

## AN EXAMINATION OF DESMOND FORD'S BOOK

### *RIGHT WITH GOD, RIGHT NOW*

Erwin R. Gane, Ph.D.

This book by Desmond Ford is characterized by eloquently expressed truth interlaced with eloquently expressed error. My concern is to point out those aspects of his teaching that are unbiblical. I am not interested in attacking the author or in any way maligning his character. My purpose is to point out to the reader that Ford has misinterpreted the righteousness by faith message of the book of Romans and, in so doing, has undermined the basic teachings of Scripture as understood by Seventh-day Adventists. If I were to accept Ford's teachings, I could no longer believe in victory over sin before the second coming of Jesus, nor could I believe in the investigative judgment doctrine so clearly taught in Daniel 7 and 8. I could not believe in the perfecting latter rain or a close of probation, beyond which God's people will no longer sin. I could no longer believe in the teachings of Ellen G. White, because Ford repeatedly contradicts her. In other words, if I were to accept Ford's interpretations of Scripture, I could no longer be a Seventh-day Adventist, because he contradicts the understandings of Scripture which we have consistently held. My appeal to the reader is to examine every statement in the light of the overall teachings of the Bible. Selective study of Scripture, designed to prove a theological theory, will never do! "If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).

I will go through Ford's book page by page and point out the passages that I believe to be unbiblical, and I will explain why I believe them unbiblical:

**Page xii: "2 Corinthians 5:14 tells us that the day of our death was the Calvary Good Friday. 'If one died for all, then all died.' Not only did Christ die for us as our Substitute, but we died with him who was our representative. At Calvary, legally all of us paid for our sins yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Therefore, it is our great privilege to know, as surely as the penitent thief came to know, that paradise is ours this very day because we believe in that love manifested for us at Golgotha!"**

**See also Ford's discussion of Romans 5:6-10, pages 81, 82, 84. See also his discussion of Romans 6:2-11, pages 95, 96, 98. Compare p. 271.**

This is a misinterpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:14. We did not die at the cross, Jesus died, and He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2; 4:10). "All died" when Christ died only in the sense that His death *made provision* for all of us to die to sin. We do not enjoy the benefits of Christ's sacrifice until we *receive* Him as Savior and Lord. "Those who *receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). "But as many as *received* Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). The one who "believes" in Him has the gift of everlasting life (John 3:16). "He who believes in Him is not condemned: but he who does not believe is condemned already" (John 3:18).

This being so, it cannot be true that "at Calvary, legally all of us paid for our sins of

yesterday, today, and tomorrow.” We did not pay the penalty for our sins, Christ did, and we do not die to sin until we become born-again Christians. Not until we accept the forgiveness that Christ earned for us on the cross do we die to sin. When we come to Jesus, confessing the sins we have committed, we are forgiven because Jesus paid the penalty for them on Calvary (1 John 1:9; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 3:13). But this does not imply that the sins of “tomorrow” are automatically legally forgiven because of Calvary. The sins of tomorrow must be confessed tomorrow. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

We are united to Christ “in the likeness of His death” when our “old man,” the old life of habitual sinning, dies (Rom. 6:5, 6). The next verse translates literally from the Greek text: “For he who has died, has been justified [dedikaiotai] from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Justification is the death of the old life of habitual sinning, the death of the “old man.” This is the experience of those who accept Jesus as Savior and Lord. Then we are “buried with Him through baptism into death” (verse 4).

Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul is not saying that he was crucified when Jesus was crucified. He is saying that he was crucified with Christ when he accepted Christ by faith. Paul counted all things but loss, so that he could know Christ (Phil. 3:8). He wanted to be “found in Him,” “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Phil. 3:9, 10). He was “conformed to His death” only when he accepted Christ and was found in Him, being a recipient of His righteousness.

In Colossians 3:3, Paul wrote: “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” They died when they accepted Jesus as their Savior. Consider the context: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” (verse 1). They died to sin and were raised to newness of life when they gave their hearts to Jesus.

“The unconditional pardon of sin never has been, and never will be. Such pardon would show the abandonment of the principles of righteousness, which are the very foundation of the government of God. It would fill the unfallen universe with consternation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522.

“Yes, every act, however secret you may have thought you were in its committal, has been open to God, to Christ, and to the holy angels. A book is written of all the doings of the children of men. Not an item of this record can be concealed. There is only one provision made for the transgressor. Faithful repentance and confession of sin, and faith in the cleansing blood of Christ, will bring forgiveness, and pardon will be written against his name.”—2 T, 292, 293.

**Page 1: “The bad news in the book of Romans is that every thought we have is defiled. Every emotion of our heart, every tendency of our mind, and every inclination of the flesh is tainted—in every one of us—until the second coming of Jesus and glorification.”**

**Page 15: “Sin remains in the Christian until glorification, although it should not reign. It’s there, but it should not dominate. But it is there.”**

**See also Ford, pp. 93, 239, 253.**

The book of Romans does not teach that! Quite the contrary! Speaking of the justified

believer, Paul writes: “But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. . . . But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” (Rom. 6:17-22).

*A person who is a slave of righteousness and who is experiencing holiness does not have “every thought . . . defiled.”* Paul says that “now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). A believer serving “in the newness of the Spirit” is not one whose “every thought is defiled,” nor can it be true that “every emotion” of his heart is tainted.

Paul speaks of the justified believer as being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9). The Spirit in the heart is Christ in the heart, and “the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (verse 10). An individual who is thus indwelt by the Holy Spirit and who is, thereby, experiencing righteousness is not defiled in every thought. Paul categorically contradicts Desmond Ford in 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, *bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*” (Italics mine.)

*God’s end-time faithful believers are sealed prior to the close of probation (Rev. 7:1-3).* These sealed believers will ultimately stand with Christ “on Mount Zion” (Rev. 14:1). “And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:5). They are found without fault before the second coming of Jesus; that’s why they are sealed. Such believers cannot be said to be “tainted” in every emotion of the heart, every tendency of the mind, and every inclination of the flesh.

Ford has denied the validity of the end-time sealing work that God provides for His faithful people.

**Page 11: “None of us can get through the judgment without that Substitute. . . . But we have a Substitute in the judgment. That’s Christ.”**

Undoubtedly Christ’s righteousness is put to our account. In that sense He is our Substitute. That is only part of the story. There are many texts in Scripture that speak of God judging us by our works. Ford obviously favors the popular view that since Christ’s works are perfect, and He is our Substitute, our works don’t have to be perfect. This view teaches that Christ is the One judged, and since He is perfect and innocent, we are counted so. Consider the passages that instruct us to be overcomers in Christ. For example:

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor. 7:1).

“As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ ” (1 Peter 1:15, 16; cf. John 5:14; 8:11).

***How are we to be holy? Christ provides the power:***

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus

is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:3-5).

***Because the Lord gives us the power to be overcomers by abundantly supplying us His grace (1 Cor. 1:4-9), He judges us by our works. Our works give evidence of the effective functioning of His grace in our hearts:***

"Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to each one according to his work" (Ps. 62:12).

"I the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind. Even to give every man according to his ways. And according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10).

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:27).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

". . . who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6).

"And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17).

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Rev. 20:12).

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every one according to his work" (Rev. 22:12).

Since in the judgment we are judged by our works, it's not true to say that we are accounted innocent only because Jesus' perfect works are counted for us. It is also true that His righteousness is given to us enabling us to perform good works that can be exonerated in the judgment. The righteousness is always His, and the glory belongs to Him alone, because our works of obedience are done only when we receive the gift of His righteousness. Our works are "done in God" (John 3:21).

**Page 14: "A Division on Justification: This is the legal and verbal opposite of condemnation. It's a bright color in contrast to the shadow."**

Because condemnation is regarded as a legal verdict issued by the Judge, justification is also regarded as such a legal verdict. This argument, often presented in support of forensic-only justification, is faulted, because the verdict of condemnation is in view of the guilty spiritual condition of the condemned person. Even so, as will become more apparent in what follows, justification is a declaration of a reality. God never declares innocent those who are not so in view of their faith/grace relationship with Christ.

***Of the forty-one instances of the verb "to justify" (tsadaq) in the Hebrew Old Testament, there is none in which God declares righteous a person who is not so.*** Exodus 23:7, for example, reads literally, "Keep away from a false matter, and the innocent and righteous do not kill, for I will not justify the wicked." If the Lord will not justify the wicked whom will He justify? Obviously the righteous. Who are the righteous? The immediate context (Exodus 23:4-7) reads as follows:

"If you meet your enemy's ox or his ass going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the ass of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it, you shall help him to lift it up. You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his suit. Keep far from a false charge, and do not slay the innocent and righteous, for I will not acquit [justify] the wicked."

Hence, the righteous whom the Lord will justify are those who help their enemies when they are in trouble, those who give justice to the poor, those who tell the truth, those who preserve the lives of innocent and righteous people.

So God justifies people who are ethically righteous. Is this righteousness by man's works? Indeed no! Why not? Because the overall context of this passage in Exodus indicates that the one who is obeying the commandments and ethical stipulations of *Yahweh* is the one who has entered into covenant relationship with Him. The covenant is a heart union between the believer and His God. God did not justify the righteous person as a meritorious reward for his good ethical conduct. He legally justified him because of his commitment to the covenant-keeping God, and this commitment was expressed in good ethical conduct. The Lord says He will not justify the wicked. He never declares righteous the person who has not been rendered righteous by a covenant relationship with Himself.

