

CHAPTER 2. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

2.1 Christ is the Only Righteous One

2.1.1 Christ's Divine Identity Reveals His Righteousness

2.1.1.1 Jesus Christ is the Son of God

In the Corinthian Epistles, there are several times references to Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God is the Father of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 1:19; 11:31), and the "Son" appears every time in the singular (1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 1:19), indicating that Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. It shows His divinity, because He has the same divine essence with God the Father¹⁴. This "divine essence" is a very special term used in the Nicene Creed: ὁμοούσιον, it is stated that the Father and the Son are of the same essence¹⁵. ὁμοούσιον (later became the Latin item: *homoousios*), that means "same in being, same in essence", from ὁμός (Latinization: *homós*), means "same" and οὐσία (Latinization: *ousia*), means "being" or "essence". The Fathers made a point of using this word to indicate the same divine essence (*homoousios*)¹⁶ of Christ the Son and

¹⁴ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, Volume 1, Translated by Bartel Elshout, Edited by Joel R. Beeke, Reformation Heritage Books, 145.

¹⁵ Nicene Creed

¹⁶ Stephen R. Holmes, *The Quest for the Trinity: The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History and Modernity*, IVP Academic, 87-88.

the Father, rather than a similar essence (*homoiousios*)¹⁷. This same divine essence also shows that the Son Jesus Christ has the same image and attributes of God the Father. One of God's fundamental attributes is righteousness. Therefore, Christ Jesus has divine righteousness.

2.1.1.2 Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Trinity

The epistle says that there is only one God and no other (1 Corinthians 8:4). This one God, however, has three Persons, which are clearly written any times in the Corinthian Epistles. In 1 Corinthians 12:3-6, truly the God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit appears in these places at the same time. Though Paul didn't use the word "Trinity" or "Persons", that actually these terms didn't exist at that time, but according to the Reformed Theology, there are three Persons: the First Person of the Trinity, God the Father, the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son Jesus Christ, and the Third Person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 13:14 also appears one God and three persons: God (1st Person), Jesus Christ (2nd Person), Holy Spirit (3rd Person). Moreover, there are even more verses in which two Persons appear, God the Father and Christ, and Christ and the Holy Spirit, for example: Christ is always the wisdom and power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), God is our reconciliation to Him through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18), God is the head of

¹⁷ Ibid, 94

Christ (1 Corinthians 11:4), your body is the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15,19), and so on.

2.1.1.3 Jesus Christ is the Lord

In 1 Corinthians 8:6 is written, Jesus is the one Lord. Such a strong text declares that Christ is the Lord and the only Lord. Lord is a very special word that has a special sacred meaning for Christians, and it is also directly related to the Lord of the Old Testament. This is significant, this "Lord" (κύριος¹⁸) is undoubtedly a great declaration that Jesus Christ is the LORD (אֱלֹהִים) of the Old Testament. And usually אֱלֹהִים is a substitute for LORD's name יְהוָה,¹⁹ because calling a holy LORD's name יְהוָה is likely to violate the law, that you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (Exodus 20:7). This statement is as important as "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4), "LORD" declares that Lord to the deity of Christ.²⁰ Hodge even believed that Christ is the LORD of the Old Testament, who led the Israelites through the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:1-13).²¹

¹⁸ GNT, 1 Corinthians 8:6.

¹⁹ BHS, Exodus 3:14

²⁰ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 126.

²¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Vol 1 The Divinity Of Christ*. New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 512.

In addition, there are several references to "Christ is Lord". In 1 Corinthians 1:2, it is written: our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. And, no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). Therefore, it is the work of the Holy Spirit and the privilege of believers to know "Jesus is Lord". In 1 Corinthians 16:22, a rare Aramaic word is used here: maran-atha (מָרְאָא מְרַנָּה),²² Greek translation: μαρὰν ἄθα. "mar" which means is "Lord", "Maran-atha" was translated as "Our Lord, come!".²³

He is the glorious Lord (1 Corinthians 2:8), as the Lord from heaven to whom the universe is subject (1 Corinthians 15:25). In the one hand, the name "the LORD" (יהוה) in the Old Testament is closely associated with "righteousness." Many clear scriptures indicate the Lord is righteous, the righteous One, and the righteousness of His people. For example, the LORD is righteous²⁴, For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteous deeds (Psalm 11:7). He is a righteous God and a Savior (Isaiah 45:21) and others. Therefore, under this background and in this context, associating "Jesus is Lord" highlights his righteous nature.

In the other hand, "Jesus is Lord" also has political significance. The Greek

²² George Arthur Buttrick(Editor), *The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible (K-Q)*, Abingdon Press, 262.

²³ Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 248.

