

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

*"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
he hour and the end!"*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)

The "Heart" of Justification

Editor's Preface

Many believe Paul's answer to the question of the Phillipian Jailer too simple, and incomplete. The terrified Jailer had asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul responded - "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31). The humanity of the Jailer, and the humanity of the Jews of Capernaum, evidence the same thinking. At Capernaum, Jesus was asked - "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28). And the answer Jesus gave was no different than Paul's decades later. He declared - "This is the work of God that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (v. 29). On the part of the sinner is the thinking that he must do something to gain the favor of God. From the viewpoint of God, it is the simple desire that the sinner place his faith only in Jesus Christ. When Jairus received word that his daughter had died before Jesus could get there, his heart sank; but Jesus assured him - "Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50). The clause, "she shall be made whole" is one word in the Greek text, σωθησεται, the future passive of σωζω, "I save." In this one experience is the whole of salvation. It comes from outside of man, provided by One who asks for but one thing, a living faith - the noun for the Greek verb, to believe. "Without faith it is impossible to please" God. (Heb. 11:6).

In this issue of *WMN*, this one topic - "justification by faith" prevails, plus some of the current thinking in Adventism, inasmuch as the controversy of 1888 still continues. We seem not to realize that the controversy over righteousness by faith began in the early Church with Paul's pronouncement - "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). This was the core teaching of the Reformation; this was the doctrine at which Rome hurled its anathemas at the Council of Trent. Yet strangely, today there are those in the ranks of Adventism who believe that the Roman "gospel" of Trent is the true Gospel. Why? Perhaps because of the "heart" of the problem.



The "Heart" of Justification

"God left him, to try him that [Hezekiah] might know *all* that was in his heart." (II Chronicles 32:31)

King Hezekiah ranks among the kings of Judah between David and Zedekiah as the most spiritual of them all. The record reads:

He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ... He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among the all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. (II Kings 18:3-6)

Soon after the annihilation of the Assyrian army by the angel of the Lord, he became grievously ill, and was informed by the prophet Isaiah that he should set his house in order as he would die. To this, he prayed and cried unto the Lord to be healed. Observe carefully his petition:

I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. (20:3).

His prayer was heard, and Isaiah returned with a message that his life would be lengthened fifteen years. He asked for a sign. Isaiah responded with a choice of two ways an astronomical sign could work. He chose, and it occurred. Babylonian astrologers took note, and a deputation came from the King of Babylon with letters and a present. (20:12). The Scripture reveals how Hezekiah responded to what the Lord had done for him, and why. - "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up" (II Chronicles 32:25). In his reception of the Babylonian ambassadors, the pride of his heart led to a display of self exaltation. What testimony was given these men? - the power of God to heal, or his personal wealth accumulated because of God's favor without God being mentioned as the Bestower? During the visit of these ambassadors, God stepped aside, and Hezekiah was on his own with his "perfect heart" as he had

prayed. God revealed to him "all that was in his heart" - pride. (I John 2:16). This revelation of man's "heart" is the key to the controversy which involves, justification, sanctification, and perfection.

In recent weeks, we received a packet of documents, as well as a cassette tape from a friend on the West Coast which involves several authors and differing view-points on justification. The cassette tape was a recording of a study given by Elder Dennis Priebe March 16, this year, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Mentone, California. He used some of the documents in the packet as the basis for his presentation. In his concluding observations he involved two others and their positions on justification by faith, one with which he concurred. It is our objective to analyze some of these documents and Elder Priebe's presentation.

The packet of documents included the following, as well as the cassette recording of Priebe's study captioned, "Protestant or Catholic?"

- 1) Two articles from the *Adventist Review* (Sept. 23, 1999 and June 22, 2000) by Clifford Goldstein.
- 2) An article from the *Adventist Review* (May 25, 2000) by Dr. Woodrow Whidden of Andrews University.
- 3) An essay on "Which View of Salvation is Correct?" by Dr. Erwin R. Gane.
- 4) A page of quotations from the Writings.