### **Pages 15, 16: "Luther's Experience"**

Luther is quoted as though he agreed with Ford's concept of justification. What did Luther really say? In 1545, a year before his death, in the *Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings*, He described his 1514 discovery:

"At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scriptures showed itself to me. Thereupon I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

"And I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God.' Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise. Later I read Augustine's *The Spirit and the Letter*, where contrary to hope I found that he, too, interpreted God's righteousness in a similar way, *as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us.*"—*Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), vol. 34, p. 337. Italics mine.

Luther found a Scriptural analogy to the phrase, "the righteousness of God." He likened it to "the work of God, that is, what God does in us." When he discovered this truth, he felt that he was born again. And he identified God's righteousness "as the righteousness with which God clothes us when he justifies us."

In other words, Luther did not agree with Ford that justification is only a heavenly declaration that we are righteous. He saw justification as transformation, as God clothing us with his righteousness.

Luther's 1535, *Lectures on Galatians* represents his mature theology. He wrote:

"Therefore the Christ who is grasped by faith and who lives in the heart is the true Christian righteousness, on account of which God counts us righteous and grants us eternal life."—*Luther's*

*Works*, vol. 26, p. 130.

“Here it is to be noted that these three things are joined together: faith, Christ, and acceptance or imputation. Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present, enclosing Him as the ring encloses the gem. And whoever is found having this faith in the Christ who is grasped in the heart, him God accounts as righteous.”—*Ibid.*, p. 132.

“Because you have taken hold of Christ by faith, through whom you are righteous, you should now go and love God and your neighbor.”—*Ibid.*, p. 133.

“For to the extent that he is a Christian, he is above the Law and sin, because in his heart he has Christ, the Lord of the Law, as a ring has a gem.”—*Ibid.*, p. 134.

**Pages 16, 17: “Ours is a God who justifies the ungodly. (See Romans 4:5.) The Old Testament forbids such a practice. (Deuteronomy 25:1; Proverbs 17:15.) It says, ‘Judges must not justify the wicked.’ God breaks his own law when he justifies the ungodly! Yet, in a higher sense, he keeps it. God does justify the wicked. We’re all wicked. We’ve all gone out of the way. We’ve all been unprofitable. We’ve all been selfish. We still are selfish. Selfishness tempts us every hour, every conscious minute.”**

**See also Ford, p. 143.**

**Page 68: “There’s not a single inclination of the heart, a disposition of the flesh, that isn’t tainted by our selfishness, even after conversion.”**

**For other Ford Statements on imputation of Righteousness (Romans 4), see pp. 59, 63, 66.**

So, according to Ford, God justifies ungodly people, contrary to His own law, and they remain ungodly. Romans 4:4, 5 reads: “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” An employer is in debt to his employee. The employee has earned the money, and he expects to be paid. By contrast, the person who has faith in Christ does not work for the gift of righteousness; he simply trusts in Christ to bestow righteousness upon him. God declares the believer to be that which He makes him. In fact, Paul uses the same Greek verb in Romans 4:4 that he uses in verse 5. The verb is *logizomai*. The Hebrew equivalent is *chashav*. Both verbs have a range of meanings. As used in Genesis 15:6 and Romans 4:3, these verbs mean “to impute,” “to count,” “to reckon,” “to consider as belonging to,” “to regard as,” “treat as,” “credit to.” There are 36 passages in the Old Testament that give *chashav* these closely related connotations. Never does God count something to be so that is not so.

For example, Psalm 106:30, 31 tells us that the act of Phinehas was “reckoned to him as righteousness.” The point is that his act gave evidence that he was, indeed, a righteous man (cf. Num. 25:10-13). Numbers 18:27-32 instructs that the priests who were paid from tithe were themselves to pay tithe on what they received. Having done that, what remained of the people’s tithe was reckoned to the priests as an actual gift of produce to them. Joshua 13:3 indicates that land “reckoned as Canaanite” was still in Philistine hands. It was reckoned to the people who possessed it.

In Romans 4, Paul’s point is that the imputation of Christ’s righteousness is a legal accounting of a tangible gift. God never declares you righteous without making you so. If God declared something that wasn’t true, He would be a liar. If He declared us righteous without

making us so, that would be a legal fiction. God doesn't say, as Ford thinks, that He declares you righteous in heaven, even though you remain unrighteous on earth. God doesn't say that now that He has declared you righteous, you can go on sinning and you will be saved anyway. Something happens in heaven, and at the same moment something happens in your heart. The thing that happens in heaven is that God declares you righteous in Christ. The thing that happens in your heart is that God bestows the righteousness of Christ upon you by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Imputation of righteousness is a legal declaration of a tangible gift. And that gift of righteousness is the gift of spiritual power.

Another Old Testament passage that illustrates the point is 2 Samuel 4:2. The latter part of the verse says: "Beeroth is reckoned to Benjamin." Now the interesting point is that Beeroth was a town that was given to the tribe of Benjamin. The text in the Greek Old Testament uses the same verb that is used in Romans, chapter 4. Beeroth was reckoned, counted, imputed, to the tribe of Benjamin. When the Israelites were dividing up the land between the various tribes, they sat in a committee and decided that the town Beeroth would be imputed, or reckoned, to the tribe of Benjamin. That was a legal decision. But it was a legal decision that involved the actual gift of the town Beeroth to the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Josh. 9:17; 18:21-25). So the legal decision was accompanied by an actual, tangible gift.

That is exactly how Paul is using the verb "impute" in Romans, chapter 4. Abraham's faith union with God was reckoned, imputed, or counted as righteousness because God's righteousness was given to him by the Holy Spirit. There was a legal accounting of an experiential fact (see Gal. 3:1-14; James 2:21-24). You believe in Jesus; God legally decides that Jesus' righteousness will be counted or imputed to you. That imputation means that God legally counts that which is an actual gift. Imputation is a legal accounting of an actual gift. God declares you righteous in Christ, and at the same moment makes you so by bestowing the righteousness of Jesus upon you by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

***Ellen White understood imputed righteousness in the two ways it is used in Romans 4:***

1. *The righteousness of Christ is put to the believer's account:* "If you give yourself to Him [Christ], and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God as if you had not sinned."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 62; see also *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

2. *The righteousness of Christ is bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the believer:* "By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him,"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1098.

"In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 394.

"He has become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.

"Let perfect obedience be rendered to God through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and we shall reveal to the world the fact that God loves us as he loves Jesus."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, May 28, 1896.

When God justifies the wicked, He transforms them and simultaneously declares the

transformation. He certainly does not break His Old Testament law! The justified don't remain wicked. Study the results of justification in the book of Romans. "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18). Christ died "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled *in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4, Italics mine). "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. 8:9, 10). You still retain a fallen nature, but you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, by Christ in your heart, righteousness in your heart. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:12-14). "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 9:30).

A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit cannot rightly be described as "wicked," or "selfish." Justification is transformation. If we remain wicked after justification, we are lost, because the wicked have no part in the Kingdom of Christ (Dan. 12:10; Mal. 4:1; Matt. 13:37-43; 25:45, 46; 2 Peter 2:7).

**Pages 19-21: "This word 'justify.' It never means to make righteous inside. It means, strictly, to count righteous. It's very important to know that. The whole of true religion revolves around this issue. . . . Does 'justify' mean 'To make me righteous inside?' If it does, then I've never been truly justified, never truly converted, because I'm not altogether righteous inside. . . . However, in both Old and New Testaments, the word 'justify' always means the opposite of 'condemn.' If you condemn someone, you don't make them bad, you declare them bad. In the same way, when you justify someone, you don't make them righteous inside, you declare them righteous. . . . Justification is over you all the time, like the sun. Like the pillar of cloud in the desert that sheltered Israel from the heat. . . . If you are looking to Jesus, justification is never repeated in the sense of new justification. Justification is over you all the time."**

See also Ford, pages 155, 156, 158, 246.

Ford repeats these ideas constantly. His definition of justification is basic to his understanding of the gospel. The question is, how does the Bible define justification? Is it, as Ford argues, only a legal heavenly declaration, or is it also transformation of the heart of the believer? The lexical definition of *dikaioo* ("to justify") is "to do justice," "vindicate," "become righteous," "make free or pure."—Arndt and Gingrich.

***According to Scripture, justification involves three elements:***

**1. Justification is forgiveness for past sin:**

Acts 13:38, 39 translates literally from the Greek text: "Therefore let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this Man is proclaimed to you the forgiveness of sins from all things [from] which you were not able to be justified by the law of Moses; by this man every one who believes is justified."

The message is that Christ's forgiveness is justification which could not be supplied by the



law.

Romans 4:1-8 identifies justification with forgiveness. In this passage justification = imputation of righteousness = forgiveness. Having spoken of justification and imputation, Paul illustrates by quoting Psalm 32:1, 2: “ ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’ ”

What is involved in God’s forgiveness? God wipes out our guilt because Jesus suffered for it on Calvary (Isa. 53; 1 John 2:2). But when God forgives, He transforms the believer.

“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. . . . Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness, stands faultless before God.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1070.