²⁴ KJV, Exodus 9:27

word κύριος usually refers to the Roman emperor at the time.²⁵ Paul's declaration that "Jesus is Lord, Lord of all" is a response to this statement, especially a denial of the Roman Empire's claim that "Caesar is Lord"²⁶. He is the sovereign Lord, far superior to Caesar, and this transcendence is also reflected in other areas of human ability: religion, politics and other aspects.²⁷ This is not a great difference in degree, but a transcendence in essence. Therefore, He is the true Lord, the Lord of lords, and Caesar is not! And, in Romans 10:9, Philippians 2:11 and Colossians 1:3 many other scriptures proclaim that Jesus is Lord. And in 1 Corinthians 8:6, the text specifically emphasizes that "there is one Lord, Jesus Christ." Although there are many called "Lord" in verse 5, there is only one true Lord, which is fundamentally different. In 1 Corinthians 12:5, again, there is only one Lord. Therefore, there is no second Lord, and all that is called "Lord" in this world is not really Lord, because there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ.

Besides He is the Redeemer (1Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21), He is the Aim of prayer (1 Corinthians 16: 23). He is the righteous judge, before His judgment-seat all men are to be arraigned (2 Corinthians 5:10). Hodge had summarized Christ's

²⁵ Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, ebook, InterVarsity Press, 29.

²⁶ Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 16,19.

²⁷ Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, ebook, InterVarsity Press, 69.

Divinity in 1 Corinthians, in addition to the above identities, Christ also has the orientation of religious worship. All believers are His worshippers (1 Corinthians 1:2). He is the source of spiritual life (1 Corinthians 1:4-9, 30, 31). As the giver of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians chapter 12). So, Through Jesus Christ's divine identity, we know that He is the righteousness.

2.1.2 Christ's Divine Works Reveal His Righteousness

2.1.2.1 He Created and Redeemed.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, it is said that all things came into being through Him, and we also come into being through Him. Here Jesus' divinity is revealed through the works of creation and redemption.²⁸ Although the word creation is not used directly here, the meaning is that He is the creator of the universe, God the Father created all things and mankind through the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus is the agent of all creation and the one to whom our new existence is due as well. Indeed, all creation originates from The Father through the Son²⁹. Although the Corinthians Epistles do not explain how God the Father created all things through Christ, it is very clear from the entire Bible. Hebrews 1:2 talks about God the Father creating the worlds through Christ. Similar verses are also mentioned in Romans 11:36 and Colossians 1:16,

²⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Baker Books, 268.

²⁹ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 385.

saying that all things come from God and were created through Christ. John 1:1-3 specifically talks about Christ being λόγος³⁰, the Holy Word. In Genesis 1, God created the world with His Word, which shows that the Bible is consistent. Is the Lord's creation righteous? Of course. Genesis talks about how everything God created was good (Genesis 1:1-1), and in Job 36:3, he will ascribe righteousness to his Maker. It specifically talks about how righteousness and creation are linked together. And Psalms 50:6 and 97:6 say that the heavens show His righteousness. This further proves that God's work of creation through Christ is righteous. And Theodore Beza wrote, "Nothing happens by chance, and without a very righteous decree of God."³¹

And in the new creation, there will be still righteousness in it. In 2 Peter 3:13, according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. In 1 Corinthians 8:6b, it speaks of "we" also through Him, and here "we mean believers," which is related to Christ's redemption. A new creation is mentioned in the redemption. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says: "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." Here it is said that the new creation is realized through Christ. In Christ's work of redemption, redemption and righteousness are closely related (1 Corinthians 1:30), and as the only righteous One, He demonstrated God's greatest righteousness and love on the cross.

³⁰ GNT, John 1:1-3.

³¹ Shawn D. Wright, *Our Sovereign Refuge: The Pastoral Theology of Theodore Beza* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster, 2004), 139.

2.1.2.2 He appeared and revealed.

At the beginning of Paul's letters around the Corinthians, he mentions that it was God's will that he is an apostle of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1).

In the Corinthian letters, Paul uses "Lord" 121 times, of which "Lord Jesus" or "Lord Jesus Christ", "Lord Christ Jesus" is used 22 times, and refers to Jesus, a small number of Old Testament verses, but the use of "Lord" is in the Greek word κύριος, indicating that Jesus is the Old Testament Lord (יְהוָה) is the same authority. But from the Lord (יְהוָה) of the Old Testament to the Lord Jesus of the New Testament, this connection and transformation can be said to be a major turning point in Paul's life. He used to be a persecutor of the church, a zealous Pharisee who persecuted the church and persecuted Christians strongly because he believed in the Lord God as one Lord, and could not accept another Lord Jesus (Acts 8:3, 9:1, Galatians 1:13, Philippians 3:6). Even when he was illuminated and called by the Lord Jesus, he still did not understand, and even he said very contradictory words: "Lord, who are you?" On the one hand, Paul called him Lord, but did not know who the Lord was. Jesus answered him, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:1-5), and even answered him in unusual Hebrew (Acts 26:14). This revelation from heaven caused Paul to change completely, so that he knew that the Lord of the Old Testament was equal to the Lord Jesus of the New Testament, or that the Lord Jesus was equivalent to the Lord of the Old Testament. This revelation, is not a human act, but the Lord's initiative to reveal and appear to Paul.

