

Christ, the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption

by George Whitefield

1 Cor. 1:30

I. The Text Opened

A. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

1. Of all the verses in the book of God, this which I have now read to you, is, I believe, one of the most comprehensive.
 - a) What glad tidings does it bring to believers!
 - b) What precious privileges are they in this invested with!
 - c) How are they here led to the fountain of them all, I mean, the love, the everlasting love of God the Father!
 - d) Of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.'
2. Without referring you to the context, I shall from the words,
 - a) FIRST, Point out to you the fountain, from which all those blessings flow, that the elect of God partake of in Jesus Christ, "Who of God is made unto'. And,
 - b) SECONDLY, I shall consider what these blessings are, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption'.

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: The fountain from which all blessings flow, that the elect of God partake of, is found in Jesus Christ.

1. FIRST, I would point out to you the fountain, from which all those blessings flow, that the elect of God partake of in Jesus, who of God is made to us, the Father is spoken of here.
 - a) Not as though Jesus Christ was not God also; but God the Father is the fountain of the Deity; and if we consider Jesus Christ acting *as Mediator*, God the Father is greater than he by way of economy; there was an eternal contract between the Father and the Son.
 - (1) *"I have made a covenant with my chosen, and I have sworn unto David my servant."*
 - (2) *Now David was a type of Christ, with whom the Father made a covenant, that if he would obey and suffer, and make himself a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands.*
 - (3) *This compact our Lord refers to, in that glorious prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of John; and therefore, he prays for, or rather demands with a full assurance, all that were given to him by the Father*
 - (a) *"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."*
 - (4) *For this same reason, the apostle breaks out into praises of God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - (a) *He loved the elect with an everlasting love, or, as our Lord expresses it, "before the foundation of the world."*

(b) The apostle therefore, when here speaking of the Christian's privileges, lest they should sacrifice to their own drag, or think their salvation was owing to their own faithfulness, or improvement of their own free-will, reminds them to look back on the everlasting love of God the Father; who of God is "made unto us", etc.

2. More people should be more studious of the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son!

a) We should not then have so much disputing against the doctrine of election, or hear it condemned (even by good men) as a doctrine of devils.

b) For my own part, I cannot see how true humbleness of mind can be attained without a knowledge of it; and though I will not say, that everyone who denies election is a bad man, yet I will say, with that sweet singer, Mr. Trail, it is a very bad sign.

(1) Such a one, whoever he be, I think cannot truly know himself; for, if we deny election, we must, partly at least, glory in ourselves; but our redemption is so ordered that no flesh should glory in the Divine presence.

(2) The pride of man opposes this doctrine, because, according to this doctrine, and no other, he that glories, must "glory only in the Lord."

(3) But what shall I say?

(a) Election is a mystery that shines with such resplendent brightness, that, to make use of the words of one who has drunk deeply of electing love, it dazzles the weak eyes even of some of God's dear children.

(b) However, though they do not know it, all the blessings they receive, all the privileges they do or will enjoy, through Jesus Christ, flow from the everlasting love of God the Father.

(c) But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

B. SECONDLY, I come to show what these blessings are, which are here, through Christ, made over to the elect.

1. FIRST, Christ is made to them WISDOM; but in what does true wisdom consist?

a) If I to ask some of you, perhaps you would say, in indulging the lust of the flesh, and saying to your souls, eat, drink, and be merry.

b) Others would tell me, true wisdom consisted in adding house to house, and field to field, and calling lands after their own names.

(1) But this cannot be true wisdom; for riches often take to themselves wings, and fly away, like an eagle towards heaven.

c) Even wisdom itself assures us, that a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses; vanity, vanity, all these things are vanity; for, if riches do not leave the owner, the owners must soon leave them; for rich men must also die, and leave their riches for others; their riches cannot procure them redemption from the grave, whither we are all hastening apace.

d) But perhaps you despise riches and pleasure, and therefore place wisdom in the knowledge of books.