“God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.’ Psalm 51:10. And again he says, ‘As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.’ Psalm 103:12.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

Justification = forgiveness. But forgiveness = “the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.” Therefore justification is also “the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart.” Justification is both in heaven and in the heart of the believer. When God justifies you, He changes your heart. Justification is not only a legal declaration; it is a spiritual experience that you have when you surrender your life to Jesus.

**2. Justification is the righteousness of Christ counted, imputed, reckoned for the believer (Rom. 4:3, 23-25).** This is discussed in some detail above. The verb “to impute” is *logizomai*. This verb and its Hebrew equivalent, as used throughout Scripture, refer to both a legal declaration and an actual gift. Paul’s point in Romans 4 is that justification, which is imputation of righteousness, is a heavenly declaration of an actual gift of righteousness. When Jesus imputes His righteousness to you, He simultaneously declares and makes you righteous by bestowing the Holy Spirit upon you. The same teaching is clearly outlined in Galatians 3:1-14. “The blessing of Abraham” (verse 14) was justification, imputation of righteousness by faith. The blessing of Abraham comes “upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” You can’t separate the transforming work of the Spirit from justification (imputation of righteousness). Imputation of righteousness is not only a legal declaration in heaven; it involves a heart change for the believer in Jesus Christ.

**3. Justification involves the righteousness of Christ bestowed upon the believer in the new birth experience.**

Titus 3:5-7 translates literally from the Greek text: “Not by works in righteousness which we did, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of rebirth (*paliggenesias*), and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

“He saved us . . . so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs.” (Titus 3:5-7, NIV). He saved us when He justified us. How did He do that? “By the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (verse 5, NIV). Justification is the new birth experience. Jesus

said, “You must be born again.” You are not saved, not justified, until you are born again. Justification is not only a legal declaration in heaven. It is a legal declaration of the new birth granted to the believer.

In telling Nicodemus how to be saved, Jesus said: “You must be born again” (John 3:7). He used the imagery of the new birth. In explaining how we are saved, Paul uses the imagery of a law court; justification is the declaration of a judge, a declaration that declares innocence. Both Jesus and Paul are speaking of salvation; they simply use different imagery. If Ford were correct, the new birth would not be salvation; it would be only the result of salvation. In his view justification is salvation, and the new birth is the result which begins the process of sanctification. If that were so, Jesus did not tell Nicodemus how to be saved.

In Romans 10:6-10, Paul defines righteousness by faith. “But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, “Who will ascend into heaven?” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or “Who will descend into the abyss?” (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead).’ But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach).”

The word that is in your mouth and heart is the law of God, referred to in Deuteronomy 30:11-14. When God’s law is in your heart, you are experiencing righteousness by faith. Righteousness by faith is not only a legal matter, as Ford asserts. It is a heart experience. When God justifies you, He writes His law on your heart.

Paul presents the same teaching in Galatians 2 and 3. Justification is by faith, not by works of law (Gal. 2:16). When I am justified, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, *but Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (verse 20).

Then Paul asks the crucial question. “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3). They began with justification (Gal. 2:16-21). They began with the Spirit. Justification is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. And this transformation was “the blessing of Abraham” given to the believing Gentiles so that “we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14).

***Ellen White saw justification as the new birth:***

“As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require. God Himself is ‘the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:26. And ‘whom He justified, them He also glorified.’ Rom. 8:30.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 163.

“Those who know not what it is to have an experience in the things of God, who know not what it is to be justified by faith, who have not the witness of the Spirit that they are accepted by Jesus Christ, are in need of being born again.”—*Signs of the Times*, March 8, 1910.

***Martin Luther saw justification as involving the new birth experience:***

“Then what does justify? Hearing the voice of the Bridegroom, hearing the proclamation of faith—when this is heard, it justifies. Why? Because it brings the Holy Spirit who justifies.”—*Luther’s Works*, vol. 26, p. 208.

In the introduction to his sermons on John, chapter 3, the chapter that describes the new birth, Luther wrote: “This chapter stresses above all else that sublime topic: faith in Christ, which alone justifies us before God.”—*LW*, vol. 22, p. 275.

In his *Theses on Faith and Law*, 1535, Luther wrote: “Justification is in reality a kind of rebirth in newness, as John says: who believe in his name and were born of God [John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:1].”-- “Theses Concerning Faith and Law,” *LW*, vol. 34, p. 113.

“Among the distinguished teachers there are some who say that forgiveness of sins and justification by grace consist entirely on divine imputation, that is, in God’s accounting it sufficient that he to whom He reckons or does not reckon sin is justified or not justified from his sins by this. . . . If this were true, the whole New Testament would be nothing and in vain. And Christ would have labored foolishly and uselessly by suffering for sin. Then even God Himself would have practiced mere humbug and trickery unnecessarily. . . . Against this horrible, terrible understanding and error the holy apostle has the custom of always referring to faith *in Christ*.”--*WA*. X/1, 1, 468 (*Church Postil*, Epistle for New Year’s Day, 1522); cited by Robin Leaver, *Luther on Justification* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1975), p. 58.

“The start of a new creature accompanies this faith and the battle against the sin of the flesh, which this same faith in Christ both pardons and conquers.”--“The Disputation Concerning Justification,” *LW*, vol. 34, p. 153.

“Natural motion is our motion, but this movement of justification is the work of God in us, to which our propositions refer.”--“The Disputation Concerning Justification,” *LW*, vol. 34, p. 177.

Explaining what is meant by the righteousness of God being outside of us, Luther wrote: “The phrase is grammatical. To be outside of us means not to be out of our powers. Righteousness is our possession, to be sure, since it was given to us out of mercy. Nevertheless, it is foreign to us, because we have not merited it.”--“The Disputation Concerning Justification,” *LW*, vol. 34, p. 178.

**Ford writes: “If you condemn someone, you don’t make them bad, you declare them bad. In the same way, when you justify someone, you don’t make them righteous inside, you declare them righteous.” (p. 19).**

When someone is condemned, they are not made bad; they are condemned because they are bad. They are declared to be what they are. The legal declaration is a true to fact declaration. Even so, when God justifies us He declares what He simultaneously makes us; it is a true to fact declaration. The Bible speaks of God Himself being justified (Rom. 3:4; Psalm 51:4). God is not made righteous when He is justified. He is already righteous. He is declared to be exactly what He is. When God justifies us by the new birth experience (Titus 3:5-7), He makes us righteous and declares us to be what He has made us.

**Ford writes: “Justification is over you all the time, like the sun. Like the pillar of cloud in the desert that sheltered Israel from the heat. . . . If you are looking to Jesus, justification is never repeated in the sense of a new justification. Justification is over you all the time.” (pp. 20, 21)**

Justification is forgiveness (Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:1-8). If we need forgiveness, we need justification. Sin separates from God. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18). “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you” (Isa. 59:2; cf. Josh. 7:12; Isa. 64:7). But “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). That is exactly what

justification is, forgiveness that involves cleansing from sin.

Ford would respond by saying that if we need justification every time we sin, we are in and out of Christ. But when believers fall into a sin that is contrary to the upward trend of their lives, they are not divested of all the spiritual qualities that have been bestowed upon them by conversion. They are not projected back into their pre-regeneration state. But, since sin separates from God, for our relationship with Him to be restored after we have sinned, we need to ask for and receive forgiveness. This is justification by faith. Born-again Christians will ask God for forgiveness as soon they become aware that they have sinned. “He who sins is of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Habitual sin is of the devil, and one sin is of the devil. It certainly is not of God! And for us to have justification, that one sin must be confessed and forgiven.

Paul instructed the Colossian believers to put away the sins that were characteristic of their former lives of habitual sinning, but he didn’t suggest that these sins committed by born-again Christians do not change their standing with God. Consider Paul’s teaching:

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. *Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Col. 3:1-10, italics supplied).

Paul’s obvious point is that the converted believer who falls into sin is in danger of “the wrath of God” which “is coming upon the sons of disobedience.” Born-again believers don’t have some sort of diplomatic immunity allowing them to sin with impunity. Sin separates from God; sin destroys our right relationship with Him and destroys our legal standing with Him.

Paul warned the Roman Christians in similar terms:

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:12-14).

Hence, those who are not led by the Spirit of God are not sons of God, and the Spirit of God never leads us into sin. We have spiritual life when “by the Spirit” we “put to death the deeds of the body.” If we don’t do that we will die. In other words, our spiritual life and our spiritual standing with God are inseparably connected. You cannot have right standing with God unless “by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body.” And the deeds of the body are the sins into which Satan would lead us. Such deeds inevitably separate us from God.

“One sin unrepented of is enough to close the gates of heaven against you. It was because man could not be saved with one stain of sin upon him, that Jesus came to die on Calvary’s cross.”—Ellen White, *Signs of the Times*, 3-17-1890.

“Every day that you remain in sin, you are in Satan’s ranks; and should you sicken and die without repentance, you would be lost.”—Ellen White, *Review and Herald*, 13-34-1889.

“Your only safety is in coming to Christ, and ceasing from sin this very moment. The sweet

voice of mercy is sounding in your ears today, but who can tell if it will sound tomorrow.”—ST, 8-29-1892.