In addition, the Corinthians letters written many revelations from Christ, such as the teaching on the Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-34). Paul said that he received it from the Lord, indicating that it did not come from himself, nor anyone else, nor was it the product of culture or history, but that the Lord's revelation came to him. Paul was later caught up to the third heaven. He heard secret words that cannot be told in paradise, and received extraordinary revelations (2 Corinthians 12:1-7), which were clearly revelations and appearances of the Lord. But it was so miraculous that even 14 years later, it was still hard to believe. So Paul used the third person to describe his vision, as if it happened to someone else.³² These two Corinthian letters are revelations of the Lord. The two letters reveals the truth of the Lord, which is unusual, not from man, but from God. Perhaps Paul had about four Corinthians letters,³³ but these two letters that can be revered as Canon.

These teachings of truth do not come from man, nor are they the product of culture or history, for men have been blinded by the god of this world, and cannot know the truth, nor can they know God, unless Christ reveals God, for Christ is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4-6).

³² Ogilvie, Lloyd John, *The Communicator's Commentary*, 1,2 Corinthians, Word Books, Publisher, 288.

³³ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 24.

2.1.2.3 He Provides and Comforts

In 1 Corinthians chapter 10, when the Israelites came out of Egypt in the wilderness, where there were no crops, no fruits, vegetables, or trees even grass. They lived in the wilderness for 40 years. In 40 years, about 2 million people did not die of hunger or thirst, and even their clothes did not wear out, and the shoes on their feet did not wear out (Deuteronomy 29:5). It was a supernatural blessing that God gave to Israel the manna from the heaven, the living water from the cracked rock. They had been eating spiritual food and drinking spiritual water in 40 years in the wilderness.

Without the New Testament, it is impossible to understand what the Old Testament manna actually refers to. Is the living water of the rock a historical legend or does it have present-day significance? But the Corinthians clearly tell us that He is the provider of life. The phrase "Christ is the rock" carries considerable weight; in the Old Testament, "rock" is the title of the Lord God (Deuteronomy 32:15, Psalm 18:2), and although in the Old Testament the word is metaphorical in many ways, it already implies a clear relationship with Christ. And The word is associated not only with nursing, but also with Christ's saving work: The Rock is my salvation (Deuteronomy 32:15; Psalms 62:2; 95:1), Savior (Psalm 89:26), Redeemer (Psalm 78:35), Begetter (Deuteronomy 32:18).³⁴ And the spiritual food and water mentioned here clearly refer to the Lord's Supper.³⁵ Jesus is the faithful provider of spiritual food for God's

³⁴ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Baker Books, 325.

³⁵ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The*

people. In the Old Testament Christ was a solid and reliable spiritual rock that always provided for them, and in the New Testament He also provides for the needs of every believer.

Christ is the comfort of believers in times of troubles. There are many references to "affliction" and "suffering" in 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, especially when Paul states from his own experience that this affliction refers not only to all external suffering, but also to inner suffering, which is not specifically mentioned here, but we can guess from 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 6:4-10,³⁶ especially in 11:23-29, we know exactly how much Paul suffered: Many times he suffered far greater labors, far more imprisonment, many times he was scourged, many times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, many times he was shipwrecked, many times he was in danger of rivers, of thieves, of enemies, of his own people, etc. These were enough to kill him but it was not over yet. And many times he had no sleep, hunger, cold, and nakedness. In addition, there are many inner worries, for the concern of the churches. He even had a thorn in his body that tormented him, and this Paul, in weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities, could rejoice in it, because the power of Christ covered him. Such an experience, if not for the comfort and protection of Christ, humans would have been killed or committed suicide long ago, because the

Corinthians, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 142.

³⁶ David E. Garland, *New International Version the New American Commentary: An Exegetical Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, 2 Corinthians*, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 61.

suffering is too great and the pressure is too heavy for man to overcome, and it can only lead to despair (2 Corinthians 1:8). But Paul also said that the greater suffering of Christ is the greater comfort of Christ, and that such comfort can comfort those in distress (2 Corinthians 1:4-5).

The Lord gave Paul a promise: My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Therefore, Paul preferred to boast of his own weakness, so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. This promise of the Lord is addressed not only to Paul, but also to all believers.

2.1.2.4 He Rules and Judges

In 1 Corinthians 15:25, Christ will reign. All things will be put under His feet (1 Corinthians 15:27), echoing Psalm 8:6, which shows that Christ is His dominion over the air, the earth, and the sea, He rules over the whole of creation. For God the Father has given the Son unlimited sovereignty over all creation.³⁷

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Christ as Lord, He is even more associated with the Lord (יְהוָה) of the Old Testament, who will reign forever and ever (Exodus 15:18, Psalms 95:3). For the Lord (יְהוָה) is a great King above all gods, so Jesus is the King, which of course means that He is the eternal King. In combination with the whole Bible, we see that the Lord Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15,

³⁷ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 217.

