

Our All in All

“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*

AS WE BEGIN THE YEAR

2021, an honest examination and appraisal of ourselves are most surely in order. (II Cor. 13:5, *New American Standard Bible*) Such introspection will help us to keep before our minds the fact 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. We cannot hope to be acceptable to him based on any righteousness of our own. (Rom. 3:10) This means that our sonship privileges in God’s family are possible only through the abundance of his grace whereby he can be “just, and the justifier” of those who come to him through Christ Jesus. (vs. 26) Salvation, and all the divine blessings accruing as a result, are ours because of the Heavenly Father’s love in giving his son, our “all in all,” to be our Redeemer.—John 3:16; Eph. 1:23

The value of salvation is appreciated most by those who, having a proper evaluation of their own fallen condition, realize their great need for it. (Ps. 34:18) Those who come to him in simple faith and full devotion may not only enjoy “peace with God”

through his divine favor, but have access also to the inner chambers of his grace, and there “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) Such a “great salvation,” the apostle elsewhere explains, “began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”—Heb. 2:3

Jesus’ First Advent marked the opening of the age during which the high, or heavenly, calling was to operate. Not until he came and shed his blood as the Redeemer of both the church and the world would it have been possible for anyone to meet the conditions laid down for those who are called to glory, honor and immortality.—Rom. 2:7

CHRIST—OUR WISDOM

Christ was the first one to walk in the path that leads to immortality. Only through the merit of his ransom sacrifice, and by virtue of his counsel and example, is it possible for others to walk acceptably in the same “narrow way.” (Matt. 7:14) As our text states, Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. In other words, he is everything to us, in order that we may be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”—Rom. 8:17

One of the official titles the Scriptures give to Jesus is that of Counselor. (Isa. 9:6) A counselor is one who teaches and advises those who come to him for instruction. As such, he needs much in the way of wisdom to properly and effectively carry out his responsibilities. In Christ, we have both a wise and a perfect counselor, whose instruction to us comes directly from his Heavenly Father, the Creator and God of the universe. Thus, if we are to be truly wise

it is essential that we follow the instructions and leadership of Christ.

To receive and properly develop the wisdom that comes to us through Christ, we must first have reverence and devotion to his Father, Jehovah. “The fear [reverence] of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom.” (Prov. 9:10, *American Standard Version*) This quality of reverence for God is necessary from the very beginning of our approach to him. We recognize his greatness, perfection of holiness, and our own unrighteousness. This is the “beginning of wisdom,” for it implies a willingness and desire to put aside our own imperfect ways and to accept the perfect will of the God. Approaching God in this attitude of humility, we recognize the need for a Redeemer as a requisite step in the way of wisdom. We also come to understand that the Bible, God’s holy Word, is to be the guiding light of our lives in the development of wisdom.

Christ is the living Word of God, and thus a personification of divine wisdom, He was “made flesh, and dwelt among us,” being “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) In the perfect example of his life, we have a pattern before us of the manner in which the wisdom of God is to take effect in our thoughts, words and actions. He is the “captain” [Greek: chief leader] of our salvation, who, in being himself guided by the words of God, has shown us the true meaning of those instructions as we seek to follow in his footsteps.—Heb. 2:9-11

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

The Apostle James gives us a comprehensive statement concerning “the wisdom that is from above.”

He says 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 these words we have a revealing example of how the various elements of heavenly wisdom are to operate in those who are fully devoted to the doing of God’s will. Much of earthly wisdom functions along lines contrary to the principles mentioned by James and is frequently rooted in pride and selfishness. Thus, it is often displayed at the expense of purity, peace, gentleness, and the other qualities mentioned by James.

How different, though, is the heavenly wisdom which is in harmony with the divine character of love. Christ wonderfully displayed all the qualities of heavenly wisdom as he went about in his Father’s service. He was “first pure,” or holy. He was this by nature, even as a child, having been born as a perfect human being. As a Jew, Jesus gave evidence of his moral and intellectual purity by his complete obedience to the Law given to Israel by God at Mount Sinai. He was pure also in his wholehearted devotion to the divine will from the time of his baptism at Jordan until his death on the cross. The Master’s absolute loyalty and dedication to the doing of his Father’s will are encapsulated in his unequivocal response to Satan following one of his temptations. Jesus said, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—Matt. 4:10

WISDOM IS PEACEABLE

The Apostle Paul admonished that “if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” (Rom. 12:18) This beloved servant of God knew,

even as Jesus exemplified in his 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. To Jesus, living peaceably did not mean that he could yield to Satan's suggestions to compromise the divine Law. Neither was it his desire to avoid persecutions that might come upon him for the sake of "peace" with the hypocritical leaders of the day. Aside from this, however, in the case of both Jesus and Paul, they gave evidence of divine wisdom by living as peaceably as possible with their fellow man.

