

The following is the first part of a three part symposium on the subjects of Justification, Sanctification and Glorification. Justification by Bro. T. Smith; Sanctification by Bro. E. Lorenz; Glorification by Bro. Wilmott. Given at the Lebanon, Oregon, Convention, Saturday morning, June 16, 1973.

## **“JUSTIFICATION”**

Br. Ted Smith

Over the years, as we have used our Pastor’s writings, in the study of Justification, we have all observed no doubt, that various ways have been employed to explain the subject. We could be confused if we did not realize this fact, and if we confined ourselves to only one of the ways used by the Pastor to explain Justification, and ignored all the other ways of explanation. My point is that we lose some valuable bits of understanding if we fail to grasp the various aspects of Justification. In a way, it is very simple, and can be kept that way if we reason carefully and proceed cautiously from one viewpoint to another.

On Reprint page 5959, in the first paragraph of the article entitled JUSTIFICATION—WHAT? WHEN? HOW? we find a definition—“Justification really means only one thing, viz.: a making right, making just.” And as forming a part of this definition, the following words are added—“Justification may be either partial or complete.” This is the simplest definition of Justification that I have found in our Pastor’s writings, and very complete as well.

In this brief examination of a definition, we wish to call special attention to the fact that this definition has two parts and that if we are to use it with understanding, we must show that both parts have been given weight. Combining the two parts then, the definition reads as follows: “Justification really means only one thing, viz.: a making right, making just,” AND “a making right, making just may be either partial or complete.”

Let us carefully note that while Justification means “a making right, a making just,” this by no means implies that in all cases Justification is “complete” or perfect. At times it can be “partial.” We might add a strong point here—if God is pleased to count a person as Justified, who are we, or what right have we to say that God is mistaken? Or what right have we to say that there are no proper grounds for God’s judgment in the matter? Should we not try to reason as God does?

We have a basis for reasoning in the case of Abraham. In James 2:23 we find these words, “and the scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.” And Gal. 3:6, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And Rom. 4:3, “For what saith the scriptures? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

So we see in Abraham's case, his righteousness, his justification was because of his faith, his belief in God; and because there was not yet a redeemer, Abraham was still under condemnation, and his Justification was only "partial."

If we do not count the Justification of the world in the Millennial Age, there are four Justifications—"a making right, a making just"—that we have studied about in the Harvest Message. Two of these are "partial," one is "typical" and the fourth is "complete." The two "partial" Justifications are "partial" because they do not have imputed to them the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. The "typical" Justification is "typical" because it is based upon the blood of animal sacrifices and not upon the blood of the man Jesus. The "complete" Justification is "complete" because it has the life element in it, viz., the imputation of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, which releases a person from condemnation from death because of Adam's sin.

For the sake of convenience and clarity, we are going to call the Justifications we referred to as Justifications number one, number two, number three and number four.

Justification number one ("a making right, making just") was granted to the Ancient Worthies. Abraham was an outstanding example of the Ancient Worthies, so we refer to the scriptures which describe his condition and position. Rom. 4:1-3, "Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness." And James 2:23, "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: AND HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD." Because Jesus had not yet died, it was not possible to impute the merit of Jesus' sacrifice to Abraham, so his Justification was only "partial." Abraham's Justification was as complete as it was possible to make it under the circumstances. Thus by way of explanation he was spoken of as "tentatively justified." "Tentative" means that "which is not yet permanent, but may become so." Abraham will be "completely" justified in the "better resurrection."

Justification number two ("a making right, making just") was granted to the nation of Israel and was based upon the offering of the blood of animals once a year on the Atonement Day. The blood of animals was typical and foreshadowed the death of Jesus as the ransom sacrifice for the redemption of Adam and his race. This Justification granted to the nation of Israel was "typical" only, and might be spoken of as the lowest form of Justification, for we read "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." (Heb. 10:4)

Justification number three ("a making right, making just") is granted to those who approach God during the Gospel Age. It is accomplished in much the same manner as the Justification granted to Abraham, viz., by the exercise of faith and in drawing near to God. This accomplishes a "friendship relationship" with Christ and with the Heavenly

Father. We note the words of Jesus just before his crucifixion, words which were addressed to his disciples—“let not your heart be troubled: ye BELIEVE IN GOD, believe also in me.” (John 14:1) And in the following chapter of John, Vs. 14 and 15 Jesus said “ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” This language conveys the same thought as the language employed to describe Abraham’s faith and his friendship relationship with God. Justification number three, like Abraham’s is “partial” because the blood of Jesus is not imputed. It is also “tentative” but may become complete by a certain process which we will describe next.