(1) Christians see that all their righteousnesses are but as filthy rags; that there is no health in their souls; that they are poor and miserable, blind and naked; and that there is no name given under heaven, by which they can be saved, but that of Jesus Christ.

(a) They see the necessity of closing with a Savior, and behold the wisdom of God in appointing him to be a Savior; they are also made willing to receive salvation on our Lord's own terms, and receive him as their all in all; in this way Christ is made to them wisdom.

2. SECONDLY, RIGHTEOUSNESS, Who of God is made to us, "wisdom, righteousness."

- a) Christ's whole personal righteousness is made over to, and accounted theirs.
- b) They are enabled to lay hold on Christ by faith, and God the Father blots out their transgressions, as with a thick cloud.
- c) Their sins and their iniquities he remembers no more; they are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, who is the end of the law "for righteousness to everyone that believeth."
- d) In one sense, God now sees no sin in them; the whole covenant of works is fulfilled in them; they are actually justified, acquitted, and looked on as righteous in the sight of God; they are perfectly accepted in the beloved
 - (1) They are complete in him; the flaming sword of God's wrath, which before moved every way, is not removed, and free access given to the tree of life; they are enabled to reach out the arm of faith, and pluck, and live for evermore.*
 - (2) Here is where the apostle, under a sense of this blessed privilege, breaks out into this triumphant language; "It is Christ that justifies, who is he that condemns?"*
 - (3) Does sin condemn?*
 - (a) Christ's righteousness delivers believers from the guilt of it.*
 - (b) Christ is their Savior, and is become a propitiation for their sins: who therefore shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?*

e) And what a privilege is here!

- (1) Well might the angels at the birth of Christ say to the humble shepherds, Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy; unto you that believe in Christ a Savior is born'.*
- (2) And well may angels rejoice at the conversion of poor sinners; for the Lord is their righteousness; they have peace with God through faith in Christ's blood, and shall never enter into condemnation.*
 - (a) O believers! (for this discourse is intended in a special manner for you) lift up your heads; rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice'.*
 - (b) Christ is made to you, of God, righteousness, what then should you fear?*
 - (c) You are made the righteousness of God in him; you may be called, The Lord our righteousness'.*
 - (d) Of what then should you be afraid?*
 - (e) What shall separate you from this time forth from the love of Christ?*
 - (i) *This is a glorious privilege, but this is only the beginning of the happiness of believers.***

3. THIRDLY, Christ is not only made to them righteousness, but sanctification.

- a) By sanctification, I do not mean a bare hypocritical attendance on outward ordinances, though rightly informed Christians will think it their duty and privilege constantly to attend on all outward ordinances.
- b) Nor do I mean by sanctification a bare outward reformation, and a few transient convictions, or a little legal sorrow; for all this an unsanctified man may have.
- c) But, by sanctification I mean a total renovation of the whole man.

(1) *By the righteousness of Christ, believers come legally, by sanctification they are made spiritually, alive; by the one they are entitled to, by the other they are made meet for, glory.*

(2) *They are sanctified, therefore, throughout, in spirit, soul, and body.*

d) Their understandings, which were dark before, now become light in the Lord; and their wills, before contrary to, now become one with the will of God; their affections are now set on things above; their memory is now filled with divine things.

(1) *Their natural consciences are now enlightened; their members, which were before instruments of uncleanness, and of iniquity into iniquity, are now new creatures; old things are passed away, all things are become new', in their hearts.*

(2) *Sin has now no longer dominion over them; they are freed from the power, though not the indwelling of being, of it.*

(3) *They are holy both in heart and life, in all manner of conversation.*

(4) *They are made partakers of a divine nature, and from Jesus Christ, they receive grace; and every grace that is in Christ, is copied and transcribed into their souls; they are transformed into his likeness.*

(a) *He is formed within them.*

(b) *They dwell in him, and he in them.*

(c) *They are led by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.*

(d) *They know that Christ is their Emmanuel, God with and in them; they are living temples of the Holy Spirit.*

(e) *And therefore, being a holy habitation unto the Lord, the whole Trinity dwells and walks in them; even here, they sit together with Christ in heavenly places, and are vitally united to him, their Head, by a living faith.*

(i) *Their Redeemer, their Maker, is their husband; they are flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone; they talk, they walk with him, as a man talks and walks with his friend; in short, they are one with Christ, even as Jesus Christ and the Father are one.*

e) In this way is Christ made to believers sanctification.

