

Made unto wisdom

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[0 : 00] Verse 30. 1 Corinthians 1 and verse 30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

I would be failing in my duty to you as a minister and pastor if I did not draw the distinction between the spirit of the Apostle Paul, who writes in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2, and the spirit of John Paul II, his namesake, whose words are in the press and whose public speeches some of us were listening to a few days ago.

I do not do this in the spirit of animosity, but as I say I would be failing in my duty if I fail to point out to you the difference in tenor, the difference in outlook, the difference in tone and in spirit between these two men and the way they approached congregations whom they came to.

Just a detail or two will suffice. In chapter 1, 17 and 18, Paul says, For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of non-effect.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. And you'll see that the Apostle here was concerned to impress upon his hearers only one message.

[1 : 49] It was nothing sectarian. It had no bearing upon politics directly. It was simply the foolish message of the cross of Christ. There is a point which we cannot fail to mark.

A little later down in chapter 2, verses 1 and 2. And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And here again you see there is the same entire self-effacement.

The man is hiding behind his message. The man does not bring himself as a figurehead. He is not there to project an image. As I said, he hides himself behind the message of the foolishness of the cross of Christ.

The distinction is not merely a pale one. It is an absolute distinction between this man and some who have succeeded to high office in the Church of Rome.

[2 : 59] Take, for instance, chapter 2 again, verse 5, where he says, I do all this, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

In other words, he is concerned not simply to have an adherent following. He doesn't simply want to build up numbers of men and women who make a nominal attachment to his particular denomination or church.

His concern is that men's faith should stand in the power of God. That it should be a real faith. Not a mere notional or a mere intellectual or a mere moral attachment to some body of doctrine.

But it is a real personal converting faith. And all these things that we have seen in the past few days are gross and they are offensive to spiritual minds.

Not because we differ from him in points of sectarian interest, but because we are concerned to see what apostolic Christianity is. What is the gospel?

[4 : 01] What were these early preachers like who brought the gospel? And here Paul tells us, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in trembling, in order that whatever I said to you, it may not appear to be advancing myself.

I had no personal wish to promote myself. I was not selling my image. I was bringing to you the message whereby you can be saved. But of all the distinctions, it seems to me the most extraordinarily great one, is that of chapter 1 and verse 31.

That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. And if Paul was jealous for anything, it was that his hearers should give glory to nobody, save to God alone.

There was no clapping when the apostle Paul preached. There were tears, and there were sorrows, and there were groans, and there were requests for forgiveness, and the wisdom to know what to do, and what was required in order to eternal life.

But there was no puffing up of the flesh. Him that glorieth, says Paul, let him glory in the flesh. I make those distinctions, not in order, as I say, to be in any way sectarian, or bigoted, or biased, or prejudiced, but simply to show you, we must not miss the difference between these early gospel preachers, and some who profess to be their successors today.

[5 : 39] The difference is between night and day, between heaven and hell. It is an absolute, diametrical difference. And we should not fail to see, that that is the case.

Now I take you, having said these introductory words, to verse 30 of chapter 1. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Here the apostle Paul is telling believers what has happened to them in their conversion. Now, let me observe this.

If you are a converted person, you need to know what has happened to you. That's why these apostles did what they did.

Writing these letters, preaching their sermons, giving their lectures, in certain lecture halls, which they hired for the occasion, it was to explain to believers what has happened to them.

[6 : 50] And they continually said, if you're a Christian, certain things now are different in your life. You need to know it, said these apostles, and you and I today, in this 20th century, equally, if not more so, need to know what has happened to us if we are brought to Christ.

And the verse, verse 30, which forms my text, is one of these great descriptions of the change which God has brought about in my life, and in your life, if we are converted to Christ.

And I want to put it to you like this, all true believers have a personal union with Christ as a result of our conversion.

these are the ways he puts it, you are in Christ Jesus. You have a union and a communion with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the mediator between God and men.

Now sometimes the Bible tells us that Christ is in us. Christ is in us. And of course, that's a frequent emphasis. You get it in Colossians where Paul says, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

[8 : 13] But here in this verse and in many other verses, we have the reverse and the converse, that you are in Christ. Now both these things, of course, are true, and both are true as soon as a person is converted.

This is not a second blessing. This is not a post-conversion experience. And this is certainly not something which occurs only to ministers or to very, very high and important persons in the church of Jesus Christ.

It's true of all Christians. You are, all of you, if you are believers, in Christ. And Christ is in you.

There is, in other words, a real communion communion and union which brings life to the soul of God's people.