Gane's Position

We shall note first Dr. Gane's question and the answer he gave. He was Clifford Goldstein's predecessor as editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. The first thing evident is that there is a 180 degree difference in the theology of the two men. This is not saying that one is 100% correct, and the other equally as wrong. It does mean that there needs to be careful study and evaluation of where each stands in relationship to truth. Some positions of Gane are reflected in the position taken by Priebe. In the over-all picture, it should be noted that Gane connects his answer with the Doctrine of the Trinity as taught by Rome, which Rome in turn declares is the basis of "all the other teachings of the Church." (*Handbook of Today's Catholic*, p. 11)

Dr. Gane seeks to show that there is no difference between what he perceives Christ's teaching to be on justification, and what the Apostle Paul taught on the same subject. There should be none, if we understand justification correctly. Paul clearly declared that the Gospel he taught was received by him as a direct revelation by Jesus Christ. He wrote to the Galatians:

I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:11-12).

Gane perceives the night conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus as reflective of what Christ taught on justification and uses it as the basis for comparison between Jesus' teaching on salvation and what Paul taught. He wrote: "In His interview with Nicodemus, Jesus presented five principles of salvation." These are:

- 1) The Cross is central to our salvation.
- 2) The Cross makes forgiveness possible.
- 3) The Cross makes it possible for Christ's righteousness to be counted for the believer.
- 4) The Cross makes it possible for Christ's righteousness to be bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit.
- 5) The Cross makes it possible for Christ to give us the power to obey His law.

Is there anything wrong with these principles? Absolutely not. The Cross is made central as it should be. So likewise did Paul make it central in his teaching. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. (1:15:3)

What is the problem? Gane groups all five principles as the basis for, and explanation of justification. Jesus did not once use the term, justification, in talking to Nicodemus. He was trying to get Nicodemus to see "all" that was in his heart. He used terms - "water" and "the Spirit" - borrowed from Creation (Gen. 1:2). Unless man was willing to consent to become nothing, just clay once more in the Hands of the Potter, there was no hope. Why could this be demanded as the condition of salvation? Paul explained that He who was Somebody, "emptied Himself, . . . becoming obedient even unto death, yea the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7-8 ARV). He became "nothing" facing eternal annihilation by tasting the second death for every man, that those who would but accept could be justified.

Further, in choosing the wilderness experience of the uplifted serpent Jesus illustrated not only the death He would die, but also the simplicity of redemption. All bitten by the "fiery serpents" needed but to look to live (Num. 21:8-9).

Jesus did speak specifically about justification in a parable. In the parable He made a comparison involving a Pharisee, even as Nicodemus was, and the one justified, a sinner. He compared "two men [who] went up into the temple to pray" (Luke 18:10). The publican, who "would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," alone was "justified" (v. 14). The answer is the "heart" of the matter, and our willingness to recognize "all" that is in that "heart." Those who do so and plead for mercy only are justified. The "new birth", a new creation in Christ Jesus, follows.

Priebe vs. Goldstein

The first article by Clifford Goldstein in September, 1999 on "Testing Truths" had a test made up of six antithetical couplets by which the reader was suppose to be able to determine if he lined up with "the Protestant point of view" or "was inclined toward the teaching that Roman Catholicism embraced since the Council of Trent," the Tridentine Gospel. Though couplets, there were numbered 1 - 12. If one chose all the odd numbered, he was Protestant, but if the even numbered, he tended toward the Catholic teaching. It was the conclusions drawn by this test which were questioned by Elder Priebe in his presentation at Mentone. Priebe maintained that what Goldstein called Protestant was really Evangelical, and what Goldstein held as giving evidence of Roman Catholicism was in reality the true perception of justification.

Priebe insists that some form of righteousness must take place within a sinner before he is justified. He cites certain Scriptures and references from the Writings which would seem to verify his conclusion. To arrive at truth will require more than a mere surface analysis. As noted above, Jesus did not use the word "justified" in any of its forms in discussing with Nicodemus the "new birth." However, He did in the parable cited (Luke 18:14). The word used by Jesus in this parable, as translated by Luke, is *δεδικαιωμενος*, a perfect passive participle of the word, *δικαιωω*. Two facts are established by this word: 1) Being in the perfect tense, it indicates a completed

action, and 2) Being in the passive form, it indicates a state pronounced upon him, and not something done by him. The publican was a justified sinner, the transformation was to follow by growth in grace. Or as Luther put it - *simul justus et peccator*.

