

Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works

Ivan T. Blazen

Is it possible to reconcile Paul's teachings of justification and judgment?

This study, comprising a series of articles, seeks to clarify the relationship between justification by faith alone, which brings assurance of salvation, and judgment according to works. Varied attempts have been made to resolve what was seen as a tension or contradiction between these two doctrines. Often these attempts have taken the form of minimizing or negating one or the other of these teachings. It is my contention that both are to be strongly maintained, for Scripture teaches both, and that there is an inner unity between them, like the unity that exists between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord.

Since so much of the discussion on justification and judgment is carried on with respect to the thought of the apostle Paul, my attention will be focused there. However, there is reference to other passages and to certain statements in the Spirit of Prophecy.

As a presupposition for the discussion, this study first considers the relation between reason and revelation. It continues by discussing in turn the occurrence and significance in Paul of (1) justification by faith apart from works and (2) judgment according to works. This leads us to an evaluation of various attempts to harmonize the two doctrines. Then we shall examine the relation between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord, between the gift of God and the claim of God. Our objective is to place the discussion of the relation between justification and judgment in a new key. The study concludes with an application of the discussion to Seventh-day Adventist teaching on the judgment and with a consideration of aspects of the judgment in the theology of John.

At the outset it is necessary, on the basis of Scripture, to deal with a fallacious way of

reasoning that mistreats the data of divine revelation. Such reasoning if unchallenged and allowed to stand would make impossible a Biblically balanced resolution to the relationship between justification and the judgment.

A text appropriate to this discussion, one germane to the thematic concerns of this study, is Romans 3:1-8. In this passage Paul is carrying on a debate with Judaism over the subject of the faithfulness of God. In Romans 1 and 2 Paul has shown that human beings have been unfaithful to God. All people alike, not only Gentiles but also Jews, many of whom have condemned the Gentiles, are sinners before God, under His judgment (chap. 2:2), and liable to His wrath. The question becomes—and it has special relevance with regard to the Jew, who was a recipient of the oracles of God (chap. 3:1, 2)—Does not human unfaithfulness cancel the faithfulness of God (verse 3)? That is to say, Does not human sin, and in particular Jewish sin, make of no effect the promises of God? Paul's answer to this is a resounding No! God is true, though every human being is false. He prevails when He is judged concerning His word and faithfulness (verse 4).

With this the question takes a new direction, an opposite twist. The question no longer concerns the maintenance of God's faithfulness—that is now presumed to be true—but the maintenance of human unfaithfulness. The issue now is not about man's judgment upon God, but about God's judgment upon man. If the divine faithfulness cannot be canceled, should not human unfaithfulness be canceled as something liable to the judgment? If God's faithfulness remains, even though every person has been unfaithful, then perhaps human unfaithfulness is not undesirable but desirable, in any case not really punishable, for such unfaithfulness only throws into bold relief the faithfulness of God. Would not God be unjust to inflict wrath upon (verse 5) or judge as a sinner one whose lie has caused God's truth to abound to His glory (verse 7)? In fact, is it not a commendable course to do wrong "that good may come" (verse 8)? * The "good" in such a case probably refers first to the favorable light in which human badness places God's goodness, and second to the good, or grace, that comes from God to

human beings who have sinned (see chaps. 5:20 and 6:1).

This kind of argumentation was designed, by those who employed it, to discredit Paul's doctrine of the justification of the ungodly by showing that it would lead to a perpetuation of, even an invitation to, sin rather than its demise.

Paul responds

Paul responds by saying that if the reasoning referred to of letting sinful humans off the hook were valid, "then how could God judge the world?" (chap. 3:6). By this question Paul negates the logic of his opponents, not by a discussion this will come in Romans 6 after Paul has fully developed his view of justification by faith (chaps. 3:21-4:25) and its consequences (chapter 5)—but by an appeal to a dogmatic datum of divine revelation—*God will judge the world*.

If this is true, as both he and his Jewish opponents believed, then no kind of reasoning that would minimize or do away with this judgment could be valid. Divine revelation supersedes ordinary human logic. (Note how the Jewish objection presented in chapter 3:5 is accompanied by Paul's comment: "I speak in a *human way*.")

Reason must function as the servant of revelation. It is revelation that enlightens reason, and thus it is reason's task to explicate revelation, not contradict it. Once the reality of the judgment is established on the basis of revelation, reason must operate to explain its significance, not to lessen or destroy its import.

Two elements emerge

Two elements inherent in Romans 3:1-8 emerge clearly. First, God is faithful, that is, He keeps His promises to human beings, even though they have broken their promises to Him (verses 1-4). Second, there is no excuse in God's faithfulness for human sin, no

encouragement to its continuance (verses 5-8). These two points may seem to be in tension with each other, but for Paul they exist in unity and must be said together. Paul will develop the first point in his teaching on God's justification of the ungodly by faith, and the second point in terms of his teaching on judgment according to works.

These two elements are pillars in Paul's theology. For Paul they stand together, each helping to explain the full significance of the other and to guard the other from misunderstandings and false deductions.

Justification by faith helps to guard the judgment from the false ideas that human beings never will be able to stand in God's judgment or that standing there self-goodness will place God's righteousness under obligation. In other words, justification contradicts the concept that humans cannot make it in the judgment or that they make it by themselves.

On the other hand, judgment according to works guards the doctrine of the justification of the *ungodly* from meaning the justification of *ungodliness*. If there is a judgment according to works, then justification must mean that the lives of the justified are claimed by Christ and that they are called to live for Him who died for them (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

When either of these pillars is weakened or removed by the desire for a quick, easy unity of thought, we end up, not with a half-truth, but with no truth. In terms of the actual data of Scripture, it is a fiction to believe that justification does not relate us to the rule of Christ as Lord or that the judgment does not relate us to the work of Christ as Saviour.

Paul became very angry with those who attempted in any way, either by thought or deed, to move either of these pillars. As we see from Galatians 1:8, 9 and Romans 3:8, those who advocated either position—working for justification or the justified not working—were alike condemned by Paul in strong language. If, as Hebrews says, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (chap. 10:31) one also *can* be sure that it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God's servant, the living and often livid Paul!

Since both justification by faith and judgment according to works are elements of divine

revelation, it belongs to Christian reason to accept both, to proclaim both, to interpret both, and to seek to correlate both. One teaching should not be made to yield to the other so that its inner essence and unique contribution are denied.