(1) *And Oh what a privilege is this! to be changed from beasts into saints, and from a devilish, to be made partakers of a divine nature; to be translated from the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear Son!*

(2) *To put off the old man, which is corrupt, and to put on the new man, which is created after God, in righteousness and true holiness!*

(a) *Oh what an unspeakable blessing is this!*

(b) *I almost stand amazed at the contemplation of this.*

(c) *Are not you astonished, when you feel the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, and God holds out the golden scepter of his mercy, and bids you ask what you will, and it shall be given you?*

(i) *Does not that peace of God, which keeps and rules your hearts, surpass the utmost limits of your understandings?*

(ii) *And is not the joy you feel unspeakable?*

(a) *Is it not full of glory?*

(b) *I am persuaded it is; and in your secret communion, when the Lord's love flows in on your souls, you are as it were swallowed up in, or, to use the apostle's phrase, filled with all the fullness of God'*

(c) *Are not you ready to cry out with Solomon, and will the Lord, indeed, dwell thus with men!*

(d) How is it that we should be in this way your sons and daughters, O Lord God Almighty!

(3) *If you are children of God, and know what it is to have fellowship with the Father and the Son; if you walk by faith, and not by sight; I am assured this is frequently the language of your hearts.*

(4) *But look forward, and see an unbounded prospect of eternal happiness lying before thee, O believer!*

(5) *What you already received are only the first-fruits, like the cluster of grapes brought out of the land of Canaan; only an earnest and pledge of yet infinitely better things to come.*

(6) *The harvest is to follow; your grace is hereafter to be swallowed up in glory.*

(a) *Your great Joshua, and merciful High-Priest, shall administer an abundant entrance to you into the land of promise, that rest which awaits the children of God.*

(b) *For Christ is not only made to believers wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, but also REDEMPTION.*

f) But, before we enter upon the explanation and contemplation of this privilege,

(1) *FIRSTLY, Learn the great mistake of those writers and ministers, who, notwithstanding they talk of sanctification and inward holiness, (as indeed sometimes they do, though in a very loose and superficial manner,) yet they generally make it the CAUSE, whereas they should consider it as the EFFECT, of our justification.*

(a) *“Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, (and then) sanctification.”*

(b) *For Christ’s righteousness, or that which Christ has done in our stead without us, is the sole cause of our acceptance in the sight of God, and of all holiness wrought in us: to this, and not to the light within, or anything worked within, should poor sinners seek for justification in the sight of God.*

(c) *For the sake of Christ’s righteousness alone, and not anything worked in us, does God look favorably on us; our sanctification at best, in this life, is not complete.*

(d) *Though we are delivered from the power, we are not freed from the in-being of sin; but not only the dominion, but the in-being of sin, is forbidden, by the perfect law of God*

(e) *For it is not said, “thou shalt not give way to lust,” but “thou shalt not lust.”*

(i) So that while the principle of lust remains in the least degree in our hearts, though we are otherwise never so holy, yet we cannot, on account of that, hope for acceptance with God.

(ii) We must first, therefore, look for a righteousness without us, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ

(a) For this reason the apostle mentions it, and puts it before sanctification, in the words of the text.

(b) And whosoever teaches any other doctrine, doth not preach the truth as it is in Jesus.