One of the prophetic titles given to Jesus is that of "The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In his sermon on the mount, he proclaimed a blessing to the peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9) By his own example, the gracious words which fell from his consecrated lips promoted peace and goodwill among those of pure hearts who heard him. To others, the Master's words of peace stirred up enmity against him. In following Jesus' example, we may not be confronted with similar large and dramatic issues to test the purity and peaceable nature of our devotion to God, but the Master's loyalty to these principles associated with divine wisdom constitutes a perfect pattern for us.

GENTLENESS REQUIRED

Following the course of heavenly wisdom should lead us to develop gentleness of character. As we make progress in the narrow way, the rough tendencies of the flesh and the world should yield to refinement as well as gentleness of heart and disposition. Christ was pleasingly gentle, and he was so "easy to be intreated" that even little children were not leery

of his presence. (Matt. 19:13,14) Those who sought for the blessings he could bestow were given his consideration, even though they often succeeded only in touching the hem of his garment. The Master's gentleness and ease of approach was in keeping with his pure character and with the peace which he possessed.

In our desire for wisdom, and in our disposition to acquire it, we, like the Master, should be gentle. We should have an open heart toward those with whom we come in contact, and always be ready to extend the blessings of comfort and joy to all those willing to receive them. We note these words of Paul to the brethren at Thessalonica, in which his attitude of gentleness and entreaty are so beautifully shown: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."—I Thess. 2:7,8

"MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS"

The wisdom which is from above rejoices in mercy. How beautifully Jesus exemplified this quality of the divine character, both in his teaching and in his manner of life. When he was asked how often one should forgive, he said, "Until seventy times seven" times, essentially indicating that there should be no limit to mercy and forgiveness. (Matt. 18:22) The quality of mercy serves to bypass nearly all friction and disputes that might otherwise rob followers of the Master of the fullness of joy that should be theirs. Whether in our individual lives, in our homes, or among our brethren in Christ, 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” spoken of by James are the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. (Gal. 5:22,23) The proper ripening of this fruit, and its resulting display in our lives, will inevitably give sure evidence of the wisdom from above. To be full of good fruits, we must be emptied of self. Only thus can the Holy Spirit of God become the all-possessing power of our lives—the power and influence by which we can develop good fruit.

NO PARTIALITY

The Scriptures explain that “ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) Therefore, to show partiality in our dealings with fellow members of the body of Christ would indicate a lack of wisdom from above. Just as God is no respecter of persons, so 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. To be partial in our dealings with each other would be contrary to the course of heavenly wisdom, and the example set by Christ. Indeed, some of the disciples seemed to be more appreciated by the Master than others, and these were granted some additional privileges. His nearness to Peter, James and John is specifically indicated, perhaps because of their greater love and understanding of him. God is not a respecter of persons in any unjust way, 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, peaceable, gentle, merciful and impartial toward all, that there is no room for hypocrisy to gain a foothold. To be properly guided by heavenly wisdom we must be out of harmony and sympathy with all that is sinful. To avoid hypocrisy, however, this must be the case not merely outwardly, but also in our hearts and in our thoughts. Being “without hypocrisy” also means to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”—James 1:22

When analyzing the wisdom which is from above, we find that in the life of Jesus we have a perfect example to follow as we walk in the narrow way. Not only, therefore, does the beginning of wisdom lead us to Christ as our Redeemer, but we find wisdom’s perfection manifested in his every word and deed, which, by God’s grace, we are striving to copy in our own lives.—John 13:15; I Cor. 1:24; I Pet. 2:21

CHRIST—OUR JUSTIFICATION

In addition to being our wisdom, the apostle explains that Christ is also our righteousness. The word “righteousness” is translated from a Greek word meaning “equity” or “justification.” (*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*) Various forms of the same Greek word are used in the New Testament, and are translated “justified,” “justification,” and “righteousness.” Considering the meaning of the Greek word used in our text as equity, or justification, we get a comprehensive view of what Christ means to us in connection with our relationship to the Heavenly Father and our hope of life. (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) Christ is our “equity” in the sense that the value of his ransom sacrifice is sufficient to redeem us from Adamic sin. By faith in Jesus’ ransom offering and full consecration of ourselves to the doing of the Heavenly Father’s will, we become “justified” in God’s sight, and he counts us as righteous. Thus, we are permitted to enjoy the privileges of fellowship and partnership with the Father and with his Son.