While only a brief suggestion can be made here, I would affirm that the need for and the unity between justification and the judgment are not to be sought in some formal, deductive logic, but are connected with salvation-history. To speak of justification and the judgment is to speak about realities that exist in the continuity of salvation-history.

Only in the framework of the unfolding drama of God's salvation, as revealed in Scripture, can justification and the judgment be rightly evaluated. Isolated from salvation-history and made the objects of logical debate, justification and the judgment may drift into collision with each other.

It belongs to Christian reason to assess the place and function that justification and judgment have in the revealed flow of God's redemptive plan. According to that plan, God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ, His Son, and offered justification, a right relation with Himself, to all who would place their faith in the crucified, risen Christ. Those whom God justified through Jesus Christ He called to witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed until the consummation of all things. When the end comes, the judgment assesses and testifies to the reality of justification evidenced by the faithful witness of God's people. In this flow, justification and the judgment do not stand in the relation of tension or contradiction, but in that of inauguration and consummation.

God's plan has run its full course when His people, the justified, stand before Him at the end of time with the fruit of their personal (ethical) and evangelistic labor in the power of the Spirit. To be without fruit is to be not a part of, but apart from, God's redemptive process in this world.

The point I am making about the relation between justification's and the judgment's being that of the relation between inauguration and consummation finds elements of support in

Philippians 1:5-11. Paul says that he is "thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel thus about you. . . , for you are all partakers with me of grace. . . . And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which came through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

I would affirm that the rubrics and content of our theology must be large enough to accommodate all the data of divine revelation. In this regard justification and judgment should be conceived as integral elements of the ongoing movement of salvation-history. Neither must be weakened or rejected. Both must be accepted and integrated. These pillars must stand together, supporting the edifice of God's redemptive purpose and activity.

Justification and Assurance

Summary of the previous article

An apparent tension stands between God's act in justifying us by faith and the idea that He will consider our works in judging us. To some the assurance of salvation falls a casualty of the second idea. In accepting the reality of the judgment as revealed of God, we conclude that it is revelation that enlightens reason; reason's task is to explicate revelation.

Paul stresses God's unbending faithfulness, but also the fact that His faithfulness offers no endorsement for human sin. Each of these truths guards the other from false deductions. Paul's discussion avoids theoretical logical positions, for he finds resolution in the saving ministry of Christ—EDITORS

Justification is by faith, apart from works. This is asserted so frequently by Paul that it is not necessary to give a catalog of texts. Galatians 2:16 alone makes the point several times. Two texts, however, are worth special mention because they supply the rationale and perspective from which Paul's many assertions are made. I refer to Galatians 2:21 and Romans 3:27.

On the basis of these texts, if Paul were asked how he knew that justification could not be by works, his first reply would not be, "Because the works of humans have been evil," though in fact Paul is capable of painting a very dark picture of the universal sinfulness of human actions, as he does in Romans 1:18-3:20. Rather, his primary reply would be given in the terms of Galatians 2:21.

Paul's logic in this text is Christological and runs like this: "If righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for nothing." -Implied: "But it is inconceivable that Christ died for nothing; He died to save. Therefore, righteousness cannot be by the law." In other words, righteousness cannot come by works of the law because revelation indicates and faith

confesses that righteousness comes from Christ.

The same basic point is registered in Romans 3:27. When Paul denies that works exclude boasting, this is not the argument we would expect, having read the story of mankind's evil works in Romans 1:18-3:20. But then Romans 3:21-26, which emphasizes the manifestation of God's grace and righteousness at the cross, comes before the question posed in verse 27. Paul answers that what ultimately excludes boasting is not the presence of evil deeds, but faith in Christ's atoning deed. The teaching that righteousness is not by works is therefore a Christological deduction.

Having made this observation, we may find it of some value to summarize some of the main elements in Paul's understanding of justification. Romans, with other related texts, supplies the best guide.

Over against the sordid specter of human unrighteousness described in chapters 1:18-3:20, with all mankind "under the power of sin" (chap. 3:9),* every mouth stopped, and the whole world guilty before the judgment bar of God (verse 19), the righteousness of God (His redemptive activity whereby He restores human beings to a right relation with Himself), which leads to salvation, is being revealed through the proclamation of the gospel (see chap. 1:16) and is effective for faith and *faith alone* (the significance of "from faith to faith" [verse 17, K.J.V.]).

What is announced in verses 16 and 17 is developed more fully in chapter 3:21-26. The righteousness of God that *is being* revealed, or offered, personally in the gospel (chap. 1:17) *was* revealed (chap. 3:21) historically in the blood sacrifice of Christ on the cross (verse 25). Human beings, all of whom have sinned and hence are short of God's glory (verse 23), are justified (put right with God, "rightified") by God's grace through the redemption (liberation or freedom from sin) effected by Christ's sacrifice (verses 24, 25) . This justifying activity of God creates a new "now" for believers (verse 21), which stands over against the old eon of sin and death (chap. 1:18-3:20).

The understanding of the nature of justification is clarified in other sections of Romans. Romans 5:16, 18 and 8:33, 34 are of help, for here justification is contrasted with condemnation (see 2 Corinthians 3:9) and the bringing of charges against God's elect. It is clear-God's justification of the sinner means that his condemnation is removed and all charges against him are dropped. This happens because God is "for us," not "against us," as evidenced by the fact that "he. . . did not spare his own Son but gave him up *for us* all" (Rom. 8:31, 32).

This significance for justification is in accord with what is revealed in Romans 4:1-8, probably the most important passage for understanding justification. Here, after showing what Abraham did not find, that is, a reason to boast before God because of justification by works (verse 2), Paul shows, by his usage of Genesis 15:6, what in fact Abraham did find, namely a *reckoning* of righteousness on the basis of faith.

