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1 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: 27 But 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; 28 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: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

As I said last Sunday, the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is an offense to the world, which the world is not able to overcome. It was the greatest of all signs to the world, but those who gloried in signs and wonders, the Jews, were offended by the Cross, because they could not conceive of Jehovah dying such an awful and shameful death. The Cross was also the great manifestation of Eternal Wisdom, but those who gloried in wisdom, the Greeks, were likewise offended at the Cross, for they could not conceive of any of the gods acting in such a way—it was completely contrary to every natural thought.

But it is only in the Cross of Christ that the perfect Justice and Mercy of God is revealed. Those who deny the cross of Christ must deny both the justice and mercy of God. They cannot believe that He is perfectly just, for they think that He can be pacified by their good intentions or their sacrifices; neither can they believe that he is perfectly merciful, for they cannot believe that their sins can be freely forgiven without some activity and labor on their part. So those who are ensnared by the false religions of Romanism, Islam, Judaism, and liberal Protestantism of all stripes are constantly whipsawed—on the one hand by their guilty consciences, for they cannot believe that God has fully satisfied His justice in the sacrifice of Christ; on the other hand by their self-righteousness, to think that they have purchased to themselves some special favor of God by the worthiness of their works. As our catechism says:

Q30: Do those also believe in the only Savior Jesus, who seek their salvation and welfare from "saints," themselves, or anywhere else?

A30: No; although they make their boast of Him, yet in their deeds they deny the only Savior Jesus;[1] for either Jesus is not a complete Savior, or they who by true faith receive this Savior, must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.[2]

God has chosen such a way of salvation, because such a way is most in tune with His glory and honor. He cannot deny Himself and He cannot act in any way that is contrary to Himself as the Creator and source of all blessings. No one can glory in His presence, for no one has anything of his own. Every gift is from God, the Father of lights.

The sum of these things is in the text before us, and what a wonderful text it is:

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Every word is pregnant with meaning. Of Him {of God the Father who has chosen these things} are ye in Christ Jesus – by His eternal decree. We are in Christ Jesus so that the purpose of God might be fulfilled in us. We did not and cannot put ourself into Christ—this is the work of the Father, and it is explicitly so stated here. Our union with Christ is of God. Christ is appointed a Mediator for a People, a specific people. These people are the ones that realize the benefits of the union with Christ, and those benefits are clearly stated here. This is the purpose for which you are in Christ Jesus: that Jesus Christ be to us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption.

I want to consider each of these words.

- I. Wisdom. The Greek seems to indicate that the three words that follow Wisdom, are the manifestation and explanation of Wisdom. Jesus is the Wisdom of God, and this wisdom is manifested in Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. No man is wise who does not rely on Christ alone for salvation. How can he be wise if he does not see the value of Jesus Christ? How can a man be wise if he thinks he can pay for his own sins? How can a man be wise if he thinks he can be pleasing to God in his own strength? How can a man be wise if he thinks he can devise for himself his own religion? How can a man be wise if he thinks he can make his own gods? How can a man be wise if he refuses to see his own sinfulness before the Creator.
- II. Righteousness and Sanctification are joined together in the Greek. As Charles Hodge says, they are different aspects of our relationship before the law of God.
  - a. We are justified in that Christ satisfied the demands of the law as a rule of justification. Christ is our righteousness in that He fully merited eternal life for you and me, and it would be unjust for God to deny heaven and eternal life to anyone who is in Jesus Christ. They can no more be lost than the sun can be pulled from the sky or God cease to be God. We cannot stand before God in our own right, but we can certainly stand at the judgment in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.
  - b. We are sanctified in that Christ has fully satisfied the demands of the law as a rule of duty or obedience. We are vulnerable before the law of God not only because of the wrath of God against sin, but because the law demands obedience. It is our duty to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. But Christ is our sanctification because He fully kept the law for us. The first Adam brought sin and death upon us by his first sin; the last Adam brings righteousness and life because He perfectly obeyed the law in all its requirements, for He loved God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength; and He loved His neighbor as Himself. Because of this, He sends us His Holy Spirit to put to death the old Adam in us, and resurrect in us that which is like the new Adam. This is the beauty of the Cross of Christ; the old man dies with Christ; the new rises with the new Life of Christ.
  - c. Justification is completed and finished in us, for it is not inherent righteousness, but is the righteousness of Another, Jesus Christ. Sanctification is not finished in us, but is begun in us by the work of the Holy Spirit. He has begun a good work in us and will complete it until the day of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that works in us both to will and to do that which is pleasing to God. As far as justification is concerned, it is the perfect, present possession of every child of God; as far as sanctification is concerned, it is at present imperfect but will be perfected in the Day of Christ. So Solomon says, “The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
  - d. Righteousness and Sanctification ought never to be separated, for any one who is justified is given the gift of the Holy Spirit and He, the Holy Spirit, begins a new work that transforms the man. He begins his struggle with sin. The new man seeks its Father, the Father of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ, so that he can never again be the same as he was; his struggles may be difficult and his trials very great, but he learns to trust in God and to love the commandments of God.

- e. But neither are righteousness and sanctification to be confused, as if justification depended upon our sanctification. No, sanctification can never be the ground of our salvation before God, because we all carry our sinful nature as a burden—in God’s wisdom He has permitted this to be so, in order for us to always trust in Christ alone.

III. Redemption: this is mentioned last, but it is the first gift that our Mediator Jesus Christ gives to us. We are purchased by his precious blood—bought by Him out of the bondage of sin and misery, so that all other gifts might be given to us.

This means that we must never ever be deceived into seeking anything from God apart or beyond Jesus Christ. He is a complete and perfect savior, and He is the joy and the love of our hearts. He is the only savior of men. How do we make void the cross of Christ.

- a. By mixing our own ideas and wisdom with it, as if the gospel were not sufficient.
- b. By seeking to use the Gospel to further our own agenda.
- c. By seeking to take refuge in our own works of righteousness. This is nothing else but unbelief, as I said before, in denying the perfect justice of God, as if He would be pleased with our own gifts to Him, as if we could bribe Him with our gifts to turn away His wrath from us---or to deny His perfect mercy, in thinking that the mercy offered to us in Jesus Christ is somehow imperfect, and must be supplemented with our own efforts.
- d. We must turn aside from all these, and trust in Christ alone

It is God himself who has made Christ to be Wisdom, Righteousness and Sanctification, and Redemption for each of us who are in Christ. This is the joy of our hearts. Amen and Amen.