Justification number four (“a making right, making just”) is a Justification “unto life” and “is an instantaneous work—it is God that justifieth.” (Reprint page 5959, par. 5). It is brought about as follows: one who is approaching God, enjoys a Justification to friendship with God and with Christ. Such, if he is to continue to receive God’s guidance and favor, is expected to continue to draw nearer and nearer to God and “count the cost.” When the cost is counted and the individual goes all the way and makes a full consecration to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, he is sponsored by Jesus, is accepted of God and spirit begotten and at the same time the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice is imputed to the offering of the body of the consecrating one, and the result is “Justification unto life.” The Justification to friendship of the one offering himself in full consecration is “vitalized,” i.e., it has imputed to it the “merit of Jesus,” and the instantaneous result is “Justification to life.” This Justification is the highest form of “a making right, making just” because it is “complete.”

It is being said that “you are either Justified or you are not.” This expression is true if it is applied properly. If this expression is limited in its meaning to: “Justification to life,” then it is not a proper expression to use, because there are four different aspects to “a making right, making just,” as we have already explained. We believe it is possible to use this expression properly as follows: the Ancient Worthies were justified to friendship with God, but their worldly neighbors were not. The nation of Israel was typically justified, but the surrounding worldly nations were not. Those approaching God in the Gospel age are justified to friendship with God and with Christ, but their worldly associates are not. Those who go all the way during the Gospel age, having the merit of Jesus imputed to their sacrifice are justified to life, but those who are merely approaching God are not (justified to life).

We all know the Pastor has written a great deal on the subject of Justification, and how this Justification is pictured in the Court of the Tabernacle. I believe our Pastor’s reasonings and conclusions are based upon a knowledge of the scriptures, plus a knowledge of all known facts. I have observed that a knowledge of facts plays just as important a part in reaching a conclusion as a knowledge of the scriptures themselves.

Our Pastor spoke of those who were approaching God, as being in the Court, doing certain things, going in and out of the Court, etc. I believe our Pastor was merely using typical language to express facts which we all know about. Let us reason on scriptures and facts and see how this all corresponds to the details of the Court and its furnishings.

We all know it is a fact that when one is approaching God and studying the Bible, he is made aware of the teaching that Jesus is the way and that all progress toward God must be by and through Jesus. This is where the Gate to the Court comes into the picture.

And it is also a fact that all progress toward God is a walk by faith, unseen to worldly minds and comprehension. Here is where the linen curtains surrounding the Court play their part in the picture. These curtains were 7½ feet high—too high for a man to see over.

As one studies he learns that Jesus, as the Way, has died a ransom sacrifice for our sins; and it is a fact that the one approaching God keenly feels the need of a Saviour, and he recognizes Jesus as the great Sin-bearer and accepts him as such. Here is where the Brazen Altar plays its part in the picture.

Now let us remind ourselves that we are considering scripture teachings and actual experiences of those who approach God.

We know it is a fact that one might be content to go only as far as the Brazen Altar, and sit down there (just as our Pastor expressed it) and be content to just admire Jesus as the great Sin-Bearer. But it is not God's will that anyone should sit down and admire someone teaching that especially appeals to him, no matter how grand that teaching might be. No, our God wants us to go on to other teachings of tremendous importance.

So when one goes farther on, it is a fact that he starts to clean up his ways, putting away sinful thoughts, words and habits. This naturally results from the teachings of the Word of God—"clean up" is the effect of the Word of God. The laver of water enters the picture at this point. Again, the Pastor says that some come thus far and seem satisfied to put away sin and go no farther.

But one who is deeply in earnest soon is confronted with the teaching concerning discipleship, consecration. And it is a fact that this teaching is the most soul-searching and soul-shaking of all—"present your bodies a living sacrifice;" "sit down and count the cost."

