

Abiding In Christ

Lesson 3

Christ is our Wisdom, Righteousness,
Sanctification, and Redemption

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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Lesson 3
1 Corinthians 1:18-30
Christ is our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption

It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness [sanctification], and redemption. *1 Corinthians 1:30*

Prayers

Introduction

God placed us in Christ through the gospel and gave us faith. Faith and understanding of our salvation through Christ is the wisdom from God. From this wisdom, we also come to understand that Christ is our righteousness, holiness (or sanctification) and redemption.

In this lesson, we will study how God’s wisdom, and Christ’s righteousness, holiness, and redemption keep us abiding in him.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-30, The Christ Crucified, the Wisdom from God

^{1 Co 1:18} For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” [Isaiah 29:14]

²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.” [Jeremiah 9:24]

1. What seems foolish about the gospel message?

People object to Christianity in many ways. They do not understand how God can be triune, how Christ can be worshipped as God, or they think Bible is full of contradictions. They do not believe in the virgin birth, the resurrection, the abiding Holy Spirit, or that Jesus' death 2000 years ago could forgive all their sins for all time. They do not believe that God is so gracious that all he requires for salvation is for us to believe in his Son as our savior and to worship him.

2. Paul wrote the Jews demand signs, and Greeks look for wisdom (before they will believe in Christ). What are some beliefs that have replaced the good news of the gospel message that we are saved through faith in Christ?

Many false beliefs have crept into how Americans view God and salvation. Some are:

1. We are all saved by being good enough, salvation by our good works.
 2. Another view similar to the first is that we earn God's grace by doing good works or by obeying his commands
 3. God loves all people (true) and would never condemn anyone to hell.
 4. There is no hell
 5. Jesus might have been a real person, but he was only a good teacher of how to live a good life.
 6. All religions lead to God and salvation for people of faith. We wish this were true, but Jesus said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"** (John 14:6). We understand this to mean that salvation is found only through faith in Christ.
3. Over 7 billion people are in the world, and more than 5 billion do not know Christ or are openly hostile to Christ. So, why did God choose you to be Christ's disciple according to 1 Corinthians 1:26-30. (Be prepared to laugh!)
 4. Abiding in Christ as our wisdom has many benefits, our mind calmed, our judgement is cleared and strengthened, we are freed from distractions. How is Christ's message of wisdom communicated to us?

Through the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, through others (the saints) who God has called to come along side of us, and through prayers. We can always hold on to the authority of the scriptures with unshakable confidence.

Christ as Our Righteousness

Christ is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Righteousness and holiness are similar characteristics, so what is the difference? The Hebrew word for righteous, *saddiq*, appears 206 times in the Old Testament and means **"being lawful"** or "conforming to the law." Righteous refers to perfect obedience to the law. Christ was sinless, perfectly obedient to the law. In the New Testament, the word for righteous is *dikaios*, and refers to **behavior** consistent with God's holy standard. When we place our faith in Christ, God declares we are righteous because we are united with Christ and his perfect, sinless life. Holiness refers to **character**, having the character of God. Righteous behavior leads to holiness.

5. How are we declared righteous by abiding in Christ?

Ro 3:21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Ro 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

6. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said our righteousness before God is a result of God's gift of faith in Christ. Our righteousness is the result of wisdom and faith in Christ. How does our faith in Christ, first as our wisdom and then our righteousness, illustrate our complete dependence on God?

7. Scriptures refer to our righteousness through faith in Christ as well as how our daily actions and behaviors should be righteous. How might focusing exclusively on one or the other type of righteousness lead to an unhealthy spiritual view?

If we focus entirely on how Christ's righteousness has been given to us, we might not see our own need to turn from our sinful behaviors, come to repentance, and seek God's forgiveness.

If we focus on our own behaviors and measure our righteousness by our own standards, we will either become like the prideful pharisees when we are good or we will doubt our salvation in Christ, weary with guilt and shame over our sins. We do not enjoy the forgiveness, grace, and joy God has given to us through Christ.

8. One of the great paradoxes of the Christian faith, and personal frustration of every Christian is that we continue to sin even though we have been united with Christ through baptism, and spiritually reborn, freed from sin, through the Holy Spirit. Even Paul struggled with sin (and lost) and groaned, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15) Paul referred to this struggle with sin as between the flesh and spirit or between the old sinful nature and a new creation.

Our struggle with sin does not mean we are not united with Christ, it means we have his Spirit at work in us convicting us of our sin. Read Romans 8:9-15 and discuss the great blessings we share in being united with Christ through the Holy Spirit and the obligation this brings.

Ro 8:9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Ro 8:10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Ro 8:11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Ro 8:12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

Ro 8:13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Ro 8:14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Ro 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*”

Some of the great blessings we have in Christ are:

1. Verse 9 **Controlled by the Spirit, Spirit of God lives in us.**
2. Verse 10 **Christ’s righteousness is in us.**
3. Verse 11 **Share in Christ’s resurrection.**
4. Verses 12-13 **Obligation to live by the Spirit, not the misdeeds (sins) of the body.**
5. Verse 14-15 **We are children of God and call God our Father.**

Christ as our Holiness

Holiness is having high moral character or in an absolute sense, having the **character** of God. The Hebrew word for holy is *godes* and occurs 492 times in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 11:44-45 God calls us to be holy because He is holy. A person who is holy will behave righteously. The Greek word for holy is *hagios* and appears 233 times in the New Testament. It has the same meaning as the Hebrew but also means to be set apart. When applied to God, it means that He is set apart from sin. Likewise, God calls us to be set apart from sin. Holiness has the same meaning as sanctify or consecrate when it is used to mean to be set apart. We are holy, sanctified, and consecrated when we are set apart for God’s sacred purposes. Consequently, some translations of 1 Corinthians 1:30 read Christ has become our “holiness” (NIV) while others use “sanctification” (ESV).