*“He that commits sin is of the devil. Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation and provokes the divine displeasure. The thoughts of the heart are discerned of God. When impure thoughts are cherished, they need not be expressed by word or act to consummate sin and bring the soul into condemnation. Its purity is defiled, and the tempter has triumphed.”*—4T, p. 623. (Italics supplied; cf. Matt. 5:27-30.)

“The helpless sinner must cling to Christ as his only hope. If he lets go his hold for a moment, he imperils his own soul and the souls of others. Only in the exercise of living faith are we safe. But the commission of any known sin, the neglect of known duties, at home or abroad, will destroy faith, and disconnect the soul from God.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 138.

“Let none deceive themselves with the belief that they can become holy while willfully violating one of God’s requirements. *The commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God.* ‘Sin is the transgression of the law.’ And ‘whoever sinneth [transgresseth the law] hath not seen Him, neither known Him.’ 1 John 3:6. Though John in his epistles dwells so fully upon love, yet he does not hesitate to reveal the true character of that class who claim to be sanctified while living in transgression of the law of God. ‘He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.’ 1 John 2:4, 5. Here is the test of every man’s profession. We cannot accord holiness to any man without bringing him to the measurement of God’s only standard of holiness in heaven and in earth.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 472. (Italics supplied.)

***The clear message in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen White is that we lose justification when we sin. Justification is not some sort of umbrella over us even when we are committing sin. We are not saved when we are sinning.***

***Having said this, it is important to point out that not all imperfection is sin.*** Everything we do is tinged with human imperfection. *All sin is imperfection; but not all imperfection is sin.* We will be imperfect human beings, with imperfect minds and bodies until Jesus comes. Only then will this “corruptible . . . put on incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:53). But this does not imply that we will sin till Jesus comes. Sin is breaking God’s law. All our works are imperfect because our minds and bodies are imperfect, *but not all our imperfect works are disobedience to God’s law.*

Martin Luther expressed it biblically when he wrote: “Works that result from the Word and are done in faith are perfect in the eyes of God, no matter what the world thinks about them.”—*Luther’s Works*, vol. 3, p. 318.

**Pages 21, 22:** “Justification has to do with your *position*. Sanctification with your *condition*. Justification has to do with your *status*. Sanctification with your *state*. . . . Your status is always the same in Christ—perfect. Your state is up and down, in and out, a mess. Anyone honestly looking within themselves cannot but be discouraged. . . . So it’s very important to distinguish but not separate these two things: justification and sanctification. One adheres on the outside, the other inheres on the inside. One is based on what Christ did *for me*. The other is based on what Christ does *in me*. The first is perfect, complete and 100 percent. The second isn’t, because God is doing it in me, and that’s miserable terrain to work

**in. . . . The Christian *message* is Christ *for me*—what Christ has already done. The Christian *life* is Christ *in me*—what happens after conversion.”**

**Compare Ford’s statements regarding justification and sanctification on pages 37-40, 58, 247, 248-251, 255, 303, 330, 331.**

Ford’s view is that justification determines our status or legal standing with God, and sanctification determines our spiritual state. Hence, justification is always objective, outside of us, what God does for us, while sanctification is what goes in our hearts, what God does in us. In this view righteousness by faith is only what God does *for* us in justification; sanctification, which is God’s work within us, is not part of righteousness by faith. These sentiments are expressed a number of times in his book.

***It must be pointed out that the distinction between justification being for us and sanctification being in us is never made in Scripture.*** As we have already pointed out from Scripture, justification is God’s forgiveness, which involves transformation of heart. Justification is imputation of righteousness, which is a declaration of a transformation. Justification is the new birth experience, which is transformation of character produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. To give a narrow definition of justification, as Ford does, denies the experiential element in justification. His definition denies the Bible teaching that justification is both objective and subjective. ***Justification is both what God does for and in us.*** How could Titus 3:5-7 be true if this were not so? Since the Galatians began with the Spirit, they began with justification (Gal. 2:16; 3:3). They began with a spiritual experience that was both objective and subjective, both God’s external act and His transforming work in their hearts.

***In her wonderful book, The Desire of Ages, Ellen White explains this issue in thoroughly biblical terms. Writing of the work of John the Baptist, she says:***

“John declared to the Jews that their standing before God was to be decided by their character and life. Profession was worthless. If their life and character were not in harmony with God’s law, they were not His people.”—p. 107.

This being so, it is not possible to have spiritual standing or status with God unless our character and life are right with Him. Our spiritual state must be right if we are to have a right standing or status. It is unbiblical to assert that the legal status of the believer is always perfect, even when his or her spiritual state is “a mess.”

The Apostle Paul wrote of “the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:26, 27, italics supplied). You see, salvation is “Christ *in you* the hope of glory.” By contrast, Ford’s view is that salvation is Christ *outside of you* the hope of glory.

Paul adds to his instruction for the Colossians. He goes on to say: “Him [Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect [*teleion*] in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” (Col. 1:28, 29). Paul was preaching “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” so that he could “present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Then Christ in you the hope of glory is the good news that, because of His indwelling in your heart, you can be perfect in Christ Jesus. When the Holy Spirit of Christ is reigning in your heart you have the gift of righteousness (Rom. 8:9, 10).

When Christ is reigning by His Spirit in your heart you have present perfection in Christ. “You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10). The Greek verb translated “complete” in this verse is *pleroo*, which means “to make full,” “fill,” “complete,” “bring to completion,” “finish,” “bring to an end.” (Arndt and Gingrich). This verb is sometimes translated “perfect” (see Rev. 3:2 in both the KJV and RSV, and Col. 4:12 in the KJV). Colossians 2:10 can be translated: “You have been made full in Him,” or “You have been perfected in Him.” This doesn’t imply that believers have reached the end of the process of sanctification, or that they are divested of their fallen natures, or that they may not fall into sin contrary to the trend of their lives. But what it does imply is that where and when the perfect Holy Spirit is reigning, there is holiness and perfection. When the Holy Spirit is in charge of our minds and bodies we have present holiness and perfection in Christ. Our minds and bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19, 20). As long as He is in charge, these temples, our minds and bodies, are free from spiritual defilement. “If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Cor. 3:17).

***This brings us to the Bible definition of sanctification.*** In justification, the Holy Spirit bestows righteousness upon the believer. Paul writes in Romans 8:9: “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” That is to say, you are not lost, you not unjustified, you are not lacking the new-birth experience if you have the gift of the Spirit. But “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (verse 9, last part). So unless you have the Spirit in your heart, you don’t belong to Christ. The justified believer has the Spirit reigning in his or her heart. The next verse (verse 10) informs us that the Spirit in you is Christ in you, is righteousness in you. Justification by the Holy Spirit involves the gift of righteousness to your heart by the gift of the Holy Spirit. (See also Rom. 10:6-10.)

***The exciting truth is that the gift of Christ’s righteousness in justification is what makes us holy.*** Romans 6:19 spells this out: “For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness *for holiness.*” We became willing slaves of righteousness when we were justified. “Having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (verse 18). The gift of righteousness is justification. But this gift by which we became slaves of righteousness was “for holiness.” The gift of righteousness bestowed holiness upon us. The same thought is contained in verse 22: “But now having been set free from sin [in justification], having become slaves of God, *you have your fruit to holiness,* and the end everlasting life.” Therefore the gift of everlasting life is for those who, by becoming slaves of righteousness, have the “fruit of holiness.” You became a slave of righteousness when you were justified, and this gift is what makes you holy.

***The word “holiness” translates the Greek word hagioσmos, that also means “sanctification.”*** This word occurs 10 times in the New Testament. Five times in the KJV it is translated “holiness” (Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14). And five times it is translated “sanctification” (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

“Righteousness is holiness, likeness to God, and ‘God is love.’ 1 John 4:16. It is conformity to the law of God for ‘all Thy commandments are righteousness,’ (Psalm 119:172), and ‘love is the fulfilling of the law’ (Rom. 13:10). Righteousness is love, and love is the light and life of God. The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

***Since righteousness is holiness, and we receive righteousness when we receive Christ, we***

**receive holiness when we receive Christ.** We receive Christ and His righteousness when we are justified. Therefore, we receive holiness when we are justified. Since the Greek word for “holiness” also means “sanctification,” when we are justified, we are also sanctified.

**When the thief on the cross accepted Christ, he was both justified and sanctified.** Hebrews 12:14 speaks of “holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” But Jesus said the dying thief would see the Lord; He will be with Christ in Paradise. Thus, the dying thief had received the gift of holiness, which is sanctification. He was both justified (born-again) and sanctified when He surrendered his heart to Christ. Without that gift of holiness, the thief could not have had salvation—because no one who does not have holiness will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). The gift of holiness is essential to salvation. Therefore the gift of holiness, which is the immediate and long term result of justification, is part of righteousness and salvation by faith in Christ.

**Some would have us believe that justification is by faith alone and sanctification is by faith plus human works.** Therefore, they say, justification is righteousness by faith and sanctification is not righteousness by faith. The real truth is that sanctification (holiness) is the gift of the Holy Spirit to the person who has faith. Never does the Bible suggest that we make ourselves holy. Romans 15:16 speaks of the Gentiles “sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” God chooses the believers “for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). The “elect” are those who enjoy “sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2).