If we were to apply what James wrote, and which is cited in the actions of the Council of Trent, prior to the Canons on Justification (Chapter 10), Nicodemus was a justified man, and did not need to be justified. James wrote - "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (2:24). But Nicodemus was a Laodicean, as are also those pursuing this doctrinal position today, modern Pharisees. As I was rereading the preface chapters to the Canons on Justification as set down by the Council of Trent, I thought I was listening to the tape by Priebe. This is what I read:

If they were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified; seeing that, in the new birth, there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of (Christ's) passion, the grace whereby they are made just. (Chapter III).

Clearly the Catholic teaching is that one must be born again before he can be justified. In other words, justification follows the new birth. This, too, was the basic premise in Priebe's presentation. While he did not accept, the Catholic teaching on "how" the new birth imparts righteousness for justification, he merely modified the Tridentine gospel of Rome and labeled it the true gospel.

If we wish to know how Rome understood the Gospel proclaimed by the Reformers, all we need to do is consider the anathemas proclaimed at the Council of Trent against them. Canon XII reads:

If anyone saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema

The "Heart" of the Matter

The whole issue returns to the "heart" of the justification question, the core of man's nature because of sin. Well did Jeremiah write:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (17:9).

This was Hezekiah's problem. He actually believed that he walked before God "in truth and with a perfect heart" (II Kings 20:3). That was his intent, and God responded to his request, not because Hezekiah was so righteous, but for his enlightenment that, when left on his own, he might see his "heart" as it really was, "lifted up" with pride. (II Chron. 32: 25). We do not need our "ego" massaged, we need it crucified.

This was also the same problem which Nicodemus faced. He was a teacher in Israel, not a sinner in deed. He could with others of his fellow Pharisees evaluate Jesus, "We know that thou art a teacher (only a "teacher," not a Saviour) come from God" (John 3:2). He could not comprehend the necessity to return to the nothingness of the first creation, so God could start anew. He sensed no need to be justified, because by his works he was not as other men were, sinners.

This is Priebe's problem as well as the one he quoted so approvingly to climax his presentation. If justification follows the "new birth," all then that justification is, is God's vindication of a "born-again" man, and not a merciful pardon for a confessing sinner whereby his sins are remitted. If so understood, the publican prayed amiss, and "the Teacher come from God" taught amiss. Jesus came not "to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). Those who perceive of themselves as righteous, indeed need to be "born again" so that they can see themselves as they really are.

Well was the question asked - "What is justification by faith?" The answer is clear: "It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ" (Manuscript Release, Vol. 20, p. 117). To see that one in himself is "nothing" and admit it, is the most difficult of confessions to make in sincerity.

After one so recognizes himself, then regeneration can begin. "What is regeneration? It is revealing to man what is his own real nature, that in himself he is worthless" (*ibid*). Not only being "nothing," he is "worthless." Something has to give. His worthless ego must go so "the work of God" which he cannot do for himself, can not only begin, but continue.

We are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). Jesus Christ was not only the Lamb of God "which is

bearing away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, margin), but He "ever liveth to make intercession" for those who sense their constant worthlessness, and thus their dependency on a power they do not have to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. The "heart" of justification is our heart, so desperately wicked, we cannot clean it up. It is ours to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit in me" (Ps. 51:10). This is the "new birth," going back to "creation" so that God can begin again. However, we fail to notice the beginning words of this Psalm of David:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

This is justification, then follows a new creature in Christ Jesus, a new conception, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (I Peter 1:23). It is the same creative "word" that formed man in the beginning. Then having become as "new born babes" we should "desire the sincere milk of the word, that (we) may grow thereby" (II Peter 2:2).

We profess as Adventists to have the light and truth on the doctrine of the sanctuary. We may be able to find in every facet of the sanctuary which Moses was instructed to build some symbolic representation, and there are many to find. In so doing many have missed "the weightier matters" of the sanctuary, the service performed by the priests. Consider, what the text says when the individual sinner came confessing and bringing the prescribed offering:

1) And he shall lay his hand upon the head upon the head of the sin offering, and

2) He shall slay the sin offering. (Lev. 4:29)

Now follow through the balance of the reconciliation:

1) The priest shall take of the blood thereof with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering,

2) And [the priest] shall pour out all the blood thereof at the bottom of the altar.