4. FOURTHLY, Let us now go on, and take a view of the other link, or rather the end, of the believer’s golden chain or privileges, REDEMPTION.

a) But we must look very high; for the top of it, like Jacob’s ladder, reaches heaven, where all believers will ascend, and be placed at the right hand of God. “Who of God is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and REDEMPTION.”

b) This is a golden chain indeed! and, what is best of all, not one link can ever be broken asunder from another.

(1) *If there was there no other text in the book of God, this single one sufficiently proves the final perseverance of true believers.*

(2) *God always carried on and finished the work he begun; in this way it was in the first, so it is in the new creation; when God says, "Let there be light," there is light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day, when believers enter into their eternal rest, as God entered into his.*

(3) *Those whom God has justified, he has in effect glorified.*

(a) *For as a man's worthiness was not the cause of God's giving him Christ's righteousness; so neither shall his unworthiness be a cause of his taking it away; God's gifts and callings are without repentance.*

(b) *And I cannot think they are clear in the notion of Christ's righteousness, who deny the final perseverance of the saints; I fear they understand justification in that low sense, which I understood it in a few years ago, as implying no more than remission of sins.*

c) But it not only signifies remission of sins past, but also a FEDERAL RIGHT to all good things to come.

(1) *If God has given us his only Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

(2) *Therefore, the apostle, after he says, 'Who of God is made unto us righteousness', does not say, perhaps he may be made to us sanctification and redemption: but, 'he is made'.*

(3) *For there is an eternal, indissoluble connection between these blessed privileges.*

(4) *As the obedience of Christ is imputed to believers, so his perseverance in that obedience is to be imputed to them also; and it argues great ignorance of the covenant of grace and redemption, to object against it.*

d) By the word REDEMPTION, we are to understand, not only a complete deliverance from all evil, but also a full enjoyment of all good both in body and soul.

(1) *I say, both in body and soul; for the Lord is also for the body; the bodies of the saints in this life are temples of the Holy Spirit; God makes a covenant with the dust of believers; after death, though worms destroy them, yet, even in their flesh shall they see God.*

(2) *I fear, indeed, there are some Sadducees in our days, or at least heretics, who say, either, that there is no resurrection of the body, or that the resurrection is past already, namely, in our regeneration.*

(3) *It's here, that our Lord's coming in the flesh, at the day of judgment, is denied; and consequently, we must throw aside the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.*

(a) *For why should we remember the Lord's death until he come to judgment, when he is already come to judge our hearts, and will not come a second time?*

(b) *But all this is only the reasoning of unlearned, unstable men, who certainly do not know what they say, nor of what they affirm.*

(c) *That we must follow our Lord in the regeneration, be partakers of a new birth, and that Christ must come into our hearts, we freely confess; and we hope, when speaking of these things, we speak no more than what we know and feel.*

(d) *But then it is plain, that Jesus Christ will come, hereafter, to judgment, and that he ascended into heaven with the body which he had here on earth; for says he, after his resurrection, 'Handle me, and see; a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see me have'.*

(i) *And it is plain, that Christ's resurrection was an earnest of ours: for says the apostle, 'Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that sleep; and as in Adam all die, and are subject to mortality.*

(ii) *So all that are in Christ, the second Adam, who represented believers as their federal head, shall certainly be made alive, or rise again with their bodies at the last day'.*

e) Here then, O believers! is one, though the lowest, degree of that redemption which you are to be partakers of hereafter;

(1) *I mean, the redemption of your bodies:*

(2) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, this mortal must put on immortality.*

(3) *Your bodies, as well as souls, were given to Jesus Christ by the Father; they have been companions in watching, and fasting, and praying: your bodies, therefore, as well as souls, shall Jesus Christ raise up at the last day.*

(4) *Do not fear, therefore, O believers, to look into the grave.*

(5) *For to you it is not other than a consecrated dormitory, where your bodies shall sleep quietly until the morning of the resurrection; when the voice of the archangel shall sound, and the trumpet of God given the general alarm, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment'; earth, air, fire, water, shall give up your scattered atoms, and both in body and soul shall you be ever with the Lord.*

(a) *I do not doubt, but many of you are groaning under crazy bodies, and complain often that the mortal body weighs down the immortal soul; at least this is my case; but let us have a little patience, and we shall be delivered from our earthly prisons.*

f) But what is the redemption of the body, in comparison of the redemption of the better part, our souls?