**In her book, *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White wrote:**

“Paul teaches that believers are to be ‘sanctified by the Holy Ghost.’ Romans 15:16. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told His disciples: ‘When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.’ John 16:13. And the psalmist says: ‘Thy law is the truth.’ By the word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in His law. And since the law of God is ‘holy, and just, and good,’ a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says: ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments.’ ‘I do always those things that please Him.’ John 15:10; 8:29. The followers of Christ are to become like Him—by the grace of God to form characters in harmony with the principles of His holy law. This is Bible sanctification.

*This work can be accomplished only through faith in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.*”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 469.

“The soul is to be sanctified through the truth. And this also is accomplished through faith. For it is only by the grace of Christ, which we receive through faith, that the character can be transformed.”—*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 191.

“Christ alone can help us and give us the victory. Christ must be all in all to us, He must dwell in the heart, His life must circulate through us as the blood circulates through the veins. His Spirit must be a vitalizing power that will cause us to influence others to become Christlike and holy.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1144.

**The point is that holiness (sanctification) is by faith alone in the same sense that justification is by faith alone.** We must strenuously resist evil (James 4:7, 8; Heb. 12:14), but the Holy Spirit gives the victory. He alone keeps us in conformity to the will of God. Our resistance of evil is an act of faith, but it is the Holy Spirit who relieves our burden of sin.

**Sanctification is present holiness in Christ, because of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the**



**heart of the believer.** Sanctification is often thought of as growth in holiness. And so it is! But it is also the experience of holiness enjoyed by the believer now. There are many more passages in the New Testament that use the verb “to sanctify” (*hagiazō*) in the sense of present holiness in Christ than there are passages that use it in reference to spiritual growth. This is not in any way to depreciate the great importance of spiritual growth. Nevertheless, it is vital to accept the Bible truth that the divinely indwelt Christian has present holiness (sanctification) in Christ.

Acts 26:18 speaks of those “who have been sanctified by faith.” (Literal translation). In Romans 15:16, Paul wrote of the Gentiles “having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (Literal translation). In 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul wrote of the Corinthians as “having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints [or “holy ones”]. Yet these church members were divided by controversy and prejudice. The point is that they were spoiling the beautiful gift of holiness given by the Holy Spirit. The RSV correctly translates 1 Corinthians 6:11: “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” As we have seen, Colossians 2:10 translates from the Greek, “You have been made complete [perfect] in Him.” Heb. 10:10 reads: “We have been sanctified.”

***Justification is Christ bestowed; sanctification is Christ possessed.*** Justification is Christ’s gift of Himself to us every day. Sanctification (holiness) is Christ possessed in our hearts every day. Sanctification is the state of present holiness in Christ enjoyed by the justified believer.

“True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character.”—6T, 350.

“No man receives holiness as a birthright, or as a gift from any other human being. Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed. With clearer vision they behold eternal realities. They are adopted into God’s family, and they become conformed to His likeness, changed by His Spirit from glory to glory. From cherishing supreme love for self, they come to cherish supreme love for God and for Christ. . . .

*“Sanctification is a state of holiness, without and within, being holy and without reserve the Lord’s, not in form, but in truth. Every impurity of thought, every lustful passion, separates the soul from God; for Christ can never put His robe of righteousness upon a sinner to hide his deformity.”—Our High Calling, p. 214. (Italics supplied.)*

***Sanctification is also growth in holiness caused by the constant reception of the Holy Spirit into the heart.***

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers: “May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Thess. 3:12, 13).

Thus a work of spiritual growth is to be accomplished for God’s people before the coming of Jesus. Paul continues: “Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God: that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. *For God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness.* Therefore he who rejects this does not reject

man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 4:1-8, italics supplied).

Paul’s message is that sanctification is holiness given to us by the Holy Spirit. And this gift of holiness is to be a more and more experience as we come nearer and nearer to the Lord. The result is the exclusion from our lives of the sins of the flesh and any other sins that would destroy our inner peace and holiness.

The same experience of constant spiritual growth for God’s children is emphasized in 2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all, with unveiled face [that is, with the veil of unbelief removed], beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We are to enjoy constant spiritual growth engendered by the Holy Spirit—spiritual growth that brings us progressively into the same image as the glory of the Lord.

The Apostle Peter chimes in with a warning and an exhortation: “You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked: but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:17, 18).

In Scripture, grace is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit, making possible constant spiritual growth (see 1 Cor. 1:4-9; 15:10; 2 Cor. 8:1, 2; 9:8, 14; Gal. 2:9; 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 13:9; 2 Peter 3:18).

*We may summarize the relationship between justification and sanctification as follows:*

1. Both justification and sanctification have to do with our position and our condition. Both have to do with status and state.
2. Your status or standing with God is not right unless your spiritual state is right.
3. It is not God’s plan or intention that our spiritual state should be “up and down, in and out, a mess.”
4. Justification by faith causes sanctification by faith. You can’t have one without the other. The gift of Christ’s righteousness in justification makes you holy or sanctified. Both are righteousness by faith alone!
5. The Christian message is what Christ has done for and in us. The Christian life is what Christ is currently continuing to do for and in us.
6. Justification is conversion, the new-birth experience, involving a heavenly declaration of a heart transformation. This experience is the work of the Holy Spirit, not our work. And His work of transformation is what sanctifies or makes us holy.
7. You can’t separate justification and sanctification. Justification is Christ bestowed; sanctification is Christ possessed. You have the possession because you have received the bestowal. And this possession involves present holiness in Christ and growth in holiness in Christ.

**Page 25: “First, Paul dealt with pagans, the irreligious, the gentiles. ‘They’re lost,’ he said. Now, second, he comes to the religious, and he says, ‘They’re lost.’ Third, in chapter 3, Paul says, ‘Let’s look at the whole world.’ And he says, ‘All are lost.’**

**“All Are Lost**

**“Look at chapter 3. Beginning with verse 9, Paul quotes 14 statements from the Old Testament.”**

**Page 27: “I appreciate the verse that says, ‘There is no difference, for all have sinned’**

**(Romans 3:22-23 NIV). There's no difference between any of us: irreligious, pagan, gentile, Jew, religious. There are differences in the *degree* of sin. There's no difference in the *fact* of sin.**

**“In most countries, it makes no difference whether you murder one person or 30. The penalty's the same—death! Paul has completed his lawyer's brief. The whole human race is guilty! All are worthy of death—eternal death!”**

**See also Ford's statements on Romans 3 on page 50.**

In Romans, chapter 3, Paul summarizes his first major point in his epistle to the Romans. He reemphasizes that all human beings are sinners in need of a Savior. Jews and Gentiles, whoever they are, and wherever they are, need the power of God to save them from sin. And only through the sacrifice and atoning ministry of Jesus Christ can we be saved from sin, released from guilt, and given the power to live as God has in mind for us.

Paul writes: “We have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9). Then he adds a passage from Psalm 14 and Psalm 53. “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

What Paul means is that there is no person who does not know Christ as a personal Savior who is righteous. Righteousness is a gift from God to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Paul says it himself in Romans 1:17 (NRSV): “In it [that is, in the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ ” The Greek translates literally: “The righteous person shall live by faith.”

That means that if you are living by faith, you are a righteous person; and if you are a righteous person, you are living by faith. Again Paul speaks of justified, born-again Christians in Romans 6:18: “Having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” That means that those who are justified, born again, are willing slaves of righteousness. Again in Romans 8:9,10, Paul points out that the Holy Spirit in your heart is Christ in your heart, is righteousness in your heart.

So when Paul says in Romans 3:10 that “there is none righteous, no, not one,” he means that no unjustified, unborn-again person is righteous. But the believer in Jesus Christ who is indwelt by His Holy Spirit has the gift of his righteousness.

Then in Romans 3:11, Paul adds, “There is none who understands.” But elsewhere, Paul makes it clear that those who believe in Jesus Christ, who have His Holy Spirit as their Teacher and Guide, do understand the things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:10 says that God reveals His mysteries to us “through His Spirit.” And in Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul says that he prays “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, *may be able to comprehend with all the saints* what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

So believers who are indwelt by Christ's Holy Spirit do understand God's will and have the power to follow it. So when Paul says in Romans 3:11, “There is none who understands,” he means that there is none who is not surrendered to Jesus Christ who understands.”

Likewise when he says, “There is none who seeks after God” (Romans 3:11), he is referring

to unjustified people who do not believe in Jesus Christ. And when he says in verse 12, “There is none who does good, no, not one,” he is referring to unbelievers who do not have the power to do works that are good in the sight of God. But believers in Jesus Christ do have that power. 1 John 2:29 says: “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does righteousness has been born of him.” So the born-again Christian does works that in the sight of God are righteous.

Then in Romans 3, verses 13-18, Paul continues quoting the Old Testament to describe the lost state of those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Apart from Jesus Christ, there is no peace or spiritual power or capacity to overcome sin. When Christ is not reigning in your heart, the devil is, and the result is addiction to sin and misery. But when Christ is reigning within, you have the power of His Holy Spirit to resist sin and to overcome it. Because He died for you, He is constantly available as the source of the power to overcome.

It is true that “there is no difference; for all have sinned” (Rom. 3:22, 23) in the past. But it is an unbiblical exaggeration to say, “There’s no difference between any of us: irreligious, pagan, gentile, Jew, religious.” The difference between the unjustified unbeliever and the justified believer is dramatic. The one has no fellowship with Christ and no power to overcome sin. The other has fellowship with Christ that enables him or her to live in accord with the will of God.