It is a communion in life, to use the phrase of one of the theologians, Lewis Berghoff. A communion in life. The older writers used to call this a mystical union between the believer and Christ.

It is a true union between yourself and the Son of God. Now, before I open it up, I must observe also that this union which the believer has with Christ is not simply the presence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts.

[9 : 33] That is true. Believers have the Spirit of God resident within them. We possess the Spirit. We are not carnal, we are not sensual, but spiritual men.

That's what he goes on to say in the rest of chapter 2. We have the Spirit of Christ. We have the mind of Christ. That's why the scriptures mean something to us. If we didn't have the mind of Christ, the Bible would be a closed book and we would regard it as dry as dust as the majority of mankind does.

And if you happen to find that the Bible is as dry as dust, then the logical conclusion is that you have not got the mind of Christ. We are spiritual men.

We have the Holy Spirit resident in our bodies. They are the vehicle and temple of the Holy Ghost. Yes, and in our intellects and in our minds and in our memories and in every other faculty of our being.

And we must reckon on that fact that we are not as unconverted men are and there are times when the Spirit of God gives us holy emotions and holy impulses which deliver us if you like for a time from the bondage of this world.

[10:42] You may find yourself in a community of worldly people who have no interest in the things of God. You may as it were be surrounded by the world. But then because Christ is in you you may suddenly feel your emotions enraptured and your heart goes out to God even in the midst of all these worldly companions.

Now there is no explanation of that in worldly terms. It is that Christ is imparting to you some of his own grace. And he is lifting you above your circumstances.

He is making you to be more than a conqueror. This is part of his union and communion with you. And I have said to you that it is not only true that the Holy Spirit is in us but that we have a lively true union with the second person of the Godhead.

It is not simply with the Holy Spirit we have this but with God the Son we have this. That Jesus who died and rose and ascended and is at the right hand of God is there in the glory with regard to his human nature in a limited geographical space.

But with regard to his divine nature he is omnipresent and fills heaven and earth and because of that we have a true union with the Son of God.

[11:58] Though he is up there yet because he is God he is also truly here and we can say with Paul the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me and I live by the faith of the Son of God that he dwells and lives in me.

Now that is true and something else is true and it is that the Father also dwells in us and we dwell in the Father. We have a true and a lively communion with all three persons of the Godhead with the Son with the Spirit and with the Father.

You can't have one without having them all and you can't have them all unless you have Christ. It all begins with faith in Christ. That faith in Christ is itself the gift of God as we will have occasion to look at I think in a moment.

Now I want to tell you from the Scriptures how this union of believers have with Christ is to be understood. The Bible gives us a number of illustrations a number of descriptions of this union and communion that we have with Jesus Christ and with the Godhead.

And one of these illustrations is that of a family. In other words our union with God is a familiar union and a family communion.

[13:21] We are related to God as his children and with Jesus Christ as our elder brother. Christ himself said that you recall when he was preaching on one occasion in a very crowded house in Palestine and they said to him your mother and your brethren are outside wanting to speak to you.

And of course our Lord Jesus Christ turned to these persons and he said to them my mother and my brethren they are the ones who hear the word of God and do it.

Whoso doeth the will of God he is my father and my mother and my brother. Now those are very beautiful words because they tell us that Jesus Christ recognises this family bond with all who are spiritual.

He regards all who have this spiritual union with themselves as being his true children. Isn't that the phrase that is used in Hebrews 2? Behold I and the children whom the Father whom God has given to me they are for signs and for wonders in Israel.

They are his brethren and I want to warm your hearts my Christian friends by reminding you this day that however lonely we may be in this world and however weary some the world may be our Jesus is a family relation of ours and the Son of God in all his glory acknowledges we are his brethren.

[14:56] We have this true union in life with him and that is one of the figures of scripture. Another one is that of the tree and its branches representing again another aspect of our union and communion with Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

I am the vine you are the branches every branch in me that beareth not fruit my Father takes it away as the husbandman every branch in me that does bear fruit my Father purges it prunes it back that it may bring more fruit herein is my Father glorified that you should bear much fruit so should it be my disciples it is John chapter 15 that wonderful description of the vine and the branches now this is another illustration of the union of Christ and his people and here of course the illustration is that of the sap which courses through the tree and enters the branch and brings the

