**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems – #5**

**Christ: The Wisdom of Righteousness and Sanctification**

**1 Corinthians 1:30-31**

***1 Corinthians 1:30*** *It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,* ***31*** *So that, as it stands written, “Let the one who would boast, boast of the Lord.”*

**The Church’s Struggle between Concepts and the Person of Jesus**

**The Person of Christ Jesus Who Came to Save Persons**

1. Since the spread of the Gospel, the message has been in constant danger to become divided between Concepts and Personal Relationship. There is no doubt that wisdom is a common concept among all nations. But here we have not a school of wisdom but the *person* of Jesus who is the Wisdom of God.
2. This brings a radical change in our life, for we don’t study Jesus to learn about him. Some of us can do that, but we participate in his life, death and resurrection, and by living his life we learn his wisdom. We learn wisdom, as Paul says, because “*you are in Christ Jesus*” (v30). It is a statement which is loaded with meanings:
3. You are united with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection when you were baptized (Rom 6:1ff). This kind of union will teach a special brand of divine wisdom that is the death of the old life and the birth of the new life, for this is Christian mode of existence (Rom 8:1, 39; 12:5; 16:7; 1 Cor 3:1; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:4; 3:28; 5:6; Phil 1:1).
4. This wisdom is that which is based on the revelation of the divine love that redeems the broken, frees the captives, and also heals and enlightens. It is for this reason that Jesus became the Christ (Luke 4:16-18).
5. This wisdom is the freedom of love. It has no set systems. It is learned from the communion with Christ.

**The Blindness of Laws and Systems**

Among the images that I can’t forget is that statue of justice that we still can see outside the Old Bialy in London. There we still see a woman who is blindfolded and carrying the scale. The Law and all our concepts are like the statue of justice, blind to the most important facts in Christian teaching:

1. We are called to grow up and mature.
2. We are called regardless of our merits (if any) and in spite of our past and present to be the children of God (John 1:12-13; Gal 4:6), with no reward for our achievements because the kingdom is given to us not as a reward.

We must not become blind to the fact that Jesus is neither a law nor a concept but the Person of the Son of God. Hence Jesus, as the Wisdom of God, is the revelation that tells us what is true and what is false in human wisdom. The final test is the acceptance or the rejection of the cross.

**Brief OT Use of Wisdom**

There is a group of words in the Hebrew bible that were translated by one Greek word Sophia. The most common word in Hebrew is ***khokhma*** (חוכמה) (Exod 28:3; 31:3; 35:26Deut 4:6; 2 Sam 14:20; 20:22; 1 King2: 6 and too many such as Ps 37: 30; Prov 1:2; Isa 10; 13; 11:2; 29:14; 33:14).

**Wisdom Means ‘Understanding’ (Prov 2:3; 3:5)**

In the NT, the reference to wisdom is chiefly in 1 Corinthians, chapters 1-3. It was used by Paul 25 times in this short space.

**What Does Paul Accept?**

1. He does accept understanding.
2. He appeals to common sense.

**What Does Paul Reject?**

1. Eloquent speech that can hide salvation.
2. Human intelligence that rejects the crucified.
3. The world’s wisdom - God has chosen a wisdom that is alien to this world and thus must not be submitted to the world’s wisdom.

**The Wisdom of the Crucified Jesus, by Abbot Sophronius**

* The wisdom of the crucified Jesus is that its victory has no victims, but all the victims of the worldly wisdom are healed and restored by the crucified.
* The wisdom of the crucified Jesus is that he does not kill those who come to him but he gives them eternal life and adds to this gift of life, the inheritance of the kingdom.
* The wisdom of the crucified Jesus is that Jesus does not lead those who follow him to slavery but to freedom.
* The wisdom of the crucified Jesus is that Jesus gives his life for all. He gives all (persons) the same, not taking notice of their achievements.

*(Abbott Sophronius is 10 century Coptic writer)*

**Christ Our Righteousness**

The crucified Christ has become for Christians their “righteousness” in God.