When we say that Christ’s righteousness makes up for our deficiencies, it does not mean we are free from sin literally, but only in a reckoned sense. As long as we are in the flesh, we cannot hope to reach the high standard of perfection displayed in the holy and undefiled Jesus. Yet, we should strive each day toward this end. He is our example of righteousness, our pattern and guide, to show us the upright way in all matters of life. We should daily wage an aggressive warfare to control our thoughts, words, and deeds, to bring them into harmony with the will of God, as exemplified by the example of Christ.—II Cor. 10:4,5

Knowing that Christ is our righteousness should serve to remind us throughout our earthly pilgrimage of our true position before God. We have been rescued from the pit of sin and death by divine grace, and the solid rock upon which we have been set, and now stand, is Christ Jesus. (Ps. 40:2; Matt. 16:16-18; I Cor. 3:11) Our continued relationship with the Heavenly Father as his children depends upon our standing firm upon the rock of Christ’s righteousness to the end of the way.—I Cor. 15:57

CHRIST—OUR SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification signifies holiness, or the setting apart to holy service. The meaning of sanctification from the divine standpoint is beautifully illustrated by the inscription on a gold plate which was affixed to the mitre worn by Israel's high priest, which read, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." (Exod. 28:36,37) This designated the high priest as one who had been specially set apart to serve God in the holy ceremonies of the Tabernacle, including the offering of sacrifice.

In the consecration service by which Israel's priests were dedicated to carry out the office of the priesthood, a portion of the blood from the ram of consecration was placed upon the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the great toe of the right foot of the priests. (Lev. 8:22-24) This indicated the comprehensiveness of their consecration. In the case of those who follow the Master, it serves as a fitting picture that all of our life's powers are to be dedicated—sanctified for use in the divine service.

As the blood was put upon the thumb of the right hand, so our actions should be that of service to the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren. The blood being put upon the great toe of the priest's right foot fittingly symbolizes our walk of faith in the footsteps of the Master. As the blood was placed upon the right ear of the priest, our hearing is to be one of faith, in which we "hearken unto the voice of the LORD," that we may know and do his will. (Deut. 30:10) If our consecration is complete, if our devotion is whole-hearted, we will not pay attention to suggestions of any kind which may turn us aside from our sanctified service to God.

The work of sanctification is not a momentary one. Indeed, there is a moment in which one gives himself in consecration to do God's will. However, the carrying out of that consecration, the living of a life set apart to the holy service of God, is the work of a lifetime. Daily we should study the Word of God, and look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." (Heb 12:2) Daily we should strive to set aside the ways of the flesh and have the Spirit of God fill our hearts. In all of these things Christ is our sanctification, because the fullness of his zeal and devotion to God is set before us as a perfect standard and example to be followed.

Jesus, praying on behalf of his church, asked that they be sanctified by "the word of truth." (John 17:17) This statement points out to us that ignorance and error do not sanctify. Our study of God's Word should, therefore, be sincere, and in the spirit of humility, that we may glean from its pages that which will assist us in the lifelong work of sanctification in which we are engaged.

CHRIST—OUR DELIVERANCE

Christ is also made unto us "redemption," says the apostle. The word redemption is here used in the sense of deliverance, which is the end result of the completed redemptive work in each faithful footstep follower of the Master. The thought is that of our full victory through Christ, and the attainment of a position of glory with him in the Messianic kingdom. If this ultimate and full deliverance is to be realized, we also understand that there will also be intermediate and incidental deliverances of the faithful along the narrow way. Christ is made

unto us deliverance, both in our daily experiences of trial and testing, as well as in our final deliverance, when he “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” —Phil. 3:21

The redemption, or deliverance, which is in Christ Jesus, both as it applies to our present experiences and also to our ultimate deliverance into the kingdom, is based fully upon the sacrifice he made on our behalf. In connection with that sacrifice, Jesus was severely tempted, tested and tried, and the apostle explains that by reason of this, he can help us when we pass through difficult experiences, which otherwise might overpower us.—Heb. 2:17,18

Because Christ is dealing with us as a faithful and sympathetic high priest, we have the promise, “God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Thus, in all experiences, God will both help us and deliver us according to his direction.

Let us, through all of our daily experiences in the narrow way, learn to put our trust more fully in him who is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. By so doing, we will finally experience that great and ultimate deliverance into the kingdom. This grand hope is especially meaningful today because the signs around us in the world indicate that the entire church will soon be complete and united with her Lord. Then, the great work of the kingdom can commence, which will bring the blessings of health, life and peace to all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18; 28:14 ■