

Ye Are In Christ Jesus

“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*

IN THIS LETTER TO THE church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul was speaking about God’s method in calling the weak and humble-minded ones of this earth for a place in his heavenly kingdom. He explained, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (I Cor. 1:25) The Heavenly Father wanted to show the power of his Truth and its transforming influences upon those who were of a contrite heart. The apostle further wrote, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”—vss. 27-29

GLORY IN THE LORD

He concluded this portion of his letter by stating, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (vs. 31) The apostle may have had in mind the occasion when God selected and anointed his servant David. From the scriptural record, we read, "The LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."—I Sam. 16:7

As members of the fallen and sin-sick human family, there is nothing of our fallen and condemned nature of the flesh by which we could have any standing before our Heavenly Father. All of our special privileges, and the hope of sharing with our Lord Jesus in joint-heirship with him in his future heavenly kingdom, have been made possible only through the abundance of his marvelous grace. The apostle proclaimed, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."—Rom. 3:24-26

THE GIFT OF GOD

All of the blessings associated with our salvation are available to us, not because of our own merit, but because of the Heavenly Father's love in giving

his Son to be our Redeemer. We read, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8) This special blessing is provided for those who come to God in humble faith, love, and devotion. These may have peace with him, and also have access to the inner chambers of his marvelous and wondrous grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1,2) We should be inspired by the great hope that has been set before us. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him."—Heb. 2:3

Jesus came to earth to shed his precious blood on behalf of the whole world. It will be manifest to all under the administration of his future kingdom. However, his earthly ministry also marked the beginning of this present Gospel Age during which time the invitation to the heavenly call has gone forth to those who desire to be part of the Christ, who will share in blessing all the families of the earth.

The Apostle Paul expressed his love and appreciation to God for this wonderful High Calling in his letter to the brethren at Philippi. He told them, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”—Phil. 3:13-15

In our featured scripture, Paul states that God, through our Lord Jesus, has provided us with four special blessings, and we will briefly review each of these as expressed by the apostle. They are wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Jesus was the first one to walk in the narrow way that leads to immortality, and it is only through his merit, virtue, and counsel that it is possible for any of us to walk in the same narrow way and share the same hope. Therefore, all things necessary for our development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus have been provided that we may be faithful in our new spiritual life and share as joint-heirs with him in his future heavenly kingdom.

CHRIST OUR WISDOM

The apostle has written that the first blessing we receive from Christ is ‘wisdom,’ and Solomon said, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy [One] is understanding.” (Prov. 9:10) The word ‘fear’ in this scripture means reverence and has been better translated in some versions of the Bible. It suggests the necessary and proper attitude of reverence that all of God’s children should have toward him. If we are to be truly wise, it is essential that we follow the teachings of God’s Word of Truth. It suggests having respect for his wonderful words of enlightenment and instruction that will lead us to faithfulness and zeal in our consecration to him.

In the marvelous Word of God, we read, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”—Rom. 11:33-36

Reverence for God is important from the very beginning of our walk in newness of life with Christ Jesus. It points to having a humble recognition of his greatness and perfection of holiness, and our own depravity and unrighteousness. To recognize this is the true foundation of wisdom, for it implies a willingness and desire to put aside our own imperfect ways, and to accept instead the divine will and counsel. Approaching God in this wise attitude of humility and desiring to be taught of him is a basic step in our consecrated lives, and one of the provisions of his wondrous grace. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”—Ps. 42:1

In his epistle, the Apostle James outlines an overall picture of divine and heavenly wisdom. He writes, “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”—James 3:17,18

In Christ we have the best and noblest example ever shown of the manner in which these various elements of heavenly wisdom operate in one who is fully consecrated to the doing of God’s will.

Heavenly wisdom is in harmony with the divine character in each of these aspects, and our Lord Jesus manifested these wonderful qualities as he daily went about in the service of his Father.

CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Apostle Paul stated that in addition to the gift of wisdom, the second blessing the Lord's people receive through Christ is 'righteousness.' He used the word righteousness which has been translated from a Greek word which also points to our being 'justified.' We are thus accepted by God as being righteous, or justified, and through his marvelous grace our heart intentions toward him are considered as being perfect.

That which makes possible the carrying out of our heart desires, and enables us to render acceptable sacrifices to our loving Heavenly Father is the provision of Christ's righteousness that has been imputed to us by divine grace. Our new life in Christ makes possible the fact that our fallen flesh is an acceptable sacrifice, as spoken by Paul. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

The fact that Christ's righteousness makes up for our deficiencies does not mean that we have liberty to be careless. The apostle explained, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that

are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2) None of us can ever hope to reach the high standard of perfection as was displayed by our undefiled Lord Jesus, but we should strive diligently toward this goal. He is our perfect example of righteousness, and our pattern and guide to show us the righteous way which we must follow throughout our consecrated lives. The Prophet Isaiah admonished, "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."—Isa. 51:1

As the Lord's consecrated people, we should daily wage an aggressive struggle to control our thoughts, words, and deeds and to bring them into captivity to the will and purpose of God as expressed by the teachings and example of Christ. The merit of his righteousness is imputed to us upon the basis of our faith, and gives us a true standing of righteousness, or justification, before God.