Revelation 17:14). In Isaiah 9:7, He will rule over David's kingdom from his throne and establish it with justice and righteousness, both now and forever. The Messiah is prophesied in the Old Testament. For the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ) is the Christ (Μεσσίας) of the New Testament (John 1:41), and the Christ of the prophecy is Jesus. Therefore Jesus is the king, and he rules His kingdom with justice and righteousness. Christ is the head of every man (1 Corinthians 11:3), and you are the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), further confirming that Christ is the Head in the church and full of righteousness in God's Country.

This righteous King not only rules the world, but also judges it. In 1 Corinthians 15:24-25, after that the end will come, when Christ, having destroyed all rulers, powers, and powers, will surrender the kingdom to God the Father. For Christ will reign until God has put all his enemies under his feet. This corresponds to, "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for you" (Psalm 110:1). This shows that all authority is under Christ,³⁸ and that Christ's authority surpasses all authority in the world, so his judgment is ultimate. God judges those outside (1 Corinthians 5:13), and all unbelievers will fall under God's judgment, from which no one can escape, and God has given the power of judgment to Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ became the ultimate judge. And as a judge, He is fully qualified, because he is the Lord, the righteous One who has defeated death and risen from the

³⁸ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 215-216.

dead.

As the righteous judge, He judges people according to their works; He does not condemn them or define them as guilty. The fact that his last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26) indicates that the first death is not the final death, and that all saints of all ages will be resurrected from the final judgment.

The judgment of the world is about them being condemned to eternal death. All believers must appear before the seat of Christ too, so that each one may be rewarded according to his own deeds, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). It is emphasized here that believers will also face the righteous judgment of Christ, which, of course, has nothing to do with eternal death and is fundamentally different from the judgment of death for unbelievers. When we are judged, we are punished by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11:32). Paul said that although he was not aware of anything, he could not be justified by it. For he still faced the judgment of the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:4). Christians are judged, whether apostles or believers, each face to come before the Christian table to be judged, only this is not condemnation, but punishment by the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). At that time, personal works will be revealed, the faithful will be rewarded, the unfaithful will lose their reward and suffer, and though they will be saved, they will suffer loss.

At that time, some Corinthians did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, which not only took away the basis of the Gospel, but also indirectly denied the last judgment of the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 15, we are not only told about the historical

fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, but also that it is a historical necessity that Christ will judge the world and believers. The judgment on Christians is about their reward, and they are saved, but they are rewarded according to their works. The unbelievers, on the other hand, will no longer have the possibility of salvation at the final judgment, which will result in condemnation into eternal death.

So how can we avoid that terrible death? In fact, there is nothing that man can do, unless the grace of God comes upon him so that he may be redeemed in Christ. Christians are bound to be judged by Christ, and believers cannot be justified by their own works (1 Corinthians 4:4), In Christ alone, he is a new creation, with whom God is reconciled and his sins forgiven, and who is to be made righteous in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

2.1.3 The Righteousness of His Humanity

We know from the above that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but He is also the Son of Man. He is the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), the Christ who was crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2), and the resurrection of the dead from him (1 Corinthians 15:15-16), indicating that He really died and rose again. He is not only a true man, a perfect man, a righteous man.

2.1.3.1 His identity is completely sinless.

He had no original sin. All who are in Adam are sinners, and their end is death

(1 Corinthians 15:22). The exception is Christ, in whom all will be resurrected, because he is not a man in Adam, he is heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:47-48), and all men are born by blood, beginning with Adam. The first Adam from the earth, but Christ from the heaven. Although the Corinthians letters did not write of the incarnation of Christ, but if we combine the Gospels, it is more clear that Jesus Christ is the Word that was in the beginning became the flesh (John 1:1, 14), was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Paul also spoke of Christ as God manifested in flesh in other letters (1 Timothy 3:16). He is from heaven, this also shows from the side that Christ is without original sin.

The first Adam was natural, perishable and mortal; the last Adam, Christ, spiritual, imperishable and immortal (1 Corinthians 15:44-53). Because the sting of death is sin (1 Corinthians 15:56), this is consistent with what Paul said in Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death", which means that those who commit sins must pay the price of death. If Christ was sinful, then He could not be spiritual, imperishable, and immortal. Even He did not know what sin was (2 Corinthians 5:21). So, Christ is not a human being born from the fleshly union of husband and wife in the blood of Adam. So He was born without inherited sin or original sin.