(1) *I must say to you believers, as the angel said to John, 'Come up higher'; and let us take as clear a view as we can, at such a distance, of the redemption Christ has purchased for, and will shortly put you in actual possession of.*

(2) *Already you are justified, already you are sanctified, and by it freed from the guilt and dominion of sin.*

(3) *But, as I have observed, the being and indwelling of sin yet remains in you; God sees it proper to leave some Amalekites in the land, to keep his Israel in action.*

(4) *The most perfect Christian, I am persuaded, must agree, according to one of our Articles, 'That the corruption of nature remains even in the regenerate; that the flesh lusteth always against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh'.*

(5) *So that believers cannot do things for God with that perfection they desire; this grieves their righteous souls day by day, and, with the holy apostle, makes them cry out, "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death!"*

(a) *I thank God, our Lord Jesus Christ will, but not completely before the day of our dissolution; they will the very being of sin be destroyed, and an eternal stop put to inbred, indwelling corruption.*

(b) *And is not this a great redemption?*

(c) *I am sure believers esteem it to: for there is nothing grieves the heart of a child of God so much, as the remains of indwelling sin.*

(d) Again, believers are often in heaviness through manifold temptations; God sees that it is needful and good for them so to be; and though they may be highly favored, and wrapped up in communion with God, even to the third heavens; yet a messenger of Satan is often sent to buffet them, lest they should be puffed up with the abundance of revelations.

(e) But do not be weary, do not be faint in your minds.

(i) *The time of your complete redemption draws near.*

(ii) *In heaven the wicked one shall cease from troubling you, and your weary souls shall enjoy an everlasting rest; his fiery darts cannot reach those blissful regions.*

III. The Application of the Text

A. Exhortation

1. Brethren, the redemption spoken of is unutterable; we cannot here find it out; eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the hearts of the most holy men living to conceive, how great it is.
2. Were I to entertain you by whole ages with its account, when you come to heaven, you must say, with the queen of Sheba, "Not half, no, not one thousandth part was told us."
3. All we can do here, is to go on mount Pisgah, and, by the eye of faith, take a distant view of the promised land.
 - a) We may see it, as Abraham did Christ, afar off, and rejoice in it; but here we only know in part.
 - b) Blessed be God, there is a time coming, when we shall know God, even as we are known, and God be all in all.
 - c) Lord Jesus, accomplish the number of thine elect! Lord Jesus, hasten your kingdom!
4. And now, where are the scoffers of these last days, who count the lives of Christians to be madness, and their end to be without honor?
 - a) Unhappy men! you do not know what you do.
 - b) If your eyes were open, and had you senses to discern spiritual things, you would not speak all manner of evil against the children of God, but you would esteem them as the excellent ones of the earth, and envy their happiness.
 - c) Your souls would hunger and thirst after it: you also would become fools for Christ's sake.
 - d) You boast of wisdom; so did the philosophers of Corinth: but your wisdom is the foolishness of folly in the sight of God.
 - (1) *What will your wisdom avail you, if it does not make you wise unto salvation?*
 - (2) *Can you, with all your wisdom, propose a more consistent scheme to build you hopes of salvation on, than what has been now laid before you?*
 - (3) *Can you, with all the strength of natural reason, find out a better way of acceptance with God, than by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ?*
 - (4) *Is it right to think your own works can in any measure deserve or procure it?*
 - (5) *If not, why will you not believe in him?*
 - (6) *Why will you not submit to his righteousness?*
 - (7) *Can you deny that you are fallen creatures?*
 - (8) *Do not you find that you are full of disorders, and that these disorders make you unhappy?*
 - (9) *Do not you find that you cannot change your own hearts?*
 - (10) *Have you not resolved many and many a time, and have not your corruptions yet dominion over you?*

