

THE UNION OF JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

By Paul Penno

We hear a lot about how after initial conversion to Christ, we must seek the second phase of salvation, which is sanctification. The impression is left that once Christ has launched us with the new birth, then we must do all we can throughout the rest of our life in pursuing holiness. Some evangelicals call this the second blessing theology. The initial phase of forgiveness and justification is Christ's work, the next phase is our work for Christ.

This has been adopted into our circles with the 40 days of prayer with a specific methodology from evangelical sources.

What rejoiced Ellen White's heart most in hearing the more mature Gospel presented in our 1888 history was the union of justification by faith with sanctification by faith. "I have had the question asked, "What do you think of this light that these men are presenting?" Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last forty-five years—the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have. And when another presented it, every fiber of my heart said, Amen." [1]

What she heard was the unique understanding of SDAs regarding the sanctuary cleansing as justification by faith. The heavenly sanctuary can only be cleansed when the hearts of God's people are cleansed through the atonement message.

She was asked, "What is justification by faith?" "Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'" [2]

The third angel's message is, "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). In other words, it is the sanctuary message.

Referring to the message of Jones and Waggoner she said: "This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." [3] Again, justification by faith is the righteousness of Christ manifest in obedience to all the commandments, which is the sanctuary message. There is a union of justification with sanctification.

The evangelicals do not see this union because they do not understand the sanctuary message. They want to keep justification and sanctification separate or distinct. They view justification as the work of Christ in the past when He died on the cross. Christ atoned for our sins. When you believe that perfect work of Christ, you are *legally* set free from sin.

However, there is no experiential reconciliation of the alienated heart with God through believing this doctrine. If Christ atoned for our sin, then, in the strictest sense of the word, atonement means reconciliation and harmony with sin. Sin becomes a separate entity from the sinner, which God is OK with now because of the cross. Justification legally takes care of all past, present, and future sinning.

The atonement in this view of salvation is God's wrath against sinners being appeased by an offering, which Christ makes to Him on behalf of sinners. In other words, God needs the atonement. The emphasis is not on man's need of atonement. There is nothing in this about alienated human hearts being reconciled to God.

Now evangelicals are certainly not promiscuous. They do teach sanctification and holiness, but this is a second blessing beyond justification and it certainly cannot be expected that it is completed and perfect. Since one is born with a sinning nature the Christian can never be expected to entirely achieve Christian perfection. The fallen, sinning nature we're saddled with will continue to plague us until Christ miraculously removes it at His coming.

In effect they teach three phases to the plan of salvation: (1) the cross paid it all; (2) when the sinner believes he is justified; (3) then, he must go in to sanctification.

The end product of this kind of sanctification is (1) legalism, and (2) antinomianism. It is anti-God's law because it teaches that a sinning Christian can never get out of the cycle of sin. It gives excuse for sin. It is legalism because the focus of overcoming sin is self-motivated improvement. Whenever self sets the standard of Christian experience, it always becomes relative and will frequently multiply the rules and regulations until they become oppressive legalism such as what happened with the Pharisees of Christ's day.

Our High Priest has revealed much better news for us from His Most Holy Place ministry in the heavenly sanctuary! All that a person needs is Jesus' gift of justification by faith. Sanctification is ongoing justification. One is sanctified the same way he or she is justified by faith.

Here it is: Christ has given all of Himself to every soul who comes into the world. This includes His gift of pardon for sin and its consequent eternal death, which He paid for with tremendous cost to Himself on the cross. When this gift of Christ's love is appreciated, that is true faith, which justifies. Christ's love gives the faith. The experience involves the crucifixion of self with Christ so that self-focused love is replaced by His *agape*. Justification is by faith activated by *agape*.

Sanctification is by faith, which works by *agape*. Gal. 5:6. In other words, the same faith that justifies sanctifies.

There are two phases in the plan of salvation and not three. The first phase was the legal work, which was Christ's building the bridge of atonement by faith between the feeling of God-forsakenness, and God hears. This was His sacrifice of Himself on the cross for the whole world. By this sacrifice He legally justified the whole race of sinners.

The second phase in the plan of salvation is when you hear this good news of Christ's gift of love and appreciate what it cost the dear Saviour, then you experience the heart-melting atonement of a reconciled heart. Justification by faith is the experience of the atonement with God. Sanctification is but the continued deepening appreciation for the cross. Moment by moment, day by day, self is crucified with Christ. One is justified by faith as Christ continues to impart His righteousness to the receptive sinner. There is no room at all for once-saved-always-saved in the marriage of justification and sanctification.

Furthermore, this marriage of justification and sanctification removes it from the realm of legalism. It is not motivated from self-centered hope of reward and avoidance of hell interests. This is what it means to be "under the law" (Rom. 8:6). Sanctification by faith is motivated by *agape*. It is the "under grace" motivation.

And, the marriage of justification and sanctification understanding of salvation is not anti-God's law. This is why Ellen White could write "It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God." {Ev 190.3}.

A concerted appeal needs to be made to our people to beware of their use of materials that confuse the mind of this point. We want to follow Christ in His most holy ministry by faith. We do not want to have wrong principles operating in our experience. God has revealed a unique understanding of righteousness by faith to us as a people. We must be careful about following after the teachings of Babylon or its Protestant daughters. The bottom line is their understanding of salvation is legalistic and antinomian. They do not understand what true faith is. For them it is merely head knowledge and not heart reconciliation. Self remains fully entrenched within so-called converted Christians.

Sr. White says, "Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? Why try to work out every minute point, as if the salvation of the soul depended upon all having exactly your understanding of this matter? All cannot see in the same line of vision. You are in danger of making a world of an atom, and an atom of a world. {9MR 300.4}

"As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf, and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are

pardoned. This is justification by faith. Every believing soul is to conform his will entirely to God's will, and keep in a state of repentance and contrition, exercising faith in the atoning merits of the Redeemer, and advancing from strength to strength, from glory to glory. {9MR 301.1}

“Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: ‘This is My child. I reprove him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life-insurance policy—eternal life—because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins.. He is even My beloved son.’ Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness, stands faultless before God.” {9MR 301.2} Manuscript 21, 1891, pp. 1-11. (“Christ Our Righteousness,” February 27, 1891.)

Endnotes:

[1] Ms 5, p. 10. (Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889.) (5MR 219.1; 1888 348.4; 1SAT 116.4).

[2] *Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890. {Ev 190.3}.

[3] Documentation can be found in “We Believe,” the March-April 1996 issue of The 1888 Message Newsletter.