2.1.3.2 He knew no sin

The complete sinlessness of Christ did not equate to His being a righteous being, such as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, who were completely sinless

when they were created. But they still had the possibility of committing a crime, which Augustine called in Latin "*posse peccare, posse non peccare*",³⁹ which means: able to sin or able to not sin. But Christ, as the perfect man, who is the head of all mankind, is the final form of man when the saints enter the fourth stage of life.⁴⁰ It is impossible to sin, which corresponds to Augustine's ideal: *non posse peccare*,⁴¹ that Latin item means: not able to sin.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, "know" in Greek is γνόντα, which is the verb form of the Greek word γινσκω⁴², here in addition to the conventional understanding and knowledge of life, but also an explanation is a very deep relationship of life, sometimes indicating the sexual relationship between men and women, in Matthew 1:25 only did not sleep with her γινσκω, when she gave birth to a son. This corresponds to the Hebrew word נָטַף, which first appears in the original text (Genesis 4:1) refers to cohabitation, the most intimate sexual union between husband and wife,⁴³ the deep understanding of each other, the knowledge that there is intimacy, the

³⁹ Marianne Djuth, *Augustine through the Age: An Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Liberty", 495-98.

⁴⁰ Thomas Boston, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, the Scottish Puritan.

⁴¹ Marianne Djuth (ed.), *Augustine through the Age: An Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Liberty", 495-98.

⁴² Archibald T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Supplemented & updated with A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians and A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians by C.K. Barrett, Compiled & translated by Silas Chan Designer: Daniel K. K. Tsoi Producer: Logos Book House Ltd, 331.

⁴³ John R.Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson, *The Hebrew-English concordance to the Old Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, 617.

principle of love, the relationship of unity. Jesus did not know sin, indicating that he had absolutely no relationship with sin, nothing to do with sin, nothing to do with the state of union with sin, nothing to do with sin, that is to say, he was sinless.

2.1.3.3 He had fulfilled the law perfectly

He is the true Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), the perfect sacrifice. The sin lambs often offered in the Old Testament are only foreshadowings, and their blood cannot really cleanse people's sins, but point to Jesus Christ who can truly atone for sins. He is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" as witnessed by John the Baptist (John 1:29).

Christ is blameless in his behavior, he actively obeyed the law and fulfilled God's righteousness. If he is not perfect in the law, then he has broken the law and is guilty. Obviously, if a sinner dies, can he rise again? But Christ rose. For the hook of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law (1 Corinthians 15:56). Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection three days later showed that he had triumphed over death and sin, that he was blameless in the law, and that he had not broken any laws.

From a broader perspective of the New Testament, Jesus said in the Gospel, "I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it" (Matthew 5:17). Romans 10:4 says that the end of the law is Christ, so that everyone who believes in him will receive righteousness.

2.1.3.4 His resurrection declared him the righteous One.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, it is written that the resurrection of Christ is well documented as a historical fact. Christ died and rose from the dead according to the Bible. This declares his victory over death and sin and shows that He is righteousness, because sinners are dead in sin and there is no possibility of resurrection, and all sinners die in sin! As I Corinthians 15:22 says, all who were in Adam died. But Jesus' resurrection from the dead shows that He was sinless, that the power of sin was not yet powerful over him, and his resurrection shows that He defeated death, defeated sin (1 Corinthians 15:26, 57; 2 Corinthians 5:4), defeated the devil (1 Corinthians 15:26, 54) through death. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, his resurrection shows that He is the righteous One and is the only righteous one in human history.

Some Corinthians did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, that is to say, they did not accept the historical fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). Paul righteously argues (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17, 32) that if Christ had not risen, the entire Christian faith would have been utterly ruined! If Christ has not been raised, Christ died in vain,⁴⁴ the faith of believers is in vain, and all believers are still in sin, then the final end is still death, just like the world, what is the meaning of that? As for the testimony of the apostles and believers, it is also in vain! If the Christ that believers believe in is not raised from the dead, then it is more

⁴⁴ Gerald Bray (Editor), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament: 1-2 Corinthians*, InterVarsity Press, 151.

pitiful than making people miserable! This is an extremely fundamental doctrine, one of the core elements of the faith. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus' resurrection from the dead is quite certain and clear, and his resurrection proclaims that Christ himself is the righteous One (Acts 7:52; 1 John 2:1). This is the biggest difference with all other religions: all the masters died, and only Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

2.2 Fulfillment on the Cross

2.2.1 The Wisdom of God

2.2.1.1 The secret and hidden wisdom

Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). And this wisdom is unknown to the world, not the wisdom of those who have power, for such wisdom is the wisdom of those who are doomed to pass away (1 Corinthians 2:6, 8). This wisdom is unknown to the world, a secret, hidden wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:7). However, the wisdom of God is difficult to understand, and the core of God's wisdom is Christ and his crucifixion, which the world cannot understand, accept, and even foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23).

The cross, for the world at that time, the cross was frightening and even more surprising. This was probably the most brutal method of execution ever carried out, and it was most likely invented by barbarians⁴⁵. Therefore, as senior Roman citizens

⁴⁵ John. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, InterVarsity Press, 23.

of the time, they could avoid being crucified, except in extreme cases of treason.