3) And [the priest] shall take away all the fat thereof, . . . and shall burn it on the altar for a sweet savour unto the Lord;

4) And the priest shall make an atonement for him.

Then what?

It shall be forgiven him. (Lev. 4:30-31)

What did the sinner do? Confessed and presented *another* life in place of his own for sin. But who accomplished the at-one-ment? *Another* outside of himself.

Coming to the Day of Atonement and its cleansing ritual, the emphasis is clearly stated - "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when [the High Priest] goeth in to make an atonement for the [most] holy" (Lev. 16:17). Why? "For on that day shall [the high priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean of all your sins before the Lord" (16:30). One only could make the cleansing, and that one stood as a type of Him who "is able to save to the uttermost . . . seeing He ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25). Well did Job ask - "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" - and his answer, "Not one," emphatically states man's total inability of himself to accomplish the objective. But He who can justify a sinner, can also cleanse the sinner if his ego doesn't prevent him from seeing himself as he is, "that in himself he is worthless." We must become once again as worthless mud - clay - in the hands of the Master Potter so that He can form anew His image. (Isa. 64:8).

The Pauline Concept

We really do not need to concern ourselves with modifications made in Luther's teachings by Melancthon. We have access to the same writings of Paul they had. We know his certification to the Church in Galatia that the gospel he proclaimed was not of man but that he was taught it "by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:11-12). In his letter to the Church at Rome, he set forth the two basic elements of the Gospel - the incarnation and the resurrection (1:1, 3-4) - and declared that Gospel to be "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (1:16). Then in Romans 3, he wrote - "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (v. 28). This riled the religious leadership in his day (James 2:24), and has been a part of the controversy from that day to this. The aversion to righteousness by faith did not begin in 1888. It surfaced then, and is still continued by those who prefer a modified Tridentine Gospel from Rome.

In our analysis of the Pauline Gospel, we too often begin with his conclusion, and fail to note carefully his preface, except perhaps in a general way. The need to be justified hinges on the fact that "all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God" (3:23). This we can accept, but we have trouble with how bad we, as sinners, really are. When Paul set forth the premise that all are "under sin" (3:9), he defined what "under sin" meant by Scriptural quotations from the Old Testament. The texts used by Paul (3:10-18) can be summarized by two words: "nothingness" and "worthlessness". Only the imputation of the righteousness of Christ can meet the requirements of the Law. I have nothing and am nothing. It is by the grace of God, and His grace alone, that I am justified.

Is this where it ends? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" The answer, "God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (6:1-2). One has to die before he can live again. It is then that the "abounding grace" of God comes into play. Of this Paul wrote to Titus. After advising him of how he was to instruct the Cretian believer in their relationship to their neighbors, Paul states that the "kindness and love of God our Saviour" was manifested "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved (σωσεν) us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit - in order that (ἵνα) having been justified (δικαιωθέντες) by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (3:4-7) The KJV translates an aorist (past) participle as a present - "that being justified" - thus making it appear that the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" is the justification, when the "washing" and "renewing" is that which follows justification so that we may be made heirs to the hope of eternal life. God not only "imputes," but to him that is accounted righteous, He grants grace to live according to the imputation.

This is the same teaching that is reflected in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. There he wrote:

For by grace ye have been saved (σωσάμενοι) through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, let any man should boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (2:8-10)

Here the KJV translates a perfect passive participle, as a past participle - "are ye saved." God has provided; it

is His free gift. We receive it by faith, not by works. But God does not intend that we should continue in sin. The provision of grace also includes that "in Christ Jesus" we should "walk" in the works which He ordained from the beginning.

Jesus' Illustration

Jesus told a story about a "servant" who had been working hard all day. He asked a question as to whether when the servant came in from the field he would be told to sit down and eat. The answer Jesus gave was, No; but that rather he would be told to prepare supper for his master, and then he could eat. Jesus followed with another question: "Would the master than thank the servant because of his sacrifice and service?" The answer was again, "No," with this advice:

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:7-10).