So much ink and papers have been used in the modern debate about this that I just want to give you a little sip not the full cup. Many of our great scholars have lost their sight and have fallen into what Paul has warned against: the use of the wisdom of the world which is useful when we study literature but it provides us very little service when we deal with the person of Jesus who is the God-man. Once we leave the person of Jesus and enter the sea of ideas, then we are face-to-face with linguistic studies and their history, philology (*linguistic authenticity*), and how words were translated from Hebrew to Greek. David Hill’s book *Greek Words and their Hebrew Meanings* (1967, ISBN1 57910 511 4) is a good study for those who can read Greek and Hebrew

**Terminology, Background and Issues**

The voluminous discussion on righteousness focuses largely on these questions:

1. How is the genitive construction ***dikaiosyne theou*** (righteousness of God) to be interpreted? *[“Genitive” refers to something that is named – ed.].*
2. What does the interpretation mean in the overall context of Paul’s thought? Is it to be understood in the so-called objective sense that is, the righteousness which is valid before God? Or is it to be interpreted as a subjective genitive, referring either to God’s own righteousness, describing his being (“he is righteous”) or God’s action (“God acts justly”)?
3. Further, is righteousness, or God’s righteousness through Christ, received by impartation or imputation? (i.e., does God give us part of his, or do we get our own?) Does this righteousness give juridical standing, a new status, or a new nature to us? And from the human side, is the righteousness of God experienced as ethical power, a new relationship with God, or a change of lordship?
4. Is Paul using these terms within the context of Greco-Roman jurisprudence, where righteousness means “justice” or “righteous judgment” (in a legal sense), or is he using them as they were used in Hebrew that is in light of OT meanings?

**Philological Concerns**

In the interpretation of the theme “righteousness of God,” the problem begins when one considers the meaning of words. Words neither exist by themselves without a context, nor are texts written as free-floating packages of meaning without a historical basis, or a place in their cultural milieu *[environment]*. The language Paul used was Greek, but Paul was a Jew. He lived and participated in both cultures; the Hebrew as well as Greco-Roman. Since Paul quotes passages of the LXX *[The Septuagint, first Greek translation from Hebrew of the OT]* throughout his letters, we must understand that Paul was writing for those who had the OT and before that they had believed in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Paul was not writing about concepts but about the new relationship humans have had in Jesus as the Revelation of God the Father.

In English translation, the words “righteousness” or “justification” are used to translate the Greek ***dikaiosyne***. These English words don’t connote the same meaning as the Greek term or the Hebrew.

**The Etymology of Righteousness**

The concept of righteousness in the Hebrew Bible emphasizes the relation of God and humanity in the context of a covenant. Among the various Hebrew word groups associated with righteousness, ***sede*** (“straightness,” “justness,” “rightness”) and ***sedaqa*** (“justice,” “straightness,” “honesty”), suggest a norm. In the LXX ***dikaiosyne*** (“righteousness”) is used 81 times for the Hebrew ***sedeq***, 134 times for ***sedaqa*** and six times it renders freely the adjective ***saddîq*** (“just,” “righteous,” “honest”). There are eight instances in which ***dikaiosyne*** (“righteousness”) renders ***chesed*** (“loving-kindness,” “mercy,” “piety,” “goodwill,” “covenant-faithfulness”; e.g., Gen 19:19). Other Hebrew words meaning “genuine,” “good,” “evenness,” “purity” and “simplicity” are occasionally translated in the LXX by ***dikaiosyne***. ***Dikaios*** (“observant of right,” “righteous,” “fair”) renders the Hebrew ***saddîq*** 189 times. In sum, of the predominant Hebrew terms, the root ***sdq*** is the only one to be rendered mainly by ***dike*** (“right”) and its derivatives, especially ***dikaiosyne*** while other synonymous Hebrew terms such as ***chesed*** are not given their due when the LXX translates them by ***eleios*** (“pity,” “mercy”).

***Dikaiosyne*** would have been a more accurate rendering of these words as well. The common Hebrew word for righteousness is ***sedeq*** or its feminine form ***sedaqa***, which occur in the OT 117 and 115 times respectively.

The Hebrew meaning of justice means more than the classical Greek idea of giving to everyone their due. Usually the word “justice” suggests Yahweh’s saving acts as evidence of God’s faithfulness to the covenant. For this meaning of “righteousness of God,” ***dikaiosyne*** in English is not as flexible as the Hebrew word. “God’s righteousness” in Hebrew was increasingly understood as God’s willingness to protect and provide for the poor. For example: “They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever” (Ps 112:9).

