

***Sabbath School Today***  
**With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

***Oneness in Christ***  
**Lesson 10: Unity and Broken Relationships**

When we appreciate what it took for the Father and Jesus to forgive us sinners, then we will find it in our hearts to forgive others their sins toward us.

The “good news” that salvation in Christ is not a mere provision, but a fact; that Christ is not merely *offered* to every man, but *given* to every man; that the Lord loves us so much that we cannot be lost unless we resist the Holy Spirit; that it is easy to be saved and hard to be lost, in view of this great salvation; that when Christ died on the cross, He actually did something for “every man”; that it is God who takes the initiative in effecting our salvation, and that it is impossible to be lost unless we take the initiative in resisting and rejecting what He has effected for us; and that justification by God’s free grace is effected for “all,” God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, “all men” owe even their physical life to Christ’s sacrifice and by His stripes they are healed.

This all sounds like “good news” to me. But the world does not know or understand it because no one is telling it to them, or at least very few are; and those in the remnant church who should understand it and proclaim it powerfully and effectively are themselves confused by conflicting concepts of justification by faith. Here are several Scripture passages which support the 1888 view:

“We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins *of the whole world*” (1 John 2:1, 2). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Truly this “propitiation” applies to “all men.” It is more than a mere “provision,” for “never one, saint or sinner, eats his daily food, but he is nourished by the body and the blood of Christ. The cross of Calvary is stamped on every loaf.” [1] “Our Saviour Jesus Christ ... hath brought *life* and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

The “propitiation” therefore is already effective for “all,” “saint or sinner.” “All men” live because of it. *It is the basis for justification.* Only because of the “propitiation” is it possible for God to overlook “the sins of the whole world” and send His “rain on the just and on the unjust”, and open His hand, to satisfy “the desire of every living thing” (Matt. 5:45; Psalm 145:16).

Christ “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). The text does not say that *provisionally*, possibly, maybe, perhaps, Christ will be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world if and when and not until the sinner “accepts.” Christ already *is that propitiation.* This grand “provision” of

the cross is “set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood” (Rom. 3:25). When the “propitiation” is “set forth” to the sinner and he believes it, then he experiences justification by faith.

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*, ... God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for us. ... *When we were enemies, we were reconciled* to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:6-10).

The death of Christ made effective a *lawful* justification applicable to all men. Legally, “all men” were justified, because He died for “all” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). He satisfied the demands of the law for sinners. And He died for them “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8). “When” we were still “enemies, we were reconciled ...” (Rom. 5:10).

That sounds like a blatant contradiction, doesn't it? How can you be “reconciled” while you are still in enmity? The answer is: we were *justified legally* by a sacrifice made for “all men” (Rom. 5:18), and the reconciliation is included.

But think about it, legal justification and “receiving the atonement” are two different things. We *receive* the atonement [reconciliation] only when we *believe*. “We have *now received* the atonement [reconciliation],” Paul says in Romans 5:11, when we are “justified *by faith*” (verse 1). To confuse legal justification with justification by faith will not help us finish the work in this generation; it will set our clock back to the 16th century, and lead to antinomianism. Instead of completing the Reformation begun by Luther and Calvin, such confusion will only retard its progress.

“Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One *the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life*” (Rom. 5:18).

Again we have what appears to be a contradiction! How can Paul contrast the “judgment” which came by Adam upon “all men to condemnation” with the “free gift ... unto justification” coming *likewise* “upon all men”? The vast majority of “all men” certainly do not exhibit any of the fruits of “justification by faith”!

The answer to this apparent contradiction is simply to say that that is true—“all men” do *not* exhibit the fruits of justification by faith because they have not been justified by faith. They have only been justified *legally*; and the simple fact that they live is evidence of that legal justification. “All men” would not be able to draw even one breath if that forensic justification were not effective for them. The very fact they live is proof that Christ died for them, and is the “propitiation” for their sins.

Here is where the “gospel” comes in. We are commissioned by the Lord to “go into all the world” and tell “all men” that they have been justified. We are to bear “good news.” God has no chip on His shoulder against them. He is not imputing their trespasses unto them. The propitiation is already a fact, not a mere provision. And when some *believe*, that moment they are “justified by faith.”

“If One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves ...” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

All *would* be dead if He had not “died for all.” The grave is what we deserve. The very fact “all” live is evidence that a forensic justification has been effective for them in that “our Saviour Jesus Christ ... hath brought *life* ... to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). “Life” has thus been provided for “all men” who deserve only death. More than this, those who *appreciate* the “Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9), those who “*believe*,” for *them* Christ Jesus also “hath brought *immortality* to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Clearly, God does not “impute” any man’s trespasses unto him until he rejects Christ. Therefore, the only sin for which anyone will be condemned in the Judgment is the sin of unbelief, that is, the sin of not appreciating the *sacrifice* which effected a legal justification for all. [2] When Christ died, He did something for every man, woman, and child in the world. He was “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). This “Light” is not a mere provision—it is effective. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (verse 4). No one, saint or sinner, ever knows a moment of joy, ever smiles, but by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. This is “news” the world needs to hear; and for those who believe it, it is “*good news*.”

“For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendor, and all are justified by God’s free grace alone, through His act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23, 24, *New English Bible*).

This “all” means what it says, for it harmonizes with the other passages. The *New English Bible* correctly translates the Greek “justified,” which is a present participle with the word “all” as its proper subject. Since God’s grace is “free,” it must be equally manifested to “all.” If it is a mere provision subject to certain conditions it cannot be described as “free.” But this “justification by God’s free grace alone” obviously must be forensic, for “all men” do not believe it and receive it.

Paul continues in verses 25-28 to discuss justification, proceeding from the forensic justification effected for “all” to the experiential justification which brings “remission of sins” “through *faith* in His blood.” And because faith is counted for righteousness, God can “be just and the justifier of him which *believeth* in Jesus.” This involves a change of heart! Justification *by faith* is not merely forensic, a judicial “declaring” millions of light-years away. It includes *remission* of sins! “Remission” is not a mere entry in a legal record, without relation to the heart of the sinner. “Remission” is the actual taking away of the sin, accomplished in justification *by faith*.

—Paul E. Penno

**Endnotes:**

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 660.

[2] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 58.

**Notes:**

Pastor Paul Penno's video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/TU6qd2gdFGQ>

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