Cicero, a contemporary philosopher, condemned it in one of his lectures as "a most cruel and repulsive punishment."⁴⁶ Even the Torah is recorded as a place of curse (Deuteronomy 21:23).

We can understand why Paul's "message of the Cross" seemed "foolish" or even crazy to many of his listeners (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23). How could anyone in his right mind worship as a God a dead man who had been justly convicted as a criminal and executed in the most humiliating manner? Both Jews and Gentiles, the early enemies of Christianity, lost no time in mocking God's anointed and Saviour of mankind for ending his life on the cross. That's a crazy idea.⁴⁷

Therefore Paul had to go beyond the historical details of the cross and explain the significance of this redemptive event in human history, which was not only the reason for Christ's crucifixion, but also the eternal benefit for every believer: forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and resurrection and so on⁴⁸. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). And those who do not believe, because they are self-righteous and do not know God, are doomed to destruction (1 Corinthians 1:18). And the wisdom of God is not the wisdom of

⁴⁶ Cicero, *Against Verres*, II.v.64, para. 165.

⁴⁷ John. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, InterVaestly Press, 24.

⁴⁸ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Baker Books, P73.

human, but spiritual wisdom. This reflects the transcendent and redemptive nature of God's wisdom. The cross is the heart and foundation of all hope, and the cross brings about a reversal, not merely of degree, but of essence⁴⁹.

God's wisdom is revealed to believers only through the Holy Spirit. The mystery of God is fully known by the Holy Spirit, and spiritual people receive the Holy Spirit, so that they can understand the wisdom of this mystery because the Holy Spirit speaks spiritual things to spiritual people (1 Corinthians 2:3). But he who does not have the Holy Spirit is a man of flesh, and such a man cannot understand the things of the Holy Spirit, but thinks them foolishness. So they are called the perishing ones (1 Corinthians 1:18).

2.2.1.2 The Transcendent Righteousness of Christ

In the Corinthians of the Roman Empire, there were three main cultural-backgrounds: Jews, Greeks, and Romans. It was the same as the city of Rome at that time (Rome 1:16; 10:12). They all have their own ideas of righteousness, but these righteousness cannot make men righteous. The doctrine of the righteousness of Christ, its relevance is absolutely universal, and it cuts across cultures, this is not a tribal concept.⁵⁰ Since this is aimed at "sin in Adam," all cultural problems are rooted in

⁴⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1284.

⁵⁰ John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ should be Righteousness*, Crossway, 32.

Adam, because Adam is the Father of all people and the Father of all cultures⁵¹.

On the other hand, from the perspective of revelation, all cultures are merely responses to general revelation, which has good parts and bad parts, right parts and wrong parts, and which are essentially different from God's revelation. Even if general revelation is not enough, special revelation is needed. The special revelation is Christ, which is not a product of culture or human wisdom, but wisdom from God, and it is God's special grace. Therefore, it is inevitable that Christ will transcend all cultures.

2.2.1.2.1 Surpassing Jewish Righteousness

For the Jews, who considered themselves to be God's chosen people, they believed that righteousness was God's attribute, that LORD was righteousness, that His deeds was righteous and just. They knew that since Adam and Eve sinned, all human beings have sinned, but as God's chosen people, they believed that if people kept God's law, they would meet God's standards.⁵² That is to say, man can be righteous by acts.⁵³ As a result, Jews were often self-righteous.⁵⁴ They could not accept Jesus as the Christ because their idea of the Messiah was great, is a political

⁵¹ Ibid, 33.

⁵² Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Chinese translate vol 2, Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 830.

⁵³ Geehard Kittel (Editor), *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*, volume II, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 196.

⁵⁴ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Chinese translated vol 1, Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 653.

king⁵⁵. Jesus was crucified, such a shame and humiliation, this is unacceptable! And Jesus is called "He is the Son of God," which means that Jesus is God and is called Lord by believers, which conflicts with their unanimous acceptance of the Lord God as the One Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4), and they simply cannot accept Jesus!

But Paul knew that the righteousness of the Jews was false, and he himself had been one of the elite of the law among the Jews (Galatians 1:14); He also kept the law strictly and was blameless in its righteousness (Philippians 3:6), but he also admitted that he could not be righteousness in this way (1 Corinthians 4:4). When he was called by the Lord, he thought that he was obeying the law and serving the Lord fervently, but he found himself greatly sinning against the Lord, even calling Him the Lord with his mouth, and not knowing Him at all (Acts 9:5).

After Paul repented, he realized that the Jews were still covered with a veil, and their faith was still covered with a veil, just like Moses' veil. The Jews have not turned to Christ and is still covered by a veil (2 Corinthians 3:13-16). Their teachings are far from the words of Jesus.⁵⁶ Man cannot attain the righteousness of the law, and Paul knew that only Jesus Christ fulfilled the law. Only Jesus Christ is the only Righteous.