It is important to us as Christians that we always keep this fact in mind. 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. It may serve as a touchstone of our true relationship to God throughout our entire earthly pilgrimage. How encouraging are the words of the apostle, who said, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 15:57

CHRIST OUR SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is the third blessing pointed to by Paul in our featured scripture, that is received by

the consecrated people of God through our Lord Jesus. Sanctification signifies the setting apart of one's life for a holy purpose and service of God. The Greek word for 'sanctification' means purity, or holiness. It applies to the fully consecrated child of God who has accepted the heavenly calling and the doing of the divine will during this present Gospel Age. The standard of purity, to which the apostle points, also suggests the special and pure relationship that is enjoyed by the consecrated follower of Christ with the Heavenly Father.

True sanctification was illustrated in the Tabernacle arrangements by the mitre worn by the High Priest of Israel. The inscription reads, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." (Exod. 28:36) It pointed to the High Priest's consecration and dedication to serve God in the holy things within the Tabernacle, including the offering of sacrifices.

THE HIGH CALLING IN CHRIST

During this present Gospel Age, the heavenly call has gone forth to those who are being invited to become part of the church. They have responded by making a full consecration of their lives to God, and have dedicated themselves to him as a sacrificial offering. The wise counsel of the Apostle Paul has encouraged them to seek the spiritual calling.

Paul emphasizes the spirit of sanctification and holiness that is necessary to present our lives to God. "Ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know

how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”—I Thess. 4:2-4

The life of the fully consecrated is one in which the moments and days are directed into ways that may be used in showing forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. The Apostle Peter proclaimed, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9

Our every thought and power should be used in keeping with the divine will and purpose. We desire that the will of God be enthroned within our heart so completely that our life may be poured out to him, and that our whole being be consecrated fully and forever to the doing of his will. “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”—II Cor. 10:5

A sanctified life goes beyond the endeavor to be morally upright and pure. It includes this, but upon the basis of one’s best efforts to be righteous there is the further privilege of devoting that life to the service of God. It is more than giving up of bad habits and the mere setting aside of a few worldly pleasures. We are now walking in newness of life, and fully devoted to the doing of God’s will. If we are so engaged, we are laying down our life in the divine service and will have little time to indulge in worldly pleasures.

The Prophet Micah expresses the sentiment of those who have dedicated their lives in service to

our loving Heavenly Father. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—Mic. 6:8

Christ is our sanctification because of his fullness of devotion to the Heavenly Father. His devotion was so faithfully carried out that he was consumed with zeal. He is our perfect example, which we should follow. The work of sanctification is a lifetime endeavor to fulfill our consecration, and live a life that has been wholly set apart to the will of God.

We are sanctified by the study of God’s Word, and we look to Jesus in order that we may more and more set aside the ways of the flesh. The Spirit of Christ should fill our hearts. Jesus prayed on behalf of the faithful members of the prospective church class, and asked the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”—John 17:17

CHRIST OUR REDEMPTION

The fourth and last blessing spoken by Paul in our featured scripture, was that Christ is also made our redemption. The word ‘redemption’ means salvation, or deliverance. The apostle was pointing to the result of Jesus’ redemptive work that had already been accomplished at his death. It was the deliverance, or ultimate attainment of a position of glory with Christ in his future kingdom that he was emphasizing. The apostle used the same word translated ‘deliverance’ when speaking of some of the heroes of faith. He said they would not even entertain the possibility of an immediate deliverance from death, that they might receive a “better resurrection” at a later time.—Heb. 11:35

In his letter to the church at Philippi, he wrote, “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”—Phil. 3:20,21

MANKIND’S FUTURE DELIVERANCE

In the divine program, the redemption and complete deliverance of the Christ—head and body—was to take place before the deliverance of the whole sin-sick world of mankind from sin and death. This will occur under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom of righteousness and peace that will be established over the earth. Jesus put this future salvation in proper perspective when he explained, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”—John 10:14-18

ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE

We are assured that all of our experiences are for our spiritual growth and development as New Creatures in Christ. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding

and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:17,18

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Rom. 8:28,29) The true people of God have been ‘marked out beforehand’ according to the wonderful purpose of God.

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (vss. 30,31) In this verse the word ‘predestinate’ means to mark out beforehand, and suggests the infinite wisdom and power of the Heavenly Father.

Thus is shown God’s foreknowledge in the ultimate plan concerning the Christ. They are first marked out (predestinated), then called, justified, and glorified. In the words of our featured scripture, Christ is their wisdom, justification (righteousness), sanctification, and deliverance (redemption).

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