fruit of itself so union with Christ is a fruitful union you cannot be in Christ and be a barren worthless useless Christian it's admitted by the scriptures that some Christians are more fruitful than others some bring forth a hundredfold some sixty some thirty but all who are in Christ are bound to be fruitful to some extent and your duty and mine is to see to it by the grace of God that we abound in all holiness of life and increase in fruitfulness of life and we do that by more and more cultivating this union and communion with Christ and drawing forth from his fullness grace upon grace that as Christ is a reservoir of blessing for his people so our duty is to drink deeply of his love and of his power and of his truth the Bible is given to us to be the channel whereby this truth is poured into our lives and there's no question about this that the more you cultivate this union and communion with the Son of God the more you will bring forth fruit to the glory of God to your own comfort and to your own eternal reward in the world to come the illustration is that of the vine of the branches now there is also another illustration in scripture and this is of the body and its members it is a frequent illustration of Paul found in 1 Corinthians 12 and also again in Ephesians 4 and in other places and the idea is this that just as the human body has a head and various members so the Christian church is united organically and corporately to Jesus Christ we are of his flesh and of his bones we are his body mystical and this means to say that his mind and his intelligence influences the entire body of Christian people throughout the world his spiritual life is infused throughout us all and the way the apostle works this out is very interesting he said it works out in various ways one of the applications he says is this that the ungifted Christian must never say to himself

I am worthless he must say that even though I am not so eminently spiritual or eminently gifted as my brother over there yet I must recognize that I have a place in the body of Christ I may not be the eye but I may be the ear I may not be the hand but I may be the foot I may not be one of the vital organs but I may still be the little finger and Christ will not dispense of any member of his body we are all in the body if we are Christians we all have a part to play and Jesus Christ is the one who infuses through the blood circulation if you like of his spirit the blessing and the grace and the strength for every one of his members to grow in holiness of life and Paul puts it like this in Ephesians 4 from whom referring to Christ the whole body fitly framed together and compacted by the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love so that you see he implies that every one of us can benefit one another what you know you can pass on to the other

Christian it may be a simple word but it may be just the very thing that is needed to lift them and to encourage them in the time of need now again another illustration of this union and communion with Christ is that of the temple and of the stones of the temple this is a familiar figure of course to the Jewish mind but it's also sufficiently clear to us the apostle Paul and Peter too for that matter the first of the popes he describes how that all spiritual men are like polished stones carved and fitted into position in God's spiritual temple and the entire temple is growing every time a sinner is converted he is added if you like to God's spiritual temple and the heavenly builder increases the stature of his building and the whole of this building is growing into an holy temple in the Lord and is a fit habitation for the indwelling of God by his spirit and it therefore goes to prove that the more spiritual the members are the more of God will be felt within that particular congregation or that particular

Christian community if you and I pray for revival then we have to live like men who know God and we cannot live to ourselves because those who pray for revival are praying in effect for God to come down for his solemn and solemnizing spirit of grace to be poured out upon us as a congregation and we cannot live in any sort of way if we believe that we must live as men that are holy and believe that God only dwells with those that are holy and obedient to his revealed will and we thus therefore says the Holy Scripture recognize that we are all related to one another as stones built into one holy temple for the inhabitation of God that is the way the New Testament represents this union and this communion with Jesus Christ but I refer finally here under this heading to the most perfect of all the illustrations of scripture which Paul gives us in Ephesians chapter 5 it is the mysterious description of the marriage relationship between believers and Jesus Christ where we are told that he is the husband of the body and that therefore we belong to him as his married wife now if any of the illustrations of scripture is calculated to win and to woo our hearts from the world to an obedience to Christ it is surely this but just as it is intolerable for a married woman to treat her husband with disdain and carelessness and neglect so it is intolerable for Christians to treat Christ with disdain and disrespect because he is our husband he is the saviour of the body he has given himself for us he has shed his very blood and life to the last drop for us he gave himself to

crucifixion yea to the drinking of the cup of damnation for us he stood in a place of thunder and of lightning and if some of you heard thunder and lightning last night and saw the rain fall remind yourself that's only a faint image and a faint picture and representation of where Christ stood under the thunder and lightning of divine wrath and judgment and damnation and curse and he became a curse for us and consequently says scripture he being the saviour of the body we must be subject unto Christ in all things our minds our wills our consciences must be his we must be his slaves his willing slaves because he has loved us and has given himself for us and how can we therefore love the world or the things that are of the world which are abomination with God and how can we follow up to false religions of many kinds in this world we must submit our minds and our entire bodies and wills to Christ and to his rule in this union and communion with Jesus Christ now I must leave this point but before I do so