The richness of the Hebrew usage is generally well reproduced in the LXX. Of the relatively few instances in which ***sedeq***, ***sedaqa*** and ***saddîq*** are not translated by “dikai”-words, ***eleemosyne*** and ***eleos*** (“alms,” “mercy”) are employed for ***sedaqa*** (cf. LXX Is 1:27; (Ziesler, *The Righteousness of God In Paul*, 59–60). Similar evidence of this is found in the NT at Matthew 6:1, where the variant readings of later MSS *[manuscripts]* read ***eleemosynen*** for ***dikaiosyne***.

**The Latin West**

In the Western Roman Empire, the Old Latin versions of the NT displaced the Greek NT, and Paul was consequently understood via the Latin translation. The Old Latin and later Latin Vulgate rendered the Greek ***dikaiosyne*** by the Latin ***iustitia*** (“justice”). The legal connotation of this term in Roman Law was superimposed upon the word ***dikaiosyne***, which Paul had employed. The Roman legal understanding of justice was in a distributive sense: to give to each their due; the bestowal of rewards and punishments according to merit. The OT sense of righteousness as grounded in covenantal relationship was weakened, and its place was taken by the courtroom image of the sinner before God’s tribunal. Although righteousness in the OT had a legal aspect, only in the code, that belongs to daily life where compensation had to be paid for damage or injury, this code was never applied to God’s relationship with Israel. The biblical image of the covenant between God and humanity faded into the background, while the Latin context called to mind stark legal realities of the court. The shift in language from Hebrew to Greek to Latin resulted in an alteration in theological content as the words that were employed either overlaid the earlier meaning or signified something new in the receptor language.

**Modern English**

A Germanic base from Anglo-Saxon, as well as Latinate words from the Norman Conquest, added the legal meaning. One can say either “to be righteous” (from the Anglo-Saxon verb ***rightwisen*** meaning “to make right, to rightwise”), or “to be justified” (a verbal form derived from the Latin **ius**, **iuris** and **iustitia** meaning “to be declared just”). The semantic ranges of the two are not identical.

**Beyond the Sea of Words**

1. If Jesus is a person and indeed he is, then word study is good for historical and linguistic reasons. But such studies are short of getting us into the personal relationship, which is the hallmark, the revelation, of God in Jesus Christ.

1. This personal relationship is a gift and as a gift it is marked by the action, not by the word. Here “person” and “action” don’t break down into two compartments. The uniqueness of the gospel is that it is the good news of a life of a person who came and took our humanity to share his divine life with us. This sharing is not expressed by words or even defined by concepts, but is declared by the words and these words point to the person.
2. Words have their place as signs but their meaning is discovered not by analyzing the words but by seeing what the word(s) point(s) too.
3. More important throughout our history, our union with God in Christ faded away under the hammer of beating the nail of the Gospel every Sunday, pounding into us the gospel as salvation from sin as the prime work of Jesus and leaving the rest, such as eternal life, adoption, and sharing the same glory and the same love of the Incarnate Son declared in John chapter 17.

**Righteousness of God as the Person of Jesus**

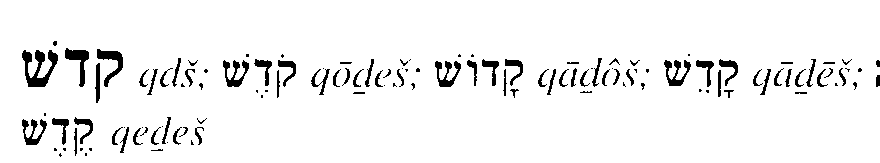
Jesus the crucified Christ did put right our communion with God. Around that theme we have not just one word, righteousness, but some others words that point to actions:

1. Reconciliation: “*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!* *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us*” (2 Cor 5:17-21). It is God’s action that continues in the “ministry of reconciliation.” God was in Christ not separated from Christ or pouring his anger on his Son.
2. Putting away the old self and to be clothed with the new life. Paul reminds those in Ephesus: “*that is not the way you learned Christ! For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*.” (Eph 4:20-24). Any prudent reader will notice the two words: righteousness and holiness, for both are the two marks of the life of Jesus. Then no one can fail to see that the right life is in Christ in a new life and a constant renewal. The image of this new life becomes more clear in Colossians 3:8-15, and the center of the teaching is Christ who called all to be in him, in Christ which is the “right” way of life for sinners.
3. To be in Christ who dwells in us (Eph 3:17) so that we may know him:  “*Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ,*[*\**](javascript:void(0);) *the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ*[*\**](javascript:void(0);) *and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead*” (Phil 3: 7-12)

**Christ is our Sanctification**

Sanctification comes from Latin, [etymologically](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology) from the [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_Language) [verb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verb) [*sanctificare*](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/sanctificare) which in turn is from [*sanctus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctus), "holy.” So what is sanctification or holiness?