What this reckoning involves is expanded in chapter 4:6-8 by the application of Rabbi Hillel's second principle of Biblical interpretation, *gezerah shawah* ("equivalency of expressions"). According to this principle, a word or phrase found in one text of Scripture may be explained by the meaning it bears in another Biblical text. Since the word *reckon* appears not only in Genesis 15:6 but also in Psalm 32:2, Paul, in good rabbinic fashion, but in harmony with the gospel, uses the latter text to illumine the former. When this is done, justification, or the reckoning of righteousness, comes to mean the forgiveness of sin or what amounts to the same thing, the covering of sin or its *nonreckoning* to the believer (with the latter idea see 2 Corinthians 5:19). Forgiveness, full and free-this is justification. The reality of it is so marvelous that the one who has experienced it is called "blessed," or happy (Rom. 4:7).

In Romans 5:9, 10, two verses parallel to each other, *justification* is coordinated with *reconciliation*. Both terms refer to the same reality and are made possible in the same way-through the death of Christ-and lead to the same result-final salvation. The synonymity between *justification* and *reconciliation* is also seen in 2 Corinthians 5: 18-21, where

reconciliation is tied together with the nonreckoning of sin, as in Romans 4:8, and with the righteousness of God. Interestingly, these concepts are in turn related to that of the new creation spoken of in 2 Corinthians 5:17. The idea of the new creation is also found in Romans 4:17, where God, who justifies, is described as one "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist."

Generally when the concept of the new creation is introduced, people think first in terms of sanctification, in the sense of moral growth. But, as we see from 2 Corinthians 5 and Romans 4, the new creation is most immediately related to justification and reconciliation. However, as 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15 shows, the purpose of Christ's reconciling death is that those who live as a result of it might live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again. The new creation involves no bifurcation between the new life granted and the new life lived.

There are other concepts and realities that shed light on justification. As Paul argues his case for justification in Galatians he comes to the place where he explains the new situation created by the justifying activity of God in terms of adoption or sonship (Gal. 4:5-7; see chap. 3:24-26). The meaning of justification comes to poignant expression in the exclamation in chapter 4:6, "Abba! Father!" ("My Father, my Father"). This exclamation is made possible by the Spirit of the *Son* flooding the heart of the believer.

Indeed, justification involves the reception of the Spirit, as is clear here and in Galatians 3:1-5, where, immediately after one of Paul's greatest arguments for *justification* by faith and not works of law (chap. 2:15-21), Paul asks whether the Galatians received "the *Spirit* by works of the law, or by hearing with faith." Without question, the reception of the Spirit belongs with the event of justification. In this connection 2 Corinthians 3 may again be noted. Not only is "ministration of righteousness" contrasted with "condemnation" (verse 9, K.J.V.) but "the ministration of the spirit [Spirit]" is contrasted with "the ministration of death" (verses 7, 8, K.J.V.). It is obvious that God's ministration of righteousness (referring here to

His justifying action) belongs with the presence of the Spirit. In Romans 5:5 the Christian's future hope of sharing the glory of God is based upon the present experience of the love of God, given through the Spirit. What that love is that the Spirit brings home to the believer is that while we were yet ungodly and helpless (verse 6), sinners (verse 8), and enemies (verse 10) "Christ died for us" (verse 8), and this made possible our justification (verse 9), or reconciliation (verse 10).

Assurance

In consequence of the reception of God's justification, with all the facets it contains and all the metaphors and realities associated with it (redemption, expiation, grace, reckoning, forgiveness, covering, reconciliation, creation, adoption, sonship, Spirit, freedom, life, peace, joy), the Christian has the confident hope of final salvation. This is spelled out fully in Romans 5.

This chapter is built on a how-much-more conceptuality. The specific phrase "much more" occurs three times (verses 9, 10, 17), but the idea suffuses the chapter. In short, for the first part of the chapter (verses 1-11), if believers have been justified now, how much more will they be saved finally and fully in the judgment at the end.

For the second part of the chapter (verses 12-21) the argument is that if the race through Adam has been affected with sin, unrighteousness, and death, how much more through Christ is it affected with grace, righteousness, and life. If Adam has brought ruin, how much more has Christ brought victory. With the appearance of the law on Sinai, sin only multiplied (verse 20) instead of being suppressed, as Judaism held. But where sin increased, grace superincreased "so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign in righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (verses 20, 21).

Thus, the order in Romans 5 leads from the reality of justification to the "how much more" of glorification (see verses 1, 2). Such a movement harmonizes with the progressing

chain of salvation mentioned in Romans 8:29, 30. Here once more justification is followed by glorification. And, as in Romans 5, suffering is the prelude to glory. According to Romans 8:17, 18, we are "fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." Furthermore, says Paul, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us." Sufferers are bidden to be confident that "in everything God works for good with those who love him" (verse 28). They are granted the assurance, derived from God's offering of His Son and the justification effected thereby (verses 32-34), that nothing in heaven or earth will be able to separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ their Lord (verses 35-39). Thus, the reality of justification involves the reality of complete and lasting assurance.

The righteousness that brings assurance of final salvation to the believer is based on faith. Paul's doctrine is righteousness by *faith*, not righteousness by *fate*. What Christ has done for humankind must be appropriated. God's righteousness, which is provided for all through Jesus Christ, is personally efficacious only by faith.

And what is the basic significance of faith? Though many of Paul's statements are valuable, perhaps no better answer can be found than that contained in Romans 4:19-21. From this text, which speaks of Abraham and his faith, the elements of true faith emerge clearly. According to Paul, notwithstanding Abraham's great age and the barrenness of Sarah's womb, "no distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God." In contrast to distrust, Abraham was "fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."

Rather than disbelieving as a result of the apparent hopelessness of the situation, Abraham believed that the word of God expressed in His promise was the ultimate reality for him, and this caused him to grow "strong in his faith." To use another Biblical writer's words, Abraham did "not live by bread alone," that is, by empirical reality, "but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

"Gave glory to God"

Finally, the whole faith event is summarized by, and finds its true direction and ultimate significance in, this, that Abraham "gave glory to God" (Rom. 4:20). In the strength of God's promise Abraham's faith grew strong *as he gave glory to God*. Such a glorification of God stands in stark contrast to, and reverses (1) the sinful reality of, the Gentiles who, according to Romans 1, refused to glorify God or be thankful to him (verse 21), but "worshiped and served the creature" (verse 25), and (2) the sinful reality of the Jews who, according to the implications of Romans 2, gloried in their own self-righteousness. Abraham's stance of faith, taken prior to his circumcision, creates the possibility of a new humanity and makes Abraham the father of both Gentiles and Jews who follow his example (chap. 4:9-12).