Our worthlessness ("unprofitable servants") is but dimly perceived. The magnitude of the investment of God in man, leaves even our willing desire to serve and the result of that service - doing "that which was our duty to do" - as nothing. If an affluent man were asked to finance a business adventure and told that he would receive only a .01% return on his investment, he would ignore the request as insulting to his business judgment. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while were yet sinners (0%), Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Then He imputes the magnitude of that sacrifice to anyone who in sincerity prays - "God be merciful to me a sinner."

It would seem that we rarely read the preceding verses to Paul's dictum - "For by grace ye have been saved (σωσάμενοι) through faith" (Eph. 2:8 Gr.). It reads:

But God who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye have been saved [σωσάμενοι];) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (2:4-7).

Where then is boasting? "It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:27-28). "God forbid that I should boast (καυχασθαι) save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

The Man of Romans 7

During his presentation at Mentone, Elder Priebe charged that many ministers in Adventism were preaching a mixed gospel, a compromise between the "everlasting gospel" and the evangelical gospel. He cited, as one example of this compromise, the exegesis of Romans 7 as teaching that Paul was citing his own experience as an Apostle, rather than an unconverted Pharisee. There is no question, a correct understanding of whose experience Paul was describing, that of a converted, or an unconverted man, be it he or another is a vital factor in understanding the redemption that is "in Christ Jesus."

Let us take note of a few key statements so that we can perceive the setting of the whole defined experience. There is the "inward man." Of this inward man, Paul says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (7:22). In the very first Psalm, it declares that "Blessed in the man [whose] delight is in the law of the Lord" (vs. 1-2). "The ungodly are not so." They shall not stand in the judgment, nor in the congregation of the righteous. The ungodly shall perish. (vs. 4-6). This "man" of the Romans 7 is *not* an ungodly man!

But Paul perceived another law in his "members," working against the law which he had accepted in his mind. (Rom. 7:23). There is no question that the law in which he delights is God's law of the Ten Commandments. The context makes this very clear (7:7). However, the law in his members he calls, "the law of sin and death" (8:2). And the question asked contains the key word, "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from this *body* of death?" (7:24; margin) That which follows defines not only, "Who" but "when." The struggle is between the "mind" and the "body" of flesh (7:25). This struggle continues until "the redemption of our body" even in those who have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (8:23). There are concepts stated by Paul in Romans 8:18-23 to which little attention has been given but there is a relationship between them and the "man" of Romans 7 in which Paul is describing his own struggle.

If as maintained by those who proclaim the modified Tridentine Gospel of Rome, the description of the struggle in Romans 7 is the conflict of an unconverted man, then the conclusion is inescapable that a converted man no longer has the "body of this death" (7:25) with which to contend, but has obtained "holy flesh." But Jesus told Nicodemus plainly that if he could be born again in the flesh, it would still be flesh, meaning all that that flesh is (John 3:6). It must be birth by the Spirit, then "as new born babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Peter 2:2, ARV).

The whole problem is the "heart" - all that is in thine heart. The human ego resists the concept of its utter worthlessness, its total dependency. It is the Pharisee, whether in the temple of Christ's day, or in the pulpit of conservative Adventism today, who is thankful that he is not as other men are. It is the contrite sinner who pleads only for mercy that goes down to his house justified. God is not looking today for 144,000 filled with their own righteousness, but 144,000 sinners who will let God complete His work for them and in them.

#

At every advance step in our Christian experience, our repentance will deepen. We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone, and shall make the apostle's confession our own: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world was crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Acts of the Apostles, p. 561

++++

"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854, USA.

Editor, Publications & Research

Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

Regional Contacts:

Australia - P. O. Box 5023, Wodonga Plaza, VIC 3690

Canada - P. O. Box 117, Thorne, ON POH 2J0

The Caribbean - P. O. Box GM 537, Castries, St. Lucia

Any portion of the Thought Paper may be reproduced without further permission by adding the credit line - "Reprinted from WWN, Ozone, Arkansas, USA."

Current copy free upon request; previous and duplicate copies - 50c.

800-4-LAYMEN (800-452-9636)

FAX - (479) 292-3745; Regular Calls - (479) 292-3721