**Holiness - The OT Background**



***qds, qodes, qados, qades, qedes***

This Hebrew word for “holiness” is a verb and all its derivatives have no synonyms. The word is used approximately 842 times in the OT. It is important to notice that, in the OT, it was used ….

152 times in Leviticus

105 times in Ezekiel

102 times in Exodus

80 times in Numbers

73 times in Isaiah

65 times in Psalms

1. “Holiness” means something consecrated and [the word] can’t be used at all except for what it was “consecrated for” as in Exodus 29:21, [describing] priests and their vestments, everything that comes into contact with the altar, the worship utensils, and any sacrificial material (Exod 29:37; 30:29; Lev 6:11), or any article used for the sanctuary (Deut 22:9).

2. “God is holy,” means “shows himself to be holy” by manifesting his unique and unchangeable divine holiness before Israel (Exod 29:43) and the nations (Ezek 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27).

3. Something can be described as “holy according to the law of worship” such as the Sabbath (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11).

4. The sense of “be made holy”; be holy/consecrated or “is sanctified” as someone is consecrated (Exod 19:22; Lev 11:44; 20:7). God “shows himself to be holy” (Ezek 38:23) because God consecrates himself to save Israel. Humans bring themselves into the condition of consecration or purity without any mention of the particular ritual (Num 11:18; Josh 3:5; 7:13; 1 Sam 16:5) or “is sanctified” (NRSV “keeping themselves holy,” 2 Chrn 31:l8).

5. “To make holy, consecrate, offer, surrender to God as a possession” (Josh 20:7; 1 Chron 23:13; 2 Chron 29:19; 30:17). God can declare something or someone to be consecrated to him (Num 3:13; 1 King 9:7). One can “view something/someone as holy” (Num 20:12; 27:14; Isa 29:23).

6. The noun *qodes* “holiness,” is the most frequently used word, referring to the sacrifices and the offering to God of Leviticus 19:8) and the “sanctuary” (Ezek 4 1:21) and for anything touched by holiness, including the sacrifice for sin “most holy” (Lev 6; 24 ff; Num 4:4; Lev 21:22).

The moral quality of holiness that means “to be without sin” is not known in the OT.

**Holiness - The NT Background**

1. The Holiness of God in the NT rests on the OT foundation. Holiness is certainly God’s own life; the Father is the Holy One (John 17:11; 1 Pet 1:15). In the Lord’s Prayer, our petition is made that God’s name should be hallowed (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:12). The name stands for the Father who now reveals himself as Father, not just “Yahweh” Himself (Matt 28:19).

2. Jesus Christ is also Holy (see Mark 1:24; Luke 1:35; John 6:69; 1 John 2:20; Rev 3:7; Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30). In Luke, it is grounded upon His miraculous birth when the Holy One came on Mary who was overshadowed by the divine Shekinah like the OT temple (Luke 1:35).

3. We shall leave all the references to the Holy Spirit in the NT.

**The Holiness of the Church**

1. The letter to the Hebrews says that the church is just like the OT temple (Heb 8: 5), but here it is the people who enjoy God’s dwelling. It is remarkable that Jesus the “Anointed” one was crucified in the city where the Temple was (Acts 4:27-30), and in verse 30 the Holy Spirit filled not the place but the people. Jesus suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem “in order to sanctify the people” (Heb 13:12), and in vv.13-14 we have the holy people of God who offer up “*sacrifices of praise that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*”

2. The NT people are called just as those of the OT, “*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*” These words (Exod 19:6) are now applied to the church (1 Pet 2:9; 1:16).

3. More vivid is the powerful historical identification of Paul of the people of God, the Church of Christ, and the body of Christ of the Holy One. The new people of God are now the new branches from the Gentile world have been engrafted (Rom 11:17), and the stump sanctifies them. The stump is obviously Christ (Rom 15:12) ordained to rule over the Gentiles. He has given Himself for the church that he might sanctify her, i.e. cleansed her by the washing of water with the word (Eph 5:26). His church is sanctified not merely as the people of the OT but it is now a state of being (1 Cor 1:2) by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:11; Rom 15:16). Jesus by his death and resurrection extended the “commonwealth” of the blessing, and his promises to the Gentiles (Eph 2:12) are extended by Christ to the whole Christian world, so that now Gentile Christians are no longer strangers but fellow citizens with the saints (Eph 2:19), built on the cornerstone Christ, over the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Here the saints are citizens who have the “right” to be in communion with God the Father.