We see from Abraham, then, that faith accepts God as God and totally trusts in and depends upon His word. That word becomes, in the argument of Romans 4, the word of the gospel, which tells about Jesus. As Abraham's faith in God's promise was "reckoned to him as righteousness," so "it will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (verses 22, 24, 25). Faith becomes acceptance of and trust in the gospel. Faith also becomes confession of the gospel, as Romans 10:9, 10 makes clear: "Because, if you *confess* with your lips that Jesus is Lord and *believe* in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man *believes* with his heart and so is justified, and he *confesses* with his lips and so is saved."

In view of the direction the scriptural data gives to the meaning of faith, it is correct, but incomplete, to call faith, as some do, a passive receptacle. The value of this conception is that it emphasizes our receiving *God's accomplishment* and thus negates *self-accomplishment* as a means of justification.

After this truth has been acknowledged, however, the fuller picture should be painted, and

the *dynamic* element of faith should be stressed. Faith is a *reaction* to God's initial action and promise. Faith is divinely stimulated by hearing the word about Christ (verse 17), but it is to be exercised by the recipient of that word. That Abraham did not weaken in faith (chap. 4:19), that "no distrust made him waver," that "he gave glory to God" (verse 20), that he was fully convinced (verse 21), that the Christian is to confess Christ as the risen Lord (chap. 10:9)- these are all action ideas in which the energy of faith is underlined. In faith, people are directly and personally *involved* with the promise of God.

In fact, Paul understands faith so dynamically, that he can describe it as obedience, meaning surrender to God's word in the gospel. To heed the gospel's call for faith is to obey God. Such is the case in Romans 1:5 (cf. chap. 16:26), where Paul declares that the very purpose of his apostleship is to bring all nations to "the obedience of faith," meaning the obedience that is faith.

In other words, the purpose of the gospel commission is to lead all nations to believe in Christ. When they believe in Christ they are doing what God through the gospel wishes them to do. This thought is corroborated by Jesus' words in John 6. In response to the people's question "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" (verse 28), Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (verse 29). Further evidence that faith is obedience appears in Romans 10:3, where it says of the unbelieving Jews, "They did not submit to [obey] God's righteousness." The same is true of Romans 10:16, which again speaks of unbelieving Israel: "They have not all *obeyed* [heeded] the gospel; for Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has *believed* what he has heard from us?' " Romans 10 is the great faith chapter, and yet it speaks of Israel as not obeying the gospel. One may also compare Romans 11:23 with Romans 11:31, 32, the former text stressing unbelief, and the latter, disobedience. Also compare Romans 1:8 with Romans 15:18, the former emphasizing faith, and the latter, obedience.

The dynamic character of faith also is seen in 1Thessalonians 1:3, where Paul commends

the Thessalonians for their "*work of faith* and labor of love and steadfastness of hope." Faith, hope, and love are what God asks of man through the gospel. According to Galatians 5:6 what really matters to God is "faith working through love."

Does this make of faith a meritorious work? Not at all. Faith is made possible only through Christ, and it has significance only because it is directed toward Christ. Thus faith's possibility and efficacy is Christ. That is why salvation by faith means salvation by grace. Faith moves us to Christ and lays hold of grace.

Paul's total theology of faith may be summarized by saying that faith is surrender to the verdict, gift, and claim of God. Faith surrenders to God's verdict upon man: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). It surrenders to God's gift to man: "They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (verse 24). And it surrenders to God's claim upon man: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. . . . For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (chap. 14:8, 9).

Judgment and Assurance

Summary of the previous article

Paul's exposition of the plan of salvation rests on the premise that God is focus, not against us, evidenced by the fact that "he . . . did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32).^{*} Despite the evil deeds of humanity, His love reached out to justify us. The justification discussed in Romans 4 becomes the basis for the assurance of Romans 5. But Paul makes it abundantly clear he is not advocating righteousness by *fate*. It must be appropriated, becoming efficacious only by faith, a kind of faith manifested in Abraham, who wholly trusted in and depended on the word of God.

The passive side of faith protects us from the idea of self-accomplishment, but its dynamic side reminds us that faith also is a reaction to God's initial action. The dynamic character of faith, while in no way rendering it a meritorious work, emphasizes the truth that faith acts.-

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The apostle Paul strongly supported belief in a coming judgment. Let us look at his major passages.

2 Corinthians 5:9, 10: "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body."

Romans 14:10, 12. Here the theme that Christians must universally appear before the divine tribunal is stated and given a particular application. In the significant setting of Christ's death and resurrection to be *Lord* of the dead and the living (verse 9), Paul asks: "Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or. . .why do you despise your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (verse 10). Just as the ultimate fate of the Christian is affected by the judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10-those who are judged receive "good or evil"-

so also here.

The implication is obvious-being judgmental of others or despising them (or, as in Romans 14: 15, causing "the ruin of one for whom Christ died") will affect one's destiny in the judgment. This is a reassertion of Christ's teaching that with what judgment we judge we shall be judged. Instead of the believer judging and despising others, his attitude should be: "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself" (chap. 15:1-3). In any case, Paul instructs Christians not to entertain unfavorable judgments on others, because "each of us shall give account of himself to God" (chap. 14:12).

Romans 2:16. This text speaks of the day when, as Paul's gospel teaches, God will judge the secrets of human beings by Jesus Christ. And, as Romans 2:6-10 portrays, God will render to every person according to his works. There will be wrath and fury to those who do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness instead; and eternal life for those who, by patiently doing good, show that they seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Because this is true, one must not take refuge in merely hearing the law, for only "the doers of the law will be justified" (verse 13). While Romans 2 has as its purpose to show that the self-righteous Jew who criticizes the evils of the Gentiles and yet sins himself (verses 1-3, 21-24) cannot be justified by his works, the chapter still contains the actual standard of the judgment.

The *standard* of the judgment should not be confused, however, with the *method* by which the standard is reached. Paul spends the rest of Romans, from 3:21 on, explaining the method. His explanation, I would contend, encompasses not only the theological portion of the book (through chapter 11), where the indicative of God's saving grace is presented as the foundation of redemption, but also the ethical portion of the book, commencing with chapter 12, where the divine imperative, arising out of the redemption offered in the gospel, is presented. This is not to mix justification and sanctification, but to show that true justification always issues in sanctification.