⁵⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI (Acts to Revelation)*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library Publisher, 795.

⁵⁶ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic, 761.

2.2.1.2.2 Surpassing Greeks' Righteousness

The Greeks regarded righteousness as one of the most important virtues, especially the Stoics, who believed that people had four major virtues: Wisdom, Righteousness, Courage, Temperance.⁵⁷ People have these four virtues, that is the gentleman. A gentleman focuses on thinking rationally, acting justly, and treating others fairly.⁵⁸ A gentleman is honorable, admirable, and wise. And the crucifixion of Jesus, so humiliating and incompetent that the believers called him the Savior, to save the world, was unacceptable to the Greeks because it was so irrational, so unwise, so stupid,⁵⁹ that it was a sign of failure, not of success. To let a person who can't even save himself to save others, in their concept, this is a stupid idea, is unacceptable.

2.2.1.2.3 Surpassing Romans' Righteousness

The Latin word for righteousness used by the Romans is *iustitia*, which is translated in the Vulgata version as *iustitia*.⁶⁰ In the Middle Ages, the "i" was divided and the consonant function became "j",⁶¹ so many people also wrote *Justitia*, Martin

⁵⁷ Stephen Tong, *Sin, Righteousness and judgment*, Simplified Chinese Version, Published by STEMI, Printed by Printmate SDN BHD, 12-13.

⁵⁸ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Chinese translate vol 2, Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 1191-1192.

⁵⁹ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 54.

⁶⁰ VUL 1 Corinthians 1:30.

⁶¹ *Encyclopedia Americana International Edition*, Vol 3, Americana Corporation, 636.

Luther used to use *iustitia, justitia*.⁶² And *justitia* came into English as *justice*.

For the Romans, righteousness was almost justice, Or judicial justice⁶³. It was not only a virtue, but also a manifestation of the legal spirit of the whole country. To act justly, according to the Roman law, to reward the good and to punish the evil, are all manifestations of righteousness.⁶⁴ From the perspective of strict law and righteousness in the Roman Empire, they were extremely concerned with righteousness. A person can abide by the law, even if a righteous person. Jesus was condemned to death by the Roman magistrates and was crucified. Such a criminal was tried by the Roman law and died shamefully on the cross. Now some people say that this Jesus who died on the cross could save the Romans, which was unacceptable to the Romans.

But Paul did not want to speak to them with the rhetorical wisdom that the Greeks and Romans valued, and he came to them not to speak, not to demonstrate the wisdom and rhetoric of speech, but to preach the Gospel. He did not want others to focus on himself, but on Christ who was on the cross.⁶⁵ Because that was what they really needed, even if they despise and reject it, it is in Christ that true righteousness

⁶² Eric Leland Saak, *Luther and the Reformation of the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge University Press, 120.

⁶³ Geehard Kittel (Editor), *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*, volume II, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 193.

⁶⁴ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Chinese translated vol 2, Campus Evangelical Fellowship Press, 829.

⁶⁵ Ajith Fernando, *The NIV application commentary: ACTS*, Zondervan, 603.

can be received. Jesus came to solve the problem was unleashed by the first man, leading to condemnation and corruption for all people everywhere in all cultures and all times. This is a stunning discovery for many people. The diagnosis of what needs to be remedied is the same in all cultures because it stems from Adam, the father of all cultures. Therefore, Christ gives the grace of righteousness to all who are willing to "receive" it. This is absolutely sufficient and necessary for everyone in any culture, anywhere in the world.⁶⁶

2.2.2 The Obedience of Christ

First of all, when we talk about the obedience of Christ, we focus on the obedience of Christ's humanity. As the second Adam, Jesus did not rely on his divinity to "cheat",⁶⁷ but He received and relied on the Holy Spirit in his true humanity. Christ totally relied on his Father, endured suffering, and obeyed until death without retreating. Speaking of his true humanity suggests that he will have human weaknesses and limitations. It is said in 2 Corinthians 13:4 that he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. Of course, the weakness of Christ is completely sinless.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ John Piper, *Counted Righteous in Christ should be Righteousness*, Crossway, 33.

⁶⁷ Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 60.

⁶⁸ Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 50.

The cross was a place of shame, yet Christ obeyed the will of his Father and shed his blood on the cross. Although he was the Son of God, he learned humility and obedience until God's will was done. His obedience made him humble before God and men, and everything he did to save us was of his own free will.⁶⁹ He was to killed innocently as a perfectly righteous man, to die on the cross, to be humiliated, to be despised, to die, without resisting, without complaining, without disobeying God's will, every step was in God's plan, every step was to fulfill the Father's will.

God is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3) shows that Christ is obedient to God. In 15:28, emphasises that God subjected all things to Christ, but Christ submitted to God who subjects all things to Him. Christ obeyed God the Father in all things.