**Page 32: “When Christ came to the end of his days on earth, he never asked his disciples to remember his miracles. He never asked them to remember his wonderful words. He never asked them to remember his beautiful life. He said, ‘Remember my death.’”**

**See also Ford, p. 52.**

Certainly, at the last supper Jesus urged His disciples to remember His death. But He also asked them to remember His words and works. Jesus said, “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:24). He promised that the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (verse 26). Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, “He will testify of Me” (John 15:26). Jesus added: “When He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13, 14). Jesus certainly wanted His followers to remember His works. He said: “I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:12-14).

**Page 55: “Never forget, the Old Testament Day of Atonement pointed to the Christ event, to the cross of Calvary. It is wrong to indulge in calendrical shuffling, trying to bring the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement down to the nineteenth century.**

**“The ancient Day of Atonement is not talking about the nineteenth century. It points to the cross of Christ. That’s where the final, full atonement was made. Calvary was the only place of complete atonement. We look only to Calvary, not to an event or date invented by man.**

**“That’s a vital and basic point.”**

This statement reveals the fact, of which some of us have been aware for a long time, that Ford's view of justification at the cross leads him to reject the Daniel and Revelation teaching of the pre-advent, investigative judgment. If you accept Ford's teaching of legal justification at the cross, logically you should reject the Bible teaching concerning the pre-advent, investigative judgment. If justification is salvation and is only a heavenly legal declaration, why would the Lord choose to judge us by our works? Such a judgment would be irrelevant. Ford's view of salvation by faith has led him to reject the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7 and 8 and other passages dealing with the pre-advent judgment. To say, as some have, that Ford is right on righteousness by faith but wrong on the judgment, fails to recognize that his view of righteousness by faith is the premise on the basis of which he rejects the pre-advent judgment message.

For an exposition of the Bible teaching on the pre-advent investigative judgment see Roy Gane's book, *Altar Call*, Diadem: Andrews University Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1999. See also Erwin Gane's book, *You Ask, God Answers* (available from Amazing Facts), chapter 10, "How, When, and Why Does God Judge His People?" pp. 177-198.

**Page 87: "We were all in Adam and Eve when they sinned. Seminally, we were there. Thus, by the sin of one, condemnation came on all of us. We were born dead." See also page 88.**

In the fifth century A.D., Augustine interpreted Romans 5 to mean that when Adam sinned all men sinned, so that all men are born guilty of Adam's sin. The contrast in Romans 5 would be that when Christ died, all humanity died, and so all humanity was justified at the cross.

That interpretation is faulted by the fact that all humanity was not responsible for Adam's fall. We were not there, nor were we involved. All humanity suffer the *results* of Adam's fall. Every human being has been born with a fallen nature, with biases, propensities to sin (Ps. 51:5; 58:3). We were not born guilty of Adam's sin, despite Augustine's contention; we were born suffering the *consequences* of Adam's sin. In this sense, all humanity sinned when Adam sinned. We didn't commit the act; we suffer the results of Adam's act. Hence, the second half of the contrast is not that all humanity died when Christ died, but that Christ's death *makes available* to all humanity justification and life. All humanity were not justified at the cross. The cross makes justification *available* to all. Justification must be accepted. "*Those who receive* abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17, italics supplied). In Scripture, justification is always by faith. We were not there when Jesus died. We did not die; Christ died for us, and the result is that we can have deliverance from the demands of our fallen natures, deliverance from sin and eternal death. We can have the wonderful gift of justification and eternal life.

Our inheritance from Adam can be illustrated by the story of the prostitute who, in plying her trade, contracted AIDS. She didn't know she had it. Subsequently she married and had a baby. The baby was born with AIDS. The baby was condemned to have a disease; but the baby was not in any way guilty of the mother's sin. Just so, we were born with a disease, fallen nature; but we were not born guilty of Adam's sin. Compare 1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:17, 18.

**Page 102: “Sin Does Remain**

**“Sin does remain. There is a residue. There is residual sin in our lives. It will annoy you. It will tempt you. It’s there. *But it does not reign.* So, keep in mind this one little line that’s so helpful and so true. Sin remains, but it does not reign.”**

**See also Ford, pages 121, 122, 129, 131, 147, 175.**

“Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Lawlessness always incurs guilt (Ps. 66:18). Where there is guilt, there is need for forgiveness (justification) (Acts 13:38, 39). Ford has contradicted Romans, chapter 6. Consider verse 18: “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:22, 23). If sin remains, individuals have not “been set free from sin.” To some degree, they are still enslaved by sin. They do not enjoy the deliverance that Paul describes in Romans 6.

What does remain for converted, born-again, justified believers? They still retain fallen natures. Our fallen natures clamor for recognition, but through the power of Christ, we may have victory. Paul referred to this struggle in 1 Corinthians 9:27: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Ellen White comments: “Paul’s sanctification was a constant conflict with self. Said he: ‘I die daily.’ His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. Instead of following inclination, he did the will of God, however unpleasant and crucifying to his nature.”—4T, 299.

Paul instructs: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal. 5:16-18).

The power of the Holy Spirit controls “the flesh,” our fallen natures. When we walk by the Spirit we do not “fulfill the lust of the flesh.” That means that, if we walk by the Spirit, we have spiritual victory. We are not under the law as a means of salvation or under its condemnation. Sin does not remain! When the Spirit of God is in control of our minds and bodies, we are free from sin.

This is the message of 1 John 3:3-10. The passages means that as long as we permit the Holy Spirit to reign in our hearts and control our minds and bodies, we are kept from sinning. The passage does not mean that habitual sin is wrong while occasional sin is acceptable. Jesus, our Example, was pure (verse 3); He did not commit habitual sin or even one sin (verse 5). All sin, whether one sin or habitual sin, is lawlessness (verse 4). Any sin is of the devil (verse 8).

In interpreting 1 John 3:3-10, it is vital to understand that the Greek present tense, which is used in the passage, does not always refer to continuous or habitual action. “The aoristic [punctiliar] present presents the action as a simple event or as a present fact without any reference to its progress.”—James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979), p. 81. The authors cite the use of verbs in the present that specify single events: Acts 16:18, “I commend you”; Mark 2:5, “Your sins are forgiven.”

First John 3:9 reads: “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.” The text is not saying that it is impossible for a person who has been born again to choose to sin. It is saying that, as long as the “Seed,” the Holy Spirit, is in charge, the individual believer is kept from sinning. First John 5:18 teaches the same truth: “We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them” (1 John 5:18, NRSV). The One who was born of God who protects believers is the Lord Jesus Christ. When we trust in His power, He keeps the evil one from touching us.

This being so, it is quite unbiblical to assert that sin remains in the lives of justified believers. Their fallen natures remain, but sin does not remain, nor does it reign. “You, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:18).

“ ‘He that committeth sin is of the devil’ [1 John 3:8]. Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation and provokes the divine displeasure.”—4T, 623.

**Page 141: “Even in your lowest experiences, even in your greatest failures, even when your heart is broken and your conscience is tormenting you because of some mistake, Paul says, ‘But there is no condemnation.’ ”**

**See also Ford, pages 159, 166, 171.**

**Page 161: “Still, in the gospel there is no condemnation even when we fail to meet God’s standards.”**

Ford has contradicted the clear message of Romans 8. Those not condemned are those “in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:1, 2). The consciences of persons who are free from the law of sin won’t be tormenting them. If the “lowest experiences,” and “greatest failures” are sins, it can never be said that such persons are walking “according to the Spirit.” Certainly there is forgiveness for the sinner. Every sinner can be justified by coming to the Lord in penitence and repentance. Then there is freedom from condemnation. But this freedom is not available to individuals who are sinning.

“For to be carnally minded is death. . . . The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:6-8). “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Rom. 8:9).

The person who is sinning does not have the benefit of Christ’s Spirit controlling his or her mind and body. Such a person is under condemnation, at enmity against God because of the choice to sin.

Paul emphasizes the point: “Therefore, brethren we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:12-14).

The “deeds of the body” are sins. We are not free from condemnation while we are capitulating to the deeds of the body. Only by putting to death the deeds of the body can we have spiritual life and freedom from condemnation.

**Page 177: “Romans 8 is not about a person different from the one found in Romans 7.”**

**Page 178: “It’s wrong when people say, ‘We need to get out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8.’ Romans 7 is a possibility at any hour of the day for any Christian.”**

Of course the Romans 7 experience is a possibility for any Christian at any time. The Lord in His mercy gives us the power of choice. But the Romans 7 person is failing. He exclaims: “For what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do” (Rom. 7:15). “I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.” (Rom. 7:18, 19, NRSV). The Romans 7 person cries out for deliverance: “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (verses 24, 25, NRSV).

By contrast, the Romans 8 person is experiencing forgiveness, spiritual power, freedom from condemnation, and victory over sin. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (verse 2, NRSV). The person who was failing (Rom. 7) could not be said to be free from the law of sin and death. The Romans 8 person has the “just requirement” of the law fulfilled in his life because he is walking “not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). The Romans 7 person is a “captive to the law of sin that dwells” in his mind and body (verse 23). The Romans 7 person is a captive to “this body of death” (verse 24). The Romans 8 person is “not in the flesh” but “in the Spirit” because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10).