[23 : 59] I want to observe that one of the nice little books which is a commentary on the Song of Solomon was written by Hudson Taylor and he calls his commentary on the Song of Solomon by this title Union and Communion or something like that Union and Communion with Christ and I mention that because the Song of Solomon is a mysterious book and a difficult book and I wonder just how much you read the Song of Solomon and I want to give you the key which opens up for you the book of the Song of Solomon and it is this key that there in that little book of the Song of Solomon in the Old Testament we have a description of the union and communion between believers and Christ and it is a most wonderful book for that reason it shows you how Christ thinks about the believer and how the believer ought to react to the love of Christ if you've never studied it take that little book out see it in that light and you might find that it is to you the sweetest book even in the Bible itself

I have spoken firstly then of the union which believers have with God in Christ of him are ye in Christ Jesus but now at more brevity I speak of the second point mentioned in our text and that is that it is the sovereign God alone who brings these blessings to us and Paul makes this point in two different ways I wonder if you notice it in the reading verse 30 but of him that is God of God are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us these things that little phrase of God is repeated twice now that's not an accident every syllable in the Bible is divine and inspired and is purposeful to teach us something and it is no simple slip of the pen that the apostle Paul puts in that phrase twice why does he say of God twice let me tell you it's because he is stressing very very heavily and very very decidedly the sovereignty of God that the whole gospel from start to finish is the work of God and that we must see that not only is it so but we need to see it to be so because things that are so which we don't see do not profit us and you see these Corinthians here they had made the big mistake of becoming factious and schismatical and one group was hiving off to a house church over here by the name of Paul and another was making a house church over there by the name of Apollos and there was another one over there

Cephas and somebody over here Jesus Christ and they were all splitting up the church into little fragments now there's nothing new in that and we see plenty of that going on in the world today and in our country today it is a schismatical tendency it is a divisive tendency and whatever word you want to put on it whether you call it charismatic or what it is something wrong with human nature now says Paul you're failing to understand the gospel you're failing to recognize that the gospel is God's sovereign will for his people and it is so he says in two ways first it is of God that you are in Christ now why does he put it to you like that it should be evident enough in order to tell you that you did not put yourself in Christ if it was God who put us into Christ then it was not I who put myself into Christ and it was not you who put yourself into Christ it was the sovereign God of him of God are you in Christ

Jesus and that means to say I can only thank God if I'm a Christian I must bow my knees and say it was not an act of my will power it was not some decision some little card that somebody gave me to sign my name on and to say that on such and such a day I put my hand up at a meeting it's not that says Paul it is of God that believers are in Christ it is the will of God it is the purpose of God it is the determinate counsel of God when men come to Jesus Christ and that's the first thing we need to see and it is very humbling and he tells it is very humbling he says according as it is written he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord you see if you and I could tell ourselves that you and I put ourselves into Christ then we would have something to glory and I could go around telling people I decided for Christ I put up my hand for God

I was at this meeting and I did it and we would have a little slice of the glory and that's why Paul says it is all of God that you're in Christ according as it is written he that boasts he that brags he that wants to show off he that wants to glory let him only glory in this that God is all in all that is the gospel the gospel flattens human nature like a steamroller the gospel makes us all wafer thin with unimportance the gospel says to us we are nothing we are nothing God is all in all and then the second of him or of God refers to Jesus Christ of him i in Christ Jesus who Christ of God is made unto us these four things now what does this second of God refer to well it refers to something different this time he is saying that Christ is the saviour of the world by the will of [30 : 27] God it is the will of God that Christ should be made the saviour my friends do you know this that Christ was the subject of election we often talk about believers being elect but Christ himself was elect do we understand this you'll find this very clearly written in scripture especially in 1st of Peter chapter 1 where it is said that God appointed him by foreordination before the foundation of the world now that is Christ Christ was appointed to be the saviour of the world in other words it was the will of God that the second person of the holy trinity should become man why didn't the father become man why didn't the holy spirit become man why didn't something else happen why did he become man and not an angel let us say and the answer is it was the will of God before the foundation of the world the son of

God the second person was foreordained to take flesh and blood and to be our saviour it is of God that he has made these things unto men and when you look at it like that you must see what a shameful thing is the kind of gospel which you get in some areas today which you might call Jesus oratory in which everybody praises Jesus and Jesus only now that is perfectly right and perfectly proper but my friends get the vision that it is the father son and holy spirit who were all equally to be praised it was God who gave the son it was God who cursed the son by imputing our sins to him and bruising his soul for us and that was an act of God's sacrificial mercy it was no easy thing for God to send the son to be the saviour of the world and propitiation for our sins and it is no easy thing believe me for the holy spirit to go into the filthiness of the heart of fallen man and to cleanse it and to renew the image of God within it it's very dirty work and we must see that all three persons of the holy trinity are engaged and involved in our salvation and all deserve our equal worship and our equal praise it is a trinitarian gospel and the glory must be to God alone now I've spoken firstly of the union of believers have with