New conformity to God

Only when the grace of God, which to the end continues as the basis for eternal life, leads to a new conformity to God (see chap. 12:1, 2) is the Christian prepared to stand in the judgment. The ethical portion of Romans is not extraneous or a mere appendage to the picture of the mercies of God in Romans 1-11. Grace always unfolds and interprets itself in a new way of life, and only this total movement is acceptable to God. We cannot doubt that the Christian will require the mercy of God to the end, but this mercy must always bear fruit. The life received from God is to be the life lived for God.

Among Seventh-day Adventists and by Seventh-day Adventists, the gospel message of Romans must be heard today in its entirety, both as indicative (the reality of God's gift) and imperative (the reality of God's claim). (Note again how Paul says in Romans 2:16 that his preaching of the gospel includes the message of the judgment.) Only in the living conjunction of gift and claim is the full potentiality realized of "being restored to a right relation with God" (see chap. 2:17).

1 Corinthians 3:13: "Each man's work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done." Later we will look at the function of this text in its context.

1 Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God."

Although Paul stresses "commendation" in the last part of the verse, it is clear that the disclosure of "things hidden in darkness" may, in the case of some people, bring the opposite result. It is not Paul's purpose here to spell this out, but it is a legitimate inference from his language. The reason for his emphasis upon commendation alone is a personal one. This commendation stands in contrast to Paul's concern in verse 3 that he should be judged by the

Corinthians or by any human court. He is not concerned about their commendation, but about *God's*.

The primary point of the verse, then, has to do with the ultimate vindication of Paul's apostolic ministry. However, the implications of the fact that God will "bring to light the things now hidden in darkness" extend more broadly. Manifestly, Paul has applied language belonging to a larger concept of the judgment to his own ministry (see Rom. 2:16).

Colossians 3:5, 6: "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. *On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*"

1 Thessalonians 4:6. In respect to his exhortations on sexual purity Paul says: ". . .that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, *as we solemnly forewarned you.*"

Galatians 5:21. The strong emphasis upon forewarning in 1 Thessalonians 4:6 is also made here. After another list of vices, Paul says: "I warn you [now], as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 6:9 is another text with a list of vices. Paul's manner of emphasis is instructive. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? *Do not be deceived.*" Surely you ought to know this, says Paul. But it is a matter, he admits, over which one could be deceived. He warns against such a deception.

Ephesians 5:5, 6 carries a similar warning on not being deceived. "*Be sure* of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. *Let no one deceive you with empty words*, for it is because of these things that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

Galatians 6:7, 8. Here, not being deceived is coupled with another thought. "Do not be deceived; *God is not mocked*, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will

from the Spirit reap eternal life."

This text makes an important contribution when it says that "God is not mocked." Surely it would be a mockery of God for a person to receive His acceptance and then refuse to live acceptably through His Spirit. A life lived deliberately by the flesh can never accord with the reality and intent of God's justifying grace.

Every Christian ought to ask himself whether his way of life mocks the God who has given him life. The accent in Galatians 6:7, 8 on being deceived and mocking God finds an outstanding parallel in Jeremiah 7:8-10: "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'-only to go on doing all these abominations?"

Romans 8:5-13 makes the same contrast between flesh and Spirit. Verse 13 says: "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."

Hebrews 2:1-3: "Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?"

Hebrews 10:26-31. What is briefly mentioned in Hebrews 2:1-3 is fully developed in this text from Hebrews 10. The text speaks for itself: "For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of

grace? For we know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Summary of main truths of judgment texts

While those who remain committed to Christ need have no fear of God's judgment or anxiety concerning salvation, three things, at least, are clear from these judgment passages. (What is said here will be clarified in later articles and set in relation to God's rich salvation.)

1. Christians, all those justified by faith, come into the judgment. 2. The judgment is made according to their works. 3. Two destinies are possible to those who have professed Christ: eternal life on the one hand, death on the other. In other words, people can be saved or lost as a result of this judgment.

No one *need* be lost-to prevent this is the reason for all the warnings in the judgment texts-but one *can* be lost if he is indifferent to God's word and will.

As the Biblical texts on grace do not allow for the false view "Never quite saved at all, no matter what Christ has done," so the judgment texts disallow the erroneous view "Once saved, always saved, no matter what I may do." Salvation is always a gift, but the gift does not remain when the Giver is rejected as Lord of our life.

A Tension Resolved: Justification grants assurance, but judgment guards it.

Summary of the previous article

Paul clearly was an advocate of the judgment. In virtually every epistle he returns to this theme, often when discussing kinds of sinful practices that will exclude people from eternal life.

We sell the apostle short if we fail to consider the impact of his total teachings. For example, by giving ear only to Romans 1-11, the theological section, and bypassing chapters 12-16, the ethical section, we understand clearly the indicative (the reality of God's gift), but overlook the imperative (the reality of God's claim). The sinner is saved from death by God's gift, but he is judged according to his deeds. Salvation is always a gift, but the gift does not remain when the Giver is rejected as the Lord of our life-EDITORS

Various attempts have been made to resolve the tension between justification and judgment.

1. Some people claim that the texts on judgment according to works are an appendage from Paul's Jewish past in which apocalyptic played an important role. The judgment texts, they would say, are a kind of apocalyptic hangover. They must therefore yield to Paul's view on justification.

According to this position, then, there is really only one, not two, foci to Paul's preaching. The judgment idea, therefore, is pronounced nonfunctional for Paul. This apocalyptic-rejectionistic view is completely unacceptable as an interpretation of Paul. It flies in the face of the *frequency* of Paul's judgment texts, the *stringency* of his thought, and the *centrality* of the judgment for his argument.

2. Some advocate what may be called the imperfectionistic view. They argue that since people can never be perfect because of indwelling sin, faith is the only operative principle in

the judgment, just as at the original bestowal of justification. For this reason the only real function of Biblical statements about judgment according to works is to cause people to flee to justification by faith, where the mercy needed may be found. Judgment according to works, then, is not really a future actuality except for the person outside of Christ. For the Christian, judgment according to works comes to mean according to Christ's works rather than the *Christian's* works.