There is a dramatic difference between the experiences of the Romans 7 and 8 persons.

**Page 189: “The pain and suffering a Christian endures never comes from guilt. That’s because the gospel has dealt with guilt. . . . Suffering is inevitable, even for Christians. But your suffering does not come from guilt. Your sins are forgiven in Christ.”**

Our sins are forgiven in Christ when we confess them (1 John 1:9). Prior to confession we are guilty, and our guilt sometimes causes us great pain and suffering. David knew all about such pain and suffering. He wrote: “For innumerable evils have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head. Therefore my heart fails me” (Ps. 40:12). “For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness” (Ps. 38:4, 5). “For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me” (Ps. 51:3).

After Peter had denied his Lord, he was overcome with grief; “he went out and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26:75). Present-day Christians, like believers throughout history, often have to bow down in penitence and ask for forgiveness. When consumed by guilt, our only solace is to be found in the forgiveness that comes when we confess our sin to God and repent with all our hearts. “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). Our sin was not forgiven at the cross; the provision was there made for our sins to be forgiven. Our sins are forgiven when to come to the Lord in penitence.

“We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No, Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, ‘These things write I unto you, that ye



sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ 1 John 2:1. And do not forget the words of Christ, ‘The Father Himself loveth you.’ John 16:27. He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you. And if you will but yield yourself to Him, He that hath begun a good work in you will carry it forward to the day of Jesus Christ. Pray more fervently; believe more fully. As we come to distrust our own power, let us trust the power of our Redeemer, and we shall praise Him who is the health of our countenance.”—*Steps to Christ*, p.. 64.

**Page 241: “The truth, of course, is that because we are fallen, because we are born in sin, because we are born without the Holy Spirit, because the curse of Adam’s sin is upon us from the beginning, we cannot perfectly obey a holy law. Not even *after* conversion. That’s because every converted person is really two people.”**

**Page 242: “So even after conversion, never for one day do I fully fulfill the law of God. That’s because I still have an old nature.”**

Once again Ford has contradicted Scripture. The great apostle whom he loves so much wrote: “Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1). You can’t be more comprehensive than that!

The apostle Peter instructs likewise: “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’ ” (1 Peter 1:15, 16).

The apostle John had no doubt about the capacity of the believing Christian to obey the law of God perfectly by dependence upon the Lord: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:2-5).

In the context of the passage, overcoming the world is keeping the commandments of God. And this is possible for the born-again believer.

Jesus said: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). He didn’t say, keep some of the commandments some of the time. Jesus said: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Jesus kept all the commandments perfectly, and He offers us the power to do the same. Furthermore, one of the prominent characteristics of the remnant church is that its members keep the commandments (Rev. 12:17).

Paul urged Timothy to “keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing” (1 Tim. 6:14).

“The conditions of eternal life, under grace, are just what they were in Eden—perfect righteousness, harmony with God, perfect conformity to the principles of His law. The standard of character presented in the Old Testament is the same that is presented in the New Testament. This standard is not one to which we cannot attain. In every command or injunction that God gives there is a promise, the most positive, underlying the command. God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and

thus frustrate His grace.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 76.

**Page 244, 245: “The righteousness of the law is our good deeds. The righteousness of the law is that which springs from our best efforts. It’s our religiosity, our church-going, our Sabbath-keeping. It’s our health reform, our tithe-paying, our missionary endeavor, our singing of hymns. That’s all the righteousness of the law, and it’s all wonderful; but it won’t get us into God’s kingdom, because it’s never good enough.”**

In the writings of Paul, the righteousness of the law is the attempt to earn righteousness by our own works. “Israel pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were by the works of the law” (Rom. 9:31, 32). By contrast: “Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith” (verse 30). The righteousness of faith involves the power to obey God’s law: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). Where is the law of God established for the person of faith? “ ‘The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach)” (Rom. 10:8). “ ‘For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days’ says the Lord, ‘I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be My people’ ”(Heb. 8:10).

Works of law are works designed to earn righteousness. Works of faith are good works that result from our faith/grace fellowship with Christ. If “our church-going, our Sabbath-keeping, our health reform, our tithe-paying, our missionary endeavor, our singing of hymns” are an effort to earn righteousness and salvation, they are “righteousness of the law,” but if they are the result of our faith in Christ, they are works of faith that are acceptable to God. Works of faith do not save us. But works of faith are pleasing to God because they result from our fellowship with Jesus. To categorize works of faith as “the righteousness of the law” is a tragic distortion of the Bible teaching.

**Page 252: “David was a murderer and an adulterer. Yet he prayed, ‘Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation (Psalm 51:12 KJV). He didn’t pray, ‘Restore to me thy salvation.’ Why not? Because David was being held under chastisement, and if he had not repented, he would have been lost. But he had not been cast off, even after murder and adultery. . . . I commend to your judgment that the Scripture never says that this great believer was cast off by his follies. He did lose his joy while he was under the chastisement of God; that’s because we can never escape the temporal consequences of sin.”**

Ford would have us believe that a person who commits murder and adultery and has not repented has not lost justification and salvation. The real truth is that David had lost the joy of salvation because he had lost salvation! Consider his prayer in Psalm 51: “Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter

than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

That doesn't sound like a man who has retained justification and salvation. He needs spiritual cleansing, forgiveness (justification), a change of heart. He knows that he is outside of Christ and He pleads for restoration.

Ellen White comments:

“I was shown that it was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after his own heart. When David departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God's own heart. *God did not in the least degree justify him in his sins*, but sent Nathan, His prophet, with dreadful denunciations to David because he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. God shows his displeasure at David's having a plurality of wives, by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity that God permitted to come upon David, who, for his integrity, was once called a man after God's own heart, is evidence to after generations that *God would not justify any one in transgressing his commandments*; but that he would surely punish the guilty, however righteous and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness and do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God.”—*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 379. Italics supplied.

**Pages 311, 312: “However, in reaction to the Reformation the Council of Trent froze Roman Catholic theology into what is called Tridentine theology. It is this theology—still official church theology—we now turn to.**

**“Tridentine theology teaches that justification is an infusion (or pouring) of God's grace into your life. This grace enables you to live a holy life, thereby allowing God to declare you righteous—because you are righteous!**

**“Some of you are familiar with a well-known Lesson Quarterly published four times a year. It contains daily lessons for people to study. This way they can be ready for the class discussion on Sabbath.**

**“In recent years, these Lesson Quarterlies have taught the Tridentine view of justification. That is, when you are converted the Holy Spirit comes in and makes you righteous. This is a devastating doctrine for people who still have a struggle with sin. And how many is that? Every converted person has a struggle with sin! . . .**

**“The Tridentine view is that when you are converted, through the medicinal sacraments such as the Lord's Supper and baptism, goodness is poured into you. That won't meet life's facts for a minute, because the law of God requires 100 percent righteousness.”**

In this comment on the Sabbath School quarterly, Ford is referring to the Bible teaching that I, as the editor, incorporated, that justification includes the new-birth experience. His view is that, because the Council of Trent (1545-63) regarded justification as the new birth, therefore my teaching in the quarterly was Roman Catholic.

The truth is that the Roman Catholic concept of the new birth and the biblical concept are dramatically different! The Council of Trent was much influenced by the writings of the 13<sup>th</sup> century theologian, Thomas Aquinas. Thomas wrote the famous *Summa Theologica*, in which he

attempted a marriage between Bible teaching and the teachings of Aristotle. Thomas argued in Aristotelian terms that in justification the philosophical matter of the soul is re-formed and made intrinsically righteous. That is to say, in justification the immortal soul of the believer is re-made so that the philosophical matter of the soul is now righteous in and of itself. The result is that the individual now has the capacity to do works that are meritorious in the sight of God. Now the justified believer with an intrinsically righteous soul can earn favor with God by his good works, including sacramental works. Trent followed the teachings of Aquinas.

The Bible disagrees with Aquinas and Trent on three counts: (1) We do not have immortal souls (1 Tim. 6:16; 15:51-54). (2) In the new birth experience (justification), the soul is not made intrinsically righteous. Our righteousness is always Christ in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9, 10), and we retain fallen natures (1 Cor. 9:27; Gal. 5:16-18). (3) Our works are never meritorious. We cannot earn favor with God by our good works. Our good works are always the result of our fellowship with Jesus in which His Spirit dwells in our hearts (Rom. 3:31; 8:9, 10).

Hence, the Tridentine concept of the new birth and the biblical concept we incorporated in the Sabbath School quarterly are vastly different.

Martin Luther saw the difference. As we have already observed, he argued that justification is the work of the Holy Spirit; it includes the new birth. He opposed the Roman Catholic view that justification involves the soul becoming righteous in and of itself.

Referring to Galatians 2:20, Luther commented: "Here Paul clearly shows how he is alive; and he states what Christian righteousness is, namely, that righteousness by which Christ lives in us, not the righteousness that is in our own person. . . .

" 'Not I, but Christ lives in me.' Christ is my 'form,' which adorns my faith as color or light adorns a wall. . . . 'Christ,' he says, 'is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one.' . . .

"Abiding and living in me, Christ removes and absorbs all the evils that torment and afflict me. . . .