- (11) *Are you not bondslaves to your lusts, and led captive by the devil at his will?*
 (a) *Why then will you not come to Christ for sanctification?*
 (b) *Do you not desire to die the death of the righteous, and that your future state may be like theirs; I am persuaded you cannot bear the thoughts of being annihilated, much less of being miserable for ever.*
 (c) *Whatever you may pretend, if you speak truth, you must confess, that conscience breaks in on you in more sober intervals whether you will or not, and even constrains you to believe that hell is no painted fire.*

e) And why then will you not come to Christ?

- (1) *He alone can procure you everlasting redemption.*
 (2) *Haste, haste away to him, poor beguiled sinners.*
 (3) *You lack wisdom; ask it of Christ. Who knows but he may give it you?*
 (4) *He is able: for he is the wisdom of the Father; he is that wisdom which was from everlasting.*
 (5) *You have no righteousness; away, therefore, to Christ: "He is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."*
 (6) *You are unholy: flee to the Lord Jesus: He is full of grace and truth; and of his fullness all may receive that believe in him.*
 (7) *You are afraid to die; let this drive you to Christ: he has the keys of death and hell: in him is plenteous redemption; he alone can open the door which leads to everlasting life.*

5. Do not, therefore, the deceived reasoner boast any longer of his pretended reason.

a) Whatever you may think, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world not to believe on Jesus Christ, whom God has sent.

b) Why, why will you die?

c) Why will you not come unto him, that you may have life?

d) "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters of life, and drink freely: come, buy without money and without price."

e) Were these blessed privileges in the text to be purchased with money, you might say, we are poor, and cannot buy: or, were they to be conferred only on sinners of such a rank or degree, then you might say, how can such sinners as we, expect to be so highly favored?

(1) *But they are to be freely given of God to the worst of sinners.*

(2) *'To us', the apostle says, to me a persecutor, to you Corinthians, who were 'unclean, drunkards, covetous persons, idolaters.'*

(3) *Therefore, each poor sinner may say then, why not to me?*

(4) *Has Christ but one blessing?*

(5) *What if he has blessed millions already, by turning them away from their iniquities; yet he still continues the same: he lives forever to make intercession, and will bless you, even you also.*

(6) *Though, Esau-like, you have been profane, and here despised your heavenly Father's birth-right; even now, if you believe, "Christ will be made to you of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."*

6. But I must turn again to believers, for whose instruction, as I observed before, this discourse was particularly intended.

a) You see, brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, what great blessings are treasured up for you in Jesus Christ your Head, and what you are entitled to by believing on his name.

b) Take heed, therefore, that ye walk worthy of the vocation by which you are called.

- c) Think often how highly you are favored; and remember, you have not chosen Christ, but Christ has chosen you.
- d) Put on (as the elect of God) humbleness of mind, and glory, but let it be only in the Lord; for you have nothing but what you have received of God.
- e) By nature you were foolish, as legal, as unholy, and in as damnable a condition, as others.
- f) Be pitiful, therefore, be courteous; and, as sanctification is a progressive work, beware of thinking you have already attained.
- g) Let him that is holy be holy still; knowing, that he who is most pure in heart, shall hereafter enjoy the clearest vision of God.
- h) Let indwelling sin be your daily burden; and not only bewail and lament, but see that you subdue it daily by the power of divine grace; and look up to Jesus continually to be the finisher, as well as author, of your faith.
- i) Do not build on your own faithfulness, but on God's unchangeableness.
- j) Take heed of thinking you stand by the power of your own free will.
- k) The everlasting love of God the Father, must be your only hope and consolation; let this support you under all trials.
- l) Remember that God's gifts and callings are without repentance; that Christ having once loved you, will love you to the end.
- m) Let this constrain you to obedience, and make you long and look for that blessed time, when he shall not only be your wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, but also complete and everlasting redemption.

(1) *Glory be to God in the highest!*