This view contains a positive element when it stresses the primacy of righteousness by faith, but in an effort to gain easy harmony with justification, it does despite to the judgment texts. Clearly, the scriptural data indicate that the Christian's works-made possible through Jesus Christ, to be sure-are in view in this judgment and that forfeiture of eternal life can result if grace has not given birth to discipleship. Further, this view does not take seriously the fulfillment-of-the-law motif found in Paul's writings (Rom. 8:4; 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13, 14; 6:2). Where this motif occurs, it does not refer to imputation of the righteousness of the law but to the actualization of its righteousness in the life of the Christian through the power of the Spirit. We recognize that this fulfillment lacks the character of absolute perfection, but we affirm that God's will comes to concrete expression in the life of the Christian. Moreover, the imperfectionistic view misunderstands the imperative in Paul. It perceives the imperative as functioning only to speak of our *undoing* before God rather than-what it really is in Paul and elsewhere-of our *doing* the will of God.

Indeed, Scripture asks of us so much, so uncompromisingly, that it takes our breath away. However, it remains true that through the power of the Spirit (which came to believers together with God's justifying grace in the first place; compare Gal. 2:16, 21 with 3:1-3) believers may actually "walk in newness of life" now (Rom. 6:4).

Through Christ and like Christ, it can be said of the Christian that the life he lives he lives to God (see Rom. 6:11). The Biblical ethic not only leads a person back to justification but is the living fruit of justification. If we must continually flee back to the cross because of the

stringency of God's demand, it is also true that we must move into the world with the cross, as disciples of Christ who follow His way.

3. A third understanding may be called the partitionistic, or perfectionistic, view. (Let us distinguish at the outset between "perfection," which the Bible ever directs us to, and "perfectionism" which is the claim to have arrived.) According to this view, justification by faith refers to the beginning of Christian existence, and at the end we find judgment according to works. We are justified *initially* by faith but *finally* by the attainment through grace of the standard of perfection. According to this, there really is no need for mercy in the judgment because the believer has put away every imperfect deed.

The perfectionistic view has positive elements: It recognizes that God calls us to perfection, it takes discipleship seriously, and it points up God's purpose to fulfill the law in experience, not to destroy it.

However, this view has serious shortcomings. First, it leaves justification and faith behind, whereas Paul does not. For Paul, faith taking hold of the righteousness of God is the foundation of right relations with God in all time-past, present, and future. This is inherent in the phrase "from faith to faith" in Romans 1: 17 and is explicitly taught in Galatians 5:5, where it is through the Spirit, by faith, that we await "the hope of righteousness" (meaning the hoped-for righteousness). In other words, faith grasps the future righteousness of God as well as its present manifestation. According to Romans 5:1, 2, justification by faith leads us to glory.

Again, Paul, the very one who powerfully presents both justification by faith alone and judgment according to works, refused to claim perfection even at the possible close of his life, as we see in Philippians 3: 12-14. He knew that Christ had made him fully His own but that he had not yet made the infinite riches of Christ fully his own (chap. 3:12b).

Shallow understanding of perfection

Finally, this view has a shallow understanding of perfection. It does not seem to comprehend adequately the significance of the "more and more" of Paul's teaching. According to Paul, we may be pleasing God and loving one another, as God has taught, but we are not to be content with this, but to do so more and more (1 Thess. 4:1, 9, 10). The standard of perfection is always ahead of the Christian and can never be said to have been fully realized. This is so because the gift of Christ is so infinite that His claim must be infinite as well. As totally as He gives Himself for and to us, so He totally claims our lives for His service. To say that one is *on the way*, as Paul did (Phil. 3: 12-14), is one thing, but to say one *has arrived at perfection* is another. This position Paul rejects, even when he counsels us to "hold true to what we have attained" (verse 16, R.S.V.). Something has happened, but more is to come. Heaven itself has rightly been described as a ceaseless approaching to God.

4. Another view declares that the judgment only assesses ranks of blessedness for the redeemed but does not determine salvation or lostness. A caption in a recent religious periodical article calls attention to this view: "The cases of believers are not in jeopardy in the judgment for their representative has already sealed their justification." The following explanation and support is given in the text of the article:

"What about the texts that indicate Christians will be judged according to their works? Doesn't the Bible teach that believers will be held accountable for the way they lived? It is true that 'we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Cor. 5:10). But while the Bible says we shall be judged *according to our* works, it does not teach we shall be justified *on account of* our good works (Rom. 3:20). Believers will be recompensed at that time for the good they have done through God's grace (Eph. 6:8; Matt. 25:32-40). *Because we have already been justified in Christ this final reckoning will in no way jeopardize our acceptance with God.* George Ladd, in *A Theology of the New Testament*, explains it like this:

"The believer will be judged for his works. Our life will be laid bare before the divine scrutiny that each one may receive the proper recompense for the things done through the life of the body, in accordance with the things that he has done, whether that life record is good or bad. *This judgment is not "a declaration of doom, but an assessment of worth," involving not condemnation or acquittal, but rewards or loss on the basis of the worthfulness or worthlessness of the Christian's life.* The same principle of judgment is expounded in 1 Corinthians 3: 12-15. Paul is here speaking of the work of Christian leaders, but the principle is valid for all believers. The only foundation upon which anything permanent can be built is Jesus Christ. However, not all build alike. Some erect structures with gold, silver, or precious stones; others will build worthless houses of wood, hay, or stubble. . . . Their works, like wood, hay, and stubble, will be consumed in the flames of judgment so that nothing remains as a result of their life on earth. This does not mean loss of salvation: "he himself will be saved," but he will suffer loss of the "well done, good and faithful servant." Those who have built faithfully and effectively will be rewarded for their love and devotion. Paul does not indicate what the reward will be. The principle involved in this judgment is that while salvation is altogether of grace, the Christian is left in no doubt that he is regarded by God as fully answerable for the quality of his present life."*

The major problem with this view, aside from the fact that it seems to imply that there will be a kind of caste system in the kingdom to come, is that it is not in harmony with the clear import of the Biblical passages on the judgment. It omits consideration of the significance of all these texts. From the judgment statements it is clear that ultimate destiny indeed is determined in the judgment, and works (work stemming from faith, of course) do have a significant part to play in the determination.

Not only does this view, represented in the article quoted above, omit much of the Biblical evidence, but it also commits the error of misusing some of the passages it does cite. For example, Matthew 25:32-40 is summoned to support the contention, made only on the

positive side, that "believers will be recompensed. . . for the good they have done through God's grace." (What of the evil they have done apart from God's grace?)