4. This will help us: read carefully in Ephesians 5:27 about why the members of the church are holy and without blemish. There is no distinction in Paul between the holiness of the church and that of the members because the church – and that is the community – receives holiness from Christ. This is why Paul addresses the communities as that of the saints (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2), because where the Spirit of the Lord there is holiness.

5. The “holy” or the saints are members of the worshipping community grounded in the sacrifice of Christ because they are “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved and as the Lord has forgiven them so they must forgive” (Col 3:12). Ephesians 1:18 speaks of the glorious inheritance in the saints, whose glorious riches are to be known by Christians. Inseparably related is the verse in Colossians that must be quoted in full, “*giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.* *This transformation is the divine act that makes the church live its inheritance*” (Col 1:12- 13).

**The Holy Life of Christians**

### 1. As the Church is a holy temple of God (1 Cor 3:17; Eph 2:21), so the life of Christians should be a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our spiritual worship (Rom 12:10) so that the Christian life is an acceptable offering sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:16).

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2. In fact, grace – the charismata, adoption, salvation, and eternal glory; in a word, all the manifestations of the divine life – are referred sometimes to Christ, sometimes to the Spirit. Thus “we live by the Spirit” and nevertheless “Christ is our life’’ (Gal 5:25; Col 3:4; Phil 1:21). The Holy Spirit is the dispenser of all the charismata, and yet these are conferred “according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”(1 Cor 12:11; Eph 4:9) It is by Jesus Christ that we received the adoption of sons; nevertheless, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption and “*all those who are moved by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*” (Eph 1:4; Gal 4:5-6 and Rom 8:15) The dead will rise from the dead “*by a man*,” Jesus Christ, and yet God will raise us “*because of the Spirit*” or “*by the Spirit that dwells*” (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 6:11) in us.

3. Let us add still another fact often pointed out: the equivalence of the two formulas “in Christ” and “in the Spirit.” This equivalence does not go so far as is usually supposed, far from it; but it is nevertheless suggestive.

Some examples show this:

a. Justified in the Spirit = justified in the Lord.

b. Sanctified in the Holy Spirit = sanctified in Christ Jesus.

c. Holy temple in the Spirit = holy temple in the Lord.

d. To be sealed in the Spirit = to be sealed in Christ.’

e. Joy in the Holy Spirit = joy in the Lord.

f. Peace in the Holy Spirit = peace in the Lord.

To explain this phenomenon, we must say that Christ operates in the Holy Spirit. For the identity of operation on the part of Christ and the Spirit in the lives of the believers there exists a much deeper cause. Jesus is called Christ because as man He possessed the fullness of the Spirit and was to cause it to be poured out upon us as soon as he had accomplished his redemptive work. Then, at the moment of the resurrection, he becomes actually for himself and for us a “life giving spirit” for himself, since the grace with which he abounds fills his body and renders it spiritual, and for us, because he communicates to us lavishly all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit himself.

Henceforth, Jesus is the head of the new humanity who brings the Holy Spirit to our life. We live by the Son and also by the Spirit; or, more exactly, we live by the Spirit sent by the Son. It is an identity of operations without confusion of Persons.

Let us take, for example, the gift of adoption. This gift comes to us from the Son who has adopted us and causes us to be accepted as brothers; God “*predestines us for it by Jesus Christ*” and confers it upon us by faith and baptism; that is to say, by the act and rite which put us “into fellowship with the Son of God.” The Holy Spirit is nonetheless called the “Spirit of adoption,” and all those whom he leads are truly “sons of God.” This is because God adopts us as sons by giving us his Spirit, and Christ adopts us as brothers by sending us his Spirit: “*for if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” The proof that “*you are sons is that God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, where he cries: Abba, Father! Therefore now he is not a slave but a son; and if a son, an heir also through God.*” The Holy Spirit is the witness, the messenger, the agent, and the pledge of our sonship.

***Pope’s Notes***

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