9. What is the only way to become holy, to take on God’s character?

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

First, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will,

we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:8-10)

The only way to be holy, to take on God’s character, is to be united with Christ. Christ is our holiness. Christ’s work is finished and complete so that we cannot become more holy before God.

10. In *Abide In Christ*, Andrew Murray illustrates our struggle with sin with white robes. When we first come to Christ in faith, he clothes us in sparkling white robes, reflecting the brilliance of his holiness. As time goes on, our robes become stained and dirty. Oh, how we long for them to make them white again. But how can we clean our spiritual robes?

We return to the cross. Some participants will respond with our need for confession and repentance because God is quick to forgive our sins as we confess them and cleanse us from unrighteousness. God’s forgiveness of our sins is through the blood of Christ. Daily, we must return to the foot of the cross to wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb, confess our sins for what we have done and left undone, and have faith that all our sins are forgiven through faith in Christ.

In his revelation, Jesus told the Apostle John, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

11. If our holiness is imparted to us by Christ what part do we play in being holy? Summarize our response to Christ’s righteousness and holiness in us for each of the following verses:

- a. ^{Jn 15:15} **I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**
- ^{Jn 15:16} **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.**
- ^{Jn 15:17} **This is my command: Love each other.**

Our response to Christ’s holiness in us is to be fruitful in God’s kingdom and to love each other.

- b. ^{John 14:19} Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Our response to Christ’s holiness in us is to keep God’s commands and love Christ.

- c. ^{Philippians 4:8} Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Our response to Christ’s holiness in us is to occupy our thoughts with noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy thoughts. And put into practice all that Christ has taught us.

- d. ^{2Peter 1:3} His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

^{2Pe 1:4} Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

^{2Pe 1:5} For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;

^{2Pe 1:6} and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness;

^{2Pe 1:7} and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

^{2Pe 1:8} For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our response to Christ's holiness is us is to add to our faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love.

12. Another word for holiness is sanctification. Church denominations place different emphases on sanctification, regarding Christ as our sanctification and repentance. Our sanctification through Christ is complete because Christ lived a perfect and sinless life, and we are united with him. However, sin remains in our daily lives, so there is a need for our repentance and turning from sin. Sometimes our need to turn from sin is called progressive sanctification. John Wesley emphasized the importance of progressive sanctification. In his "method," a believer is sanctified by the Holy Spirit as they hear the gospel preached, through reading, studying, meditating on scripture, prayer, and by works of service. By Wesley's thinking, the believer progressively defeats sin in their life (through the Holy Spirit) and takes on a holy character. Luther emphasized the idea of complete sanctification through faith in Christ. In Luther's view, the righteousness of Christ dwells in the life of a believer through the Holy Spirit and gives eternal life, but the believer has no merit of his own, only the righteousness given through Christ. Luther confessed about himself, "Martin, thou shalt not utterly be without sin, for thou has yet flesh; thou shalt therefore, feel the battle thereof. The more godly a man is, the more doth he feel the battle."

Do you see any potential pitfalls or strengths in each view?

Wesley, A possible pitfall

If we focus on a method to become righteous, adherence to the method becomes our religion, and we no longer need Christ. Our own efforts to achieve righteousness are sure to disappoint us. We might be able to avoid sinful actions for a while, but we sin again. We never escape the need to claim Christ as our righteousness.

Luther, a possible Pitfall

We might make peace with our sins if we focus solely on Christ's holiness. Christ calls us to repentance and obedience; we can never make peace with our sins.

Strength of Wesley

The acts of hearing the gospel in worship, reading, studying, and meditating on scripture, prayer, and works of service are all fruitful endeavors Christians should engage in as part of our response to God's gift of faith in Christ. They enable the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and transform our thinking.

Strength of Luther

We will always need to claim Christ as our righteousness and never look to our sense of righteousness as justification before God. No matter how hard we strive to live righteous lives, we will always be sinners. Christ came to save us for just this reason.

Christ as Our Redemption

13. We are redeemed from sin; what wonderful assurance we have. Our complete redemption and deliverance from the consequences of sin as God's children was the purpose of Christ's incarnate life. We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, one perfect sacrifice for all people, for all time. Read the following scriptures and name the blessings we have in Christ's redemption.

- a. ^{Eph 1:7} In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace
^{Eph 1:8} that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

1) Verse 7 **Forgiveness of sins**

- b. ^{Gal 4:4} But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,
^{Gal 4:5} to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

^{Gal 4:6} Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

^{Gal 4:7} So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

1) Verse 4:5 **Full rights of sons (God's children)**

2) Verse 4:6 **God's Spirit in our hearts**

3) Verse 4:7 **Child of God**

- c. ^{Tit 2:13} while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

^{Tit 2:14} who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

4) Verse 2:14 **Redeemed from wickedness, purified, to be a God's people, and to do good**

Summary

Christ is our wisdom as we receive God's gift of faith in God's plan of salvation through Christ crucified for our sins. We are united with Christ through our baptism and His Spirit so that he is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Through our faith in Christ and being united with his holiness, God sees us as holy so that we are holy in God's eyes and will always find forgiveness. We are always abiding in Christ because his Spirit abides in us.

Prayer