Unless the assumption is that among the lost of this parable none had been believers, the parable teaches unequivocally that a mere profession of faith does not pass the judgment, but only doing the will of the Father in terms of deeds of mercy. Unless Christ told this parable to justify the Jewish nation and condemn all the Gentiles-and it seems rather to show that being a Jew, a professed believer, *without* deeds of kindness affords no advantage but only loss in comparison with "unbelieving" Gentiles who *do* the will of God-it clearly teaches the principle that "believers" may be lost when they do not represent the essential character of the kingdom.

Without "Well done" no one enters the kingdom

Also using Matthew 25, in this case verse 23, George Ladd says that "Well done, good and faithful servant" will not be said to those who, according to 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, have built poorly on the foundation of Christ. These persons will be saved, but they will lose the reward that salvation gives to those who have built well. Ladd misuses both the Matthean and the Corinthian passages. It must be noted that in Matthew 25:23, "'Well done'" is followed by, and is the presupposition for, "'Enter into the joy of your master'" (R.S.V.). This joy is not only one aspect of the kingdom reserved for some people (good builders) who enter the kingdom and not for others (poor builders) who also enter the kingdom. Rather, joy is a summary term for the kingdom as a whole. Without "Well done" *no one* enters the kingdom *at all* or participates in *any* of its joy.

As for 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, this passage is misunderstood if it is used to teach that no matter what a believer does in his personal life, he still will be saved at the end of time. The statement, "he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (R.S.V.), is not so much an overt promise as it is an implied warning. It challenges those in positions of leadership who

may be building the temple of God poorly because they encourage factions rather than unity in the church-this is the subject of 1 Corinthians 3, not the personal sins of each member of the congregation, as Ladd would have us believe. It challenges them to be careful, for in the fires of the divine judgment they will escape only "as through fire," that is, by "the skin of their teeth."

The picture is of one running through the burning edifice he has built to escape for his life. No responsible leader in the church could rest comfortably in view of such a conception as this. The intensity of Paul's thought and the fatefulness of the judgment come to climactic expression when Paul says in the verses immediately following 3:12-15 that the church constitutes the temple of God and that "if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him" (R.S.V.). No unconditional "he will be saved" here! Let all take heed. Poor builders will barely make it; destroyers will not make it at all.

The view that the judgment determines only ranks of blessedness fails because it conflicts with one of the pillars of Paul's thought. The actual meaning of Paul's statements on the judgment is circumvented because of a certain view of justification. Mere human logic is involved here, operating without all the data of Scripture.

5. In my opinion the view that best recommends itself by reason of the total data of Paul's thought is what might be termed the dynamic, salvation-historical view. This view contains the two poles, so prominent in Paul, of the "already" of salvation begun and the "not yet" of salvation completed. The "already" and "not yet" are operative both in God's salvation-history and in individual human experience as it is linked to that history. The essence of this view is that there is only one justification, and it accompanies the believer from the time of faith's inception (the "already") all the way into the final judgment, where its reality and vitality are tested and attested by its fruits (the "not yet").

The Bible teaches that justification belongs to "last things," for it brings the hoped-for verdict of acquittal in the last judgment into the present. Interestingly, however, according to

Scripture, last things themselves have a beginning and an end. The principle is "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6, R.S.V.). Therefore, the testimony of Scripture is contradicted when human logic concludes that since justification, a present reality through faith, belongs to last things, nothing further can be asked of the believer in the final judgment. Though the blessing of acquittal in the future judgment indeed become operative even now, Scripture is clear that what God desires to see in the final judgment is justified believers who through His grace have borne fruit to His glory (verses 9-11).

The new history God gives each believer is not over when he comes to Christ and is justified; it is just begun. At the end God asks for justification with its fruit-*not in the sense of the formula "Faith plus works saves,"* but in the sense that justification is the source of sanctified fruit.

In the final judgment Christ as Saviour and Lord can legitimately ask of those He has justified, "Have you, in the strength of My grace, been My disciple?" Reality should answer, "Yes!" This answer could not have been given when believers first came to Christ and received His justification. Discipleship can begin only when one meets Jesus, the justifier, but *it indeed* begins as the believer yields his entire future life to the sovereignty of God's already-present love.

From "already" to "not yet"

For Paul the consummation of God's plan arrives when justification, first objectively revealed at the cross and subjectively appropriated by faith, has run its course and manifested its complete intent through sanctification, and it arrives fully at the destination of eternal life. This is the order of salvation found in Romans 6:15-23 and summarized in verse 22: "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life" (R.S.V.).

The movement from justification to eternal life is a movement from "already" to "not yet." But for each reality itself, both justification and life, there is also an "already," and a "not yet." The righteousness of God has already been received; yet believers await for that hope (Gal. 5:5). What joins what *has been* and what *will be* is faith working by love (verse 6). Only when the faith of Christians has worked by love can the final verdict be "Righteous!" As for eternal life, it will one day be full possession (Rom. 5:21), but it is now experienced as anticipation. (See, for example, Rom. 6:4, "walk in newness of life" [R.S.V.] and 6:13, "as those that are alive from the dead" [K.J.V.]). Sanctification, or maturation of life in Christ, is a connecting link between life as anticipation and life as full possession.

In the "already"- "not yet" theology of Paul judgment according to works is a fulfillment of the "not yet" aspect of justification by faith. Grace, which accompanies the believer to the end, reaches its goal in goodness, and this the judgment finds certain. The saviorhood of Christ for us is fully manifested in His lordship over us. The judgment asks if this has become reality. To fail to take due account of the judgment according to works is, in a word, to discount the "not yet" element of Paul's theology of salvation.

What is being said here is that last events do not climax at the cross and faith's reception of it, but begin there. What happened at the cross and to those who accept the cross continues to unfold its significance and application through the continuing ministry of Jesus until the cross has achieved its ultimate victory and Christ is Lord of all.

Under the lordship of Christ

The judgment according to works teaches that the cross, as a saving event, puts us under the lordship, or reign, of Christ. To reject discipleship or to refuse to walk in sanctification, which, according to Romans 6, is inseparable from justification, is to reject Christ as both our Saviour and our Lord. Judgment according to works asks not simply about isolated works, but about the relation of the believer to Christ in the duality and unity of His saviorhood and

lordship.