And some, in sitting down to "count the cost" find that consecration demands more than they are willing to give—they feel they do not want to relinquish the will of self and take the will of God instead. And so they leave the Court altogether. Now, when we say "leave the Court altogether," we mean simply that such an one mentally severs his

connections with the teachings of Truth as pictured in the Court, and ceases to make progress toward God.

Such an one may continue in such a state for some time. Then some experience in life may teach him that life here is at best only temporary and disappointing and empty. Such an one may flee back to the Court. We mean by this—this typical language, that one draws near to God again and considers afresh and more seriously the teachings of the Word of God. And being now in the right heart attitude to respond to the great teaching pictured by the Door into the Tabernacle, this one will present his body a living sacrifice:—fully consecrate himself.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul tells us that Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for those who come to God through Him. And so Jesus accepts the consecrating one, and whosoever is sponsored by Jesus is accepted by the Father and the merit is imputed, resulting in Justification to life. This one is then spirit-begotten and passes through the Door into the Holy, the spirit begotten condition.

So we see, dear brethren, that all this is simple, logical and beautiful. Bro. Russell merely uses the language of the types and pictures to express facts which we all know from experience and observation to be true. All these preliminary experiences in the Court are called tentative Justification by the Pastor. What does tentative mean? It means “an experiment.” And how true it is that when one is approaching God he is in touch, mentally with the Scriptures and finally sits down and counts the cost. But there is nothing sure or definite about the matter until such an one actually decides to take the final step of full consecration, then the justification becomes sure, vital, real. There is an expression used in the Question Book that gives the true thought perfectly. Bro. Russell in answering a question used these words, “THEY ARE IN THE COURT TENTATIVELY.” This is found on page 401 of the Question Book, line 19. There could not be a more true expression than that. One may go on to full consecration, or he may withdraw from his contact with the teachings of the Word of God entirely. Our Pastor’s expressions were suggested by FACTS, not his imagination.

When Bro. Russell speaks of going in and out of the Court, he doesn’t mean going in and out of the condition of justification—that is not the thought at all. What he means is that one is in and out of touch with the **TEACHINGS OF THE SCRIPTURES WHICH HAVE TO DO WITH THE JUSTIFIED STATE**. If we catch this one all-important point, then we can intelligently follow the logic of our Pastor’s reasoning and really enjoy it and experience its blessedness.

The claim is made by some that Bro. Russell changed his views on Justification. The supposed proof is contained in the 1916 foreword of Volume VI. I shall quote the reference for you: “Just so the sinner today approaching God might be said to be in the

way of Justification—he would have more of God’s favor than if he faced toward sin. We once spoke of a sinner in this condition as being Justified, because he believed in Jesus as his Redeemer, and was reaching forward to a full consecration of himself. Now we see” (that is, since writing Vol. VI) “that while the sinner’s attitude, like that of the Ancient Worthies, might be styled ‘tentative justification,’ it would not reach the condition of a full, complete Justification from sin until the sinner had fully presented himself in consecration to our great High Priest, Jesus, and had been accepted of Him in the name of the Father. Then, under the covering of the imputed merit of Christ’s sacrifice, the sinner would be acceptable to the Father under Christ’s Robe and begotten of the Holy Spirit.” What our Pastor really said was that at the time he wrote Volume VI, which was shortly after the year 1900, he spoke of those approaching God as justified, but later he saw that they were not fully justified or actually justified to life, until after consecration; and that previous to this actual justification, he spoke of such correctly as tentatively justified. There is no proof whatever in the 1916 foreword of Vol. VI that Bro. Russell changed his mind on the subject of Justification; rather he said just the opposite—that he felt he had right views of Justification including his use of the expression “tentative justification.”

We might express the matter this way: as to what the Court represents to anyone, depends entirely upon where a person is in his experiences. To us, who are Christians, who have taken all the necessary steps of faith and obedience, the Court represents our Justification. We look back to our experiences and easily recognize in the Court those truths or teachings that we accepted and acted upon, the last one being the teaching of the Door —“present your bodies a living sacrifice.” But if anyone is in the way of approaching God, the Court represents those teachings which he must see and act upon if he is to finally experience Justification in the full sense of the word—JUSTIFICATION TO LIFE.