Christ and secondly I've said that all things come from the sovereign God now thirdly and lastly I want to show you what the benefits are which believers have through this union with Jesus Christ and they are said here to be fourfold Christ is of God made unto believers first wisdom second righteousness third sanctification fourth redemption and I'm inclined to the view with George Whitefield that a certain order of logic is involved in these four terms wisdom righteousness sanctification and redemption I'm going to say a little about each before I conclude in a moment's time but notice first of all the apostle emphasis is that everything we need is in Christ now this is one of the things that's wrong with

Pentecostalism because some forms of Pentecostalism with respect teach you that Christ is not enough you need also some experience of the Holy Spirit now the Holy Spirit and Christ are not divided in that sort of way you can't have the Son without the Spirit and if you have the Spirit you must have the Son you can't divide God up in that manner God is one and Christ is here said to have every blessing you need Christ is the bank manager if you'll forgive the expression and he has the power of giving you everything you need for your life in this world go to the counter and ask God through Christ for whatever you need Jesus Christ has the keys he'll open the safe he'll give you with the checkbook of his bank of faith everything that you need he is all things to his people and having Christ you need no more you need no damnable plus in addition to Christ you don't need to go and have some particular form of ceremony called penance or something else called confession or something else called mass or something else called priestly work you don't need that you have all things in Christ and he is all in all you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord well now what are these four elements that he singles out first he speaks about Christ as our wisdom and this means that when the sinner first comes into union with Christ the sinner is wise to see that he is lost now men don't see that until they are united with Christ let a sinner be united with Christ and he says at once I'm a worthless sinner he smites upon his chest God be merciful to me that is the wisdom that Christ gives to him to see his fallen lost condition he is wise enough to see that death is short and eternity is long and that he must have his soul right

with God that is the kind of wisdom that Christ is to a man who is united to him it's called conviction of sin and the second is righteousness this is the act of justification whereby [36 : 39] Christ covers the nakedness of believers we are naked in our sins in the sight of God and the instant we believe in Christ the whole divine righteousness of Christ as the God man is ours there is the active obedience of his conformity to God's law there is the passive obedience of his sufferings unto death for us both these weave together a perfect robe of holy righteousness whereby the believer has a standing before God now believers you have a boldness before God you have a right and an entitlement conferred upon you from God to be called the sons of God and to go to the throne and to knock upon the doors of God's house with both hands and to cry for divine blessing you have a right to do that you have a right to say oh my father

I am hungry give me bread for my soul God will do that because he has given you Christ as your righteousness and you are in Christ and have this holy boldness and access by the faith of him and Christ third is of sanctification which means that throughout the entire span of our life in this world he will work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure that we might become more and more what we need to be brought into conformity to his own holy image that he might be the first born among many brethren and then the final phrase refers to eternity our redemption we are redeemed now but in the full sense we remain to still be redeemed in that world of glory and the soul is redeemed in the instant of death when we immediately pass into the presence of Christ and the soul of believers is holy with a holiness which cannot be lost and the body raised from the dead in the end of the world reunited to the soul brought all together fully and completely into the presence of God there no more to go out but to enjoy that union and communion with Christ in its full consummation throughout all ages world without end and I say one thing finally as I close today and I say to you how wrong you are you people that are not Christians how wrong you are to yourselves to refuse to enter into this union with Jesus Christ because it is the stubbornness of your own perverse will that you have said to God I will not enter into this condition you are still wanting to satisfy something or other in this present world you are seeking for good out of this world just as a person might go to a dung heap and find scraps of food from a dung heap so men treat this well now I bid you see that this is your folly and it will be your undoing for eternity if you do not wake up in time look up and see that Christ is the source of wisdom blessing power grace hope and all that you need and you must turn your back upon this world and choose by grace Christ for yourself get into Christ and the proof that you have done will be you will glory in nothing save in the Lord let us pray gracious God if ever we glory in ourselves in our gifts in our knowledge or in our own experiences we pray that thou wouldst forgive us very often we imbibe a spirit that we know not whence it is and thou hast bidden us here see that Christ is all and that God is all in all may we go from thy house today carrying this vision and this view with us and may we therefore spend the time of our sojourning here in this world not to the lusts of men but to the will of God and all we pray is through Christ's holy name Amen