It is Christ's active obedience. Christ Himself was to submit to God who put all things under him, to make God over all things Lord of all things (1 Corinthians 15:28). Jesus Christ obeyed Father God and kept the law. In 33 years on earth, he did not do a single thing that broke the law, which is incredible, but Christ really did it. He is the only perfect one among mankind. Adam rebelled against God's will and rejected the Word of God, causing all mankind to fall into sin and inevitably die. And Christ is completely obedient to the will of God the Father. Our Lord came into the world to take Adam's humanity and name in his place in obedience to the Father. Not

⁶⁹ Mark Jones, *Knowing Christ*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 118.

once did he disobey, obeying to the point of death, in order to surrender his flesh for us as the price of satisfying God's just judgment, in order to redeem us.⁷⁰ And at the end of the day, after judgment, Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24), proving his obedience to the Father.

Christ's passive obedience is manifested in His suffering. In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18; 2:2, 8 there are much talk of the crucifixion of Christ and the unjust judgment of a sinless man. 1 Corinthians 4:7 speaks of the killing of Christ; 1 Corinthians 11:23 speaks of the innocent betrayal of the Lord Jesus; 1 Corinthians 13:4 declares that Christ suffered according to the weakness of the flesh.⁷¹ The Lord Jesus Christ was rich, but became poor for us (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In 2 Corinthians 1:5, an indirect reference to Christ can comfort the suffering believer, for the believer is merely a share of the suffering in Christ⁷², It can also be said that when Christians are united with Christ, they share the suffering of Christ,⁷³ Although there is no specific list of what Christ suffered, Paul himself said that the greater the suffering of Christ, the greater the comfort of Christ. Some of the things that Paul suffered did not seem to happen to Christ, such as being beaten with a rod,

⁷⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol 16, translated by A kernel of Wheat Christian Ministries, 388.

⁷¹ Ibid, 88.

⁷² Coin Kruse, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Second Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, translated in Chinese by Wu Wenfang, Campus Evangelical Fellowship, 61.

⁷³ Coin Kruse, *New Testament Foundations for Ministry*, Marshall, Morgan & Scott 1983, P111-114.

being stoned, etc., which can be explained by the sufferings he experienced in his ministry. Christ suffered in His Messianic ministry,⁷⁴ such as weakness, insults, hardship, persecutions, and calamities (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is the lesson that Paul learned from Christ, and the side also affirms that Jesus Christ also experienced weakness, insults, hardship, persecutions, and calamities and so on. Moreover, all that is said here is that Christ suffered with true humanity, that he was a true man who endured obedience to death to do the will of God the Father.

2.2.3 The Atonement of Christ

2.2.3.1 He is eligible to redeem

For He is righteous and without sin at all. The one person in the universe who is qualified to perform the work of atonement, to satisfy the righteous demands of God on the one hand, and to bear the sins of all on the other, is obedient to the will of the Father and willing to become a perfect man in the likeness of man.

It is impossible to be saved without paying attention to the redemption of Jesus Christ, and countless people deceive themselves, deceive themselves, suffer, and speed toward eternal destruction until it is too late to understand.

⁷⁴ Denney, ed. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Death of Christ*, The Tyndale Press, 1956, 82.

2.2.3.2 His Atonement is complete

He has completed the work of redemption, a righteous work, a contribution forever, and all generations of believers can be redeemed by Christ. Jesus' redemption is also limited, not that the righteousness of Christ is limited and cannot be imputed to more sinners, but that God has chosen a portion of sinners according to His sovereignty, so that Christ can bear their sins and save them with the imputed righteousness of Christ. God's election comes to some (1 Corinthians 1:27), not to all. Not all people can be saved, but only God's chosen ones can be saved (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). This is also the point emphasized by the five Essentials of Calvinism (TULIP)⁷⁵.

2.3 Relationship With Human Beings

All men of the world are sinners, enemies of God based on God's righteousness, and they must face God's righteous judgment, which is death and curses. Out of God's grace and love, God predestines Christ to redeem us (1 Corinthians 1:30), not by human works, but through Christ's sacrifice. For Christ is the righteous, the only one qualified to atone for sinners, the true Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). God chose some people in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:26-27), and through Christ's atonement on the cross, Christ bore the punishment of sinners and

⁷⁵ David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism, Defined, Defended, Documented*, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, 16-18.

satisfied God's Justice, and Christ gave His righteousness to believers, so that all who trust in Christ Jesus are clothed with Christ's righteousness, forgiven of sins, reconciled to God, and become righteous. This is the "imputation of righteousness", which I shall discuss in detail in Chapter 3.

However, there are others whom God has not chosen, and they will die for their sins and fall into the terrible judgment of God. They are those who reject Jesus and despise the cross, they are who do not know God, they are self-righteous men, but none of them can boast before God (1 Corinthians 1:29), for without Christ a man cannot know God. If they can not put on the righteousness of Christ, they are sinners and will be judged by God, and their end will be eternal death.