devils, tried it. Near the beginning of Jesus' ministry Satan brought pressure upon him in the form of subtle temptations to take a course of "halfway" devotion to his consecration vows. However, Jesus was wise and resisted the attack. He was wise in his own right as a perfect human being, but even more importantly, he was wise toward God in that he not only knew the divine will for him, but hesitated not a moment in his resolute determination to be wholly loyal thereto. Thus, his response to the Adversary was direct and decisive: "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Matt. 4:10

"THEN PEACEABLE"

The Apostle Paul admonished, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." (Rom. 12:18) He knew, from his many experiences in the narrow way, and as had been exemplified in Jesus' life, that putting purity first in the consecrated life means that we will not always be able to dwell in peace in the world and with the worldly-minded. Had Christ not put purity first, and had he yielded to the Adversary's suggestions to compromise the divine will, he doubtless would have avoided much of the persecution that came upon him. Had he taken the course pleasing to "the god of this world," he could have dwelt peaceably with those who do the will of that god.—II Cor. 4:4

Jesus was not a promoter of strife. One of the prophetic titles descriptive of the spirit of his

mission to earth was that of the "Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In his sermon on the mount, Jesus said the peacemakers are considered blessed of God. (Matt. 5:9) The gracious words which fell from his consecrated lips were such as to promote peace and goodwill in the lives of those whose hearts were not calloused by selfishness, and whose minds were not blinded by the darkness of this world. Because the darkness hateth the light, however, the Master's words of peace and goodwill stirred up enmity against him from the world, an enmity that was not satisfied until the Prince of Peace hung limp and lifeless upon the cross.

In following the Master's example, we may not be confronted with similar large and dramatic issues to test the purity and wholeheartedness of our devotion to God. Even so, his loyalty to the principles of righteousness in the big as well as in the little things of life, constitutes a perfect guide for us irrespective of the manner in which we may be tested.

Putting purity first in the carrying out of our consecration vows will cause us the loss of worldly friendships. It may even test the depth of our devotion as it applies to our association with some who profess to be followers of the Master. Where issues of the Truth and its service are concerned, a peace-at-any-price attitude is not wise. It does not conform to the example of Christ who, by the appointment of our Heavenly Father, has been made unto us the embodiment of heavenly wisdom. Worldly wisdom often compromises principle in order to avoid suffering, but Jesus did not do this. He was guided by his knowledge of the divine will, even though it

meant travail and sorrow, and thereby proved himself worthy to be the Savior of the world.—Isa. 53:11

“GENTLE, . . . EASY TO BE ENTREATED”

Following the course of heavenly wisdom must lead to gentleness of demeanor and character. The coarse, rough ways of the flesh and the world should give place, as we make progress in the narrow way, to genuine refinement and gentleness of heart and disposition. Christ was pleasingly gentle and so “easy to be entreated” that even the children were completely at ease in his presence. Those who sought for the blessings he could bestow were given audience and consideration even though, in some cases, they succeeded only in touching the hem of his garment. The Master’s gentleness was in keeping with his purity. He was gentle to those deserving gentleness, but stern in his rebuttal of the hypocritical Pharisees.

In our desire for peace, and in our disposition to promote it, we, like the Master, should be gentle. We should have an open heart toward those who cross our pathway, and for whom, in God’s providence, we may have blessings of comfort to share, if they would but receive them. Yet, as with Jesus, so with us, we will not be easily entreated to walk contrary to the will of God, or to lend our support by sympathy, word, or deed to anything that is out of harmony with the spirit of heavenly wisdom.

“MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS”

Heavenly wisdom rejoices in mercy. How beautifully Jesus exemplified this quality of the divine character, both in his

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(Continued from page 31) teaching and manner of life. When he was asked how far one should go in forgiving, he gave that “seventy times seven” formula of divine mercy. Such mercy, when manifested in the Christian life, serves to bypass nearly all friction and disputes that otherwise rob followers of the Master of the fullness of joy in the Lord that should be theirs. Whether in our individual lives as followers of Christ, in our homes, or in our fellowship with one another, the mercy element of heavenly wisdom serves to sweeten all of our experiences and to make us more like our Father in heaven.

The “good fruits” associated with heavenly wisdom are the fruits of the Spirit. The growth of such fruit, and its proper ripening, will inevitably take place in the heart which is illuminated with the wisdom from above. Here again the fullness of our devotion to God will be the measure of the fruitage developed in our lives. If we are to be full of good fruits we must be empty of self. The selfish heart of the flesh is barren. However, to the extent that self and self-will is renounced, and the will of God in Christ becomes the possessing power of our lives, there is certain to be an abundant crop of good fruit.