"But so far as justification is concerned, Christ and I must be so closely attached that He lives in me and I in Him. What a marvelous way of speaking! Because He lives in me, whatever grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me is all Christ's; nevertheless, it is mine as well, by the cementing and attachment that are through faith, by which we become as one body in the Spirit. Since Christ lives in me, grace, righteousness, life, and eternal salvation must be present with Him, and the Law, sin, and death must be absent. . . .

"When it comes to justification, therefore, if you divide Christ's Person from your own, you are in the Law; you remain in it and live in yourself, which means that you are dead in the sight of God and damned by the Law. For you have a faith that is, as the sophists imagine, 'formed by love.' . . .

"But faith must be taught correctly, namely, that by it you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person, which cannot be separated but remains attached to Him forever and declares: 'I am as Christ.' And Christ, in turn, says: 'I am as that sinner who is attached to Me, and I to him. For by faith we are joined together into one flesh and one bone.' Thus, Eph. 5:30 says: 'We are members of the body of Christ, of His flesh and of his bones,' in such a way that this faith couples Christ and me more intimately than a husband is coupled to his wife. Therefore this faith is no idle quality; but it is a thing of such magnitude that it obscures and completely removes those

foolish dreams of the sophists' doctrine—the fiction of a 'formed faith' and love, of merits, our worthiness, our quality, etc."—*Luther's Works*, vol. 26, pp. 166-169.

"Therefore we, too, acknowledge a quality and a formal righteousness in the heart; but we do not mean love, as the sophists do, but faith, because the heart must behold and grasp nothing but Christ the Savior."—*Ibid*, p. 132.

Thus Luther opposed the Roman Catholic position that in justification (the new birth) the soul is made intrinsically righteous and loving. Our righteousness, he asserted biblically, is always and only Christ in our hearts by the presence of the Holy Spirit. I share that view.

**Page 316: "You are covered by Christ's merits. The idea of confession of sin is to relieve the burden of guilt. That's all. We do not confess in order to be forgiven. You have already been forgiven by the cross of Christ. You are just laying hold of it to allay the feeling of guilt."**

We do not confess in order to be forgiven? The statement is absurd and unbiblical! We confess precisely because we need to be forgiven. 1 John 1:9 states clearly why we confess our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The Bible doesn't teach that we were forgiven at the cross. The Bible teaches that we are forgiven when we confess our sins in view of the provision made at the cross. Our feelings of guilt are allayed only when we are forgiven, and that is when we confess. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). "In Him [Christ] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). "Through this Man [Christ] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38, 39).

## **SUMMARY:**

1. Desmond Ford teaches that justification is only a legal declaration in heaven that the righteousness of Christ is counted for the believer. This view of forensic-only, legal-only justification is the basis of his teaching on righteousness by faith. Justification, he says, is God declaring us righteous, not making us righteous. If he were correct, God would be declaring something that is not so. Ford reduces justification to a legal fiction.
2. Ford teaches that justification is always over believers, even when they are sinning. Thus justification is like an umbrella over us. Our salvation is assured even when we are sinning, as long as we still believe in Jesus. Thus Ford contradicts the Bible teaching that when we need forgiveness, we need justification, because forgiveness is justification.
3. Ford teaches that we don't confess our sins to be forgiven. We confess them to be relieved of our feelings of guilt. Such a view denies the clear Bible teaching that only as we confess our sins can we be forgiven and thus freed from guilt.

4. Ford denies that justification is the new birth. In his view, the new birth is the result of justification. Thus Ford excludes from justification the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. If he were correct, Jesus didn't tell Nicodemus how to be saved when He said, "You must be born again." He taught Nicodemus the *result* of salvation, not salvation itself. Ford contradicts the clear teaching of such passages as Titus 3:5-7; Galatians 3:1-14; Rom. 10:6-10 etc.

5. Ford regards the view that justification is the new birth as Roman Catholic teaching. He asserts that the Council of Trent (1545-63), which defined official Roman Catholic theology, identified justification with the new birth. Therefore the teaching of the Sabbath School quarterly in days gone by, that justification is the new birth, was Roman Catholic. Ford fails to recognize the huge difference between the Tridentine view of the new birth and that taught in Scripture. Trent followed Thomas Aquinas in teaching that in justification the believer's immortal soul is re-formed, re-made, so that it is now an intrinsically righteous soul. This soul, now righteous in and of itself, has the capacity to do works that are meritorious in the sight of God. The Bible contradicts this teaching on three counts: (1) We do not have immortal souls; (2) Our souls are not made intrinsically righteous when we are justified. Our righteousness is always Christ counted for us and Christ living in our hearts by the Holy Spirit; (3) Our works are never meritorious. Our good works, those that are acceptable in the eyes of God, are the result of the new birth. In no sense do they earn righteousness or favor with God.

6. Ford teaches that justification has to do with status, legal standing with God, not with spiritual state. He says that sanctification has to do with state. Thus, he creates a distinction that the Bible never makes. The Bible teaching is that we have no legal standing with God unless our spiritual state is right with Him.

7. Ford asserts that when God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), they remain ungodly. He denies the Bible teaching that when God declares a person righteous, He simultaneously makes him so by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon him.

8. Ford teaches that justification is the "legal and verbal opposite" of condemnation. He says that condemnation is only a legal declaration. Therefore justification, the opposite, is only a legal declaration. He fails to see that condemnation is a legal declaration of a fact, a reality. The person is condemned because he is guilty. The declaration is true to fact. Just so, justification is a declaration of a reality that the Lord simultaneously creates by bestowing the Holy Spirit upon the believer.

9. Ford teaches that sanctification is not righteousness by faith alone. In his view, only justification is righteousness by faith alone. Sanctification is the result of justification, but it is by faith plus human effort. Thus he contradicts the clear teaching of the Bible that sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, not our work. To Ford, sanctification is a never-ending process of growth in holiness. He does not see sanctification as present holiness in Christ. Thus he contradicts Hebrews 12:14 that speaks of "holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

10. Ford teaches that when Adam sinned, the whole world sinned, and when Christ died, the whole world died. He believes that we were in Adam when he sinned and in Christ when He died. Thus

the whole world is condemned and guilty before God because of Adam's fall. And the whole world was justified at the cross because when Christ died, we all died. Ford fails to see that we were not there when Adam sinned. The Augustinian doctrine of inherited guilt is unscriptural. All humans have inherited fallen natures. Only in that sense were we in Adam when he sinned. We were condemned to have a disease, but we were not guilty of Adam's sin. Moreover, we did not die when Jesus died. He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). We were not there. Not until we accept Him as Savior and Lord do we die to sin (Rom. 6; 7:1-5). The cross *made provision* for all to be justified when they believe in Jesus. But the whole world was not justified at the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus must be accepted for an individual to experience justification by faith (Rom. 5:17). In Scripture, justification is always by faith; forensic justification at the cross is not a Bible teaching.

11. Ford believes that the law of God, the Ten Commandments cannot be perfectly obeyed, even by those who are converted. He teaches that everything the believer does is tinged with sin. The believer is sinning all the time, at least to some degree. Hence, he is saved only because justification is a legal umbrella over him, ensuring his salvation, despite the sins in his life. Thus Ford contradicts the clear teaching of the Bible that the Ten Commandments can be perfectly obeyed (1 John 5:2-5; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Peter 1:15, 16; Rev. 3:2; 12:17; 14:12). He contradicts the result in the lives of believers of the end-time seal of God (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5). By implication, he also contradicts the Bible teaching of a close of probation beyond which God's people will be kept from sinning (Rev. 7:1-3; 8:2-5; 22:11).

12. Ford teaches that we are not condemned, even when we fail to reach God's standard. He asserts that David did not lose justification when he sinned. Ford rejects the Bible teaching that sin separates from God and one sin incurs God's displeasure and condemnation.

13. Ford declares that everything the believer does is tinged with sin. In fact, he says, in respect to sin there is no difference between the religious and the irreligious person. He fails to understand that all sin is imperfection, but not all imperfection is sin. Not all our imperfect works are disobedience of God's commandments. Moreover, the truly justified, born-again believer is given the power to overcome sin. Such power is unavailable to the irreligious.

14. Ford rejects the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7 and 8, and of various passages elsewhere in Scripture, that teach a pre-advent judgment beginning in 1844 and ending with the close of probation. He teaches that the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) was completely fulfilled at the cross, and that it had nothing to do with 1844 and the judgment that followed. In this commentary on Romans, he has made it abundantly clear that his teaching on righteousness by faith is the premise on the basis of which he rejects the investigative judgment doctrine. Thus, those who say that he is right on righteousness by faith and wrong on the judgment fail to recognize that his view on the former is the basis for his view on the latter. If you accept his view on righteousness by faith, logically you should reject the investigative judgment doctrine. If salvation is a legal, heavenly declaration that is always over believers, why would the Lord judge us by our works, as the Bible says He does? The Bible teaches that we are judged by our works because they demonstrate whether or not God's grace has been effectively operating in our lives.

15. Ford teaches that Christ is our Substitute in the judgment. Because Christ is perfect, and His perfection is counted for us, we can be vindicated in the judgment. Thus Ford ignores the Bible teaching that, although Christ's righteousness is counted for us, yet we are judged by our works. God expects us to be overcomers. See, for example the statement at the conclusion of each of the messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3): "To him who overcomes. . . ."



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