“WITHOUT PARTIALITY”

The Scriptures explain that “ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28) Therefore, to show partiality in our dealings with fellow-members of the body of Christ would display a lack of wisdom from above. Just as God is no respecter of persons, we who are trying to be like him must ever maintain his viewpoint, which is one of love that seeks to bestow blessings upon all—without partiality.

To be partial in our dealings with each other, or even with the world, would imply a measure of injustice. This would be contrary to the course of heavenly wisdom, and contrary to the example set by Christ. It is true that some of the disciples seemed to be more appreciated by Jesus than others, and these were granted some additional privileges. In doing this, however, the Master did not work any injustice upon the others. His nearness to Peter, James, and John was doubtless because of their greater love and understanding of him. God is not unjustly a respecter of persons, yet he makes it plain in his Word that he draws especially near to those who draw near to him.—James 4:8

“WITHOUT HYPOCRISY”

The heavenly wisdom which we see exemplified in Christ is also “without hypocrisy.” It is so pure, so peaceable, so gentle, and so merciful toward all, that there is no necessity for hypocrisy where it is in control. Those guided by heavenly wisdom must, of necessity, be out of harmony and sympathy with all that is sinful—not merely outwardly, but in their hearts. To be truly a follower of Christ, who is our wisdom, we must indeed “practice what we preach.” We are not only to outwardly support and be in sympathy with that which is pure, peaceable and gentle, but these divine qualities of heavenly wisdom must also be the adornment of our heart and inward character.

From whatever viewpoint we analyze the wisdom which is from above, we find that in the life of Christ we have a perfect example of how it should control those who are following him in the narrow

way. Not only, therefore, does the beginning of wisdom lead us to Christ as the Redeemer, but we find wisdom's perfection manifested in his every word and deed, which, by God's grace, we are trying to copy in our own lives.

CHRIST—OUR JUSTIFICATION

In addition to being our wisdom, the apostle explains that Christ is also our righteousness. In explaining this point, Paul used the Greek word *dikaiosune*, which, according to Professor Strong, literally means "equity," and specifically, "justification." Various forms of this same Greek word are used in the New Testament, and are translated as "justified," "justification," and "righteousness." As used in our text, the word could properly be translated justification.

Considering the literal meaning of the word *dikaiosune* as being equity, we have presented to us a comprehensive view of what Christ means to us in connection with our relationship to the Heavenly Father and our hope of life. He is our "equity." That is, the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice is the thing of value which gives us a standing—equity—in the sight of God, and permits us to enjoy the privileges of fellowship with the Father and his Son. The merit of Christ's righteousness is imputed to us upon the basis of our faith, giving us a standing of righteousness, or justification, before God.

No matter how perfect our heart's intentions may be toward God and righteousness—no matter how determined we are to lay down our lives in his divine service—no matter how much we appreciate the invitation to suffer with Christ, that we may

reign with him—that which makes possible the carrying out of our desires, and enables us to render acceptable sacrifice, is the equity of Christ's righteousness imputed to us by divine grace.

The fact that Christ's righteousness makes up for our deficiencies does not mean, as the apostle explains, that we can "continue in sin that grace may abound." (Rom. 6:1) We cannot hope to reach the high standard of perfection displayed in the holy and undefiled Jesus, yet we should strive toward this end. He is our example of righteousness, our pattern and guide, to show us the righteous way in all the experiences of life. We should daily wage an aggressive struggle to control our thoughts, words, and deeds, and bring them into captivity to the will of God, as expressed by the teachings and example of Christ.

It is important to us as Christians that we always keep in mind the fact that Christ is our righteousness, our justification. To remember this will help to keep us humble. The recognition of our own sinful condition, and of the wondrous provision made for us through Christ, should be indelibly impressed upon our hearts and minds each and every day of our walk in the narrow way.

This recognition is something that should serve as a touchstone of our relationship to God throughout our entire earthly pilgrimage. If at any time we feel that victories over sin and imperfection have been attained to the point where we have somewhat of our own righteousness wherewith to commend ourselves to God, we should call to mind the pit of sin and death from which we have been rescued by divine grace, and the solid rock, Christ Jesus, upon

which we have been granted the privilege of standing. (Ps. 40:2) Our continued standing with the Heavenly Father as his children depends upon Christ's righteousness to the very end of the way. Only thus will we be victorious.—Isa. 51:1; I Cor. 15:57

In the next issue of *The Dawn*, we will examine the remaining portion of our opening text, and consider how that “in Christ Jesus,” and by having his mind in us, we also receive “sanctification” and “redemption,” or deliverance. ■