If Paul had been asked to illustrate in a parable his teaching on justification and judgment, he might well have chosen the type of parable represented by the story of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:23-35). This parable represents very well what Paul in fact teaches. Like the unmerciful servant, sinners are called to account the first time by the king and forgiven an insurmountable debt. Justification operates in this way. However, when those who are forgiven, as the servant was, refuse to extend mercy to others, as the servant refused, they are called to account again by the king and sentenced to prison. The pardoned are now the penalized! This accords with Paul's teaching on judgment according to works.

If it is asked on the basis of this parable if works are the ultimate ground of salvation or damnation, the answer is "No!" The ground of salvation is the mercy of the king. The absence of merciful deeds on the part of the servant only confirmed that he had no conception of what mercy really was and that he had rejected it as an operative principle for the whole of life.

Mercy can never be only for oneself and guarded as a means of aggrandizement instead of an instrument of healing. Indeed, if God is king, our king, is it not clear that the character of His rule must characterize us? This is not to save ourselves by our works but to let God's works fully save us. We are not saved by our mercy, but God's salvation produces merciful people. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in "them" (Eph. 2:10, R.S.V.).

What is at stake in the parable is the gracious rule of the king. In testing us in terms of our mercy, what is proved is that the ultimate reality that defines and influences all things, including ourselves, is the mercy of God. That is why the final resolution of the Great Controversy is the universal testimony that God is love.

A final point in this parable that represents the spirit and thrust of Paul's thought resides in the paradoxical truth that mercy is for the merciful. Unlike Judaism's teaching that mercy would flee away in the final judgment and only justice would remain (see 2 Esdras 7:33),

Christ taught that God's mercy would be fully operative in the final judgment. But it would function only for those who had showed mercy in response to God's mercy.

Here the question arises: If one has shown mercy in this life, why does he need mercy in the judgment? In the light of Jesus Christ the answer can only be that while the character of Christ can be imitated and approximated, the infinite character of His goodness can never be equaled. Consequently, two things must remain true for the judgment: (1) the sanctified fruit of justification must be present, but (2) justification itself must continue its function of pardon. Grace is not in contradiction with fruit, nor fruit with grace. In the judgment the two elements coexist. "You have been *faithful* over a *little*; I will set you over much" (Matt. 25:23, R.S.V.).

The conclusion of our discussion about the question of assurance is to say that if justification *grants* assurance, judgment *guards* it. *It guards it from the illusion that assurance is possible without a fundamental relationship to Christ and a committed following of Christ.* Our works do not give us assurance, but the One whom we in grateful response follow in our works does. Thus the question of works and assurance is the question of Christ. The believer can always be assured of salvation if his answer to Christ is "Yes." There is no assurance in saying "No" to Him who first said "Yes" to us. Paul illustrates this point in his exposition in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. All was well with Israel-and will be well with the church, Israel's counterpart-as long as it followed the Rock, which was Christ. But when it desired evil it was destroyed by the destroyer.

The judgment upon spiritually privileged Israel proves that those who think they stand, those who are assured of their salvation apart from concern for the will of God, should take heed lest they fall (verse 12). But no one need fall, for God can always make a way of escape from temptation (verse 13). Therefore, believers have the security of sonship only as those who are tempted. The Biblical teaching on the judgment would remind us of this and give a proper foundation for true assurance-adherence to Christ.

Christ—Saviour and Lord:

Salvation comprises both God's gift and His claim upon our lives.

Summary of last week's article

One after another, students of the Bible have offered formulas designed to reconcile the teachings of justification by faith and of judgment according to works. Both are clearly taught, especially in Paul's writings.

Could the idea of a judgment be something left from Paul's Jewish upbringing, or is the threat of judgment to come a ploy on God's part to drive people to justification? Some believe justification begins the Christian experience, but by the time the judgment arrives the believer's life will be so in harmony with God's will that it can be found flawless. For others the judgment relates not to salvation or loss, but is really an assignment of rewards among God's people.

However, the most satisfying understanding centers on the two poles of Pauline doctrine: justification that already is ours, and the "not yet." The righteousness of God already has been received, yet in another way the believers await it in hope (Gal.5:5). The sustaining element as Christians wait is the assurance established on a sure foundation-adherence to Christ.-

EDITORS

We must now develop an element mentioned previously. The relationship between justification and judgment can be seen better by placing it in the setting of a discussion on the relation between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord, between the gift of God and the claim of God.

Jesus once said: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6).^{*} While the context is a discussion of marriage, the substance of His remark seems appropriate regarding salvation.

In the sphere of God's redeeming grace the gift of God and the claim of God are inseparably connected. The more we exalt His gift to us, the more we at the same time magnify His claim upon us. The more radically one perceives and receives the love of God, the more radically there is created a new ethic of love, a new life of discipleship and service.

One can no more easily separate God's gift and claim than he can divide Christ as Saviour from Christ as Lord. The confession that Christ is Saviour and Lord belongs to the very essence of New Testament Christianity. One cannot have Christ only as Saviour or only as Lord; Christ comes to us as both. There is the most intimate bond between the two realities.

The saviorhood of Christ is revealed in particular at the cross, where the love of Christ, already manifested during His earthly life, receives its climactic expression. But it is at the cross that His lordship also is revealed. His lordship is established precisely through His love. Christ's lordship is the rule of His love.

Many people are afraid of the idea of lordship. The concept seems to suggest to them the thought of a hard, oppressive, and perhaps arbitrary authority. But this is not the New Testament picture of Christ. Christ as Lord can be understood only in the light of Christ as Saviour. As Lord, Christ rules from the cross. The self-giving love of Christ revealed in His life and death is the very heart of His reign over us. There is no other principle in His crown than that manifested in His cross. To speak of His lordship is only to say that His sacrificial love is meant to prevail in all the earth. As Lord He claims our entire life for His love.

With the indivisibility of Christ as Saviour and Lord in mind we can readily see that there is an inner connection between what Christ gives to us and what He claims of us:

He comes to us in love-in the light and strength of it He asks that we be loving.

He comes to us in mercy-in the joy and power of it He asks that we be merciful.

He comes to us in forgiveness-He asks that we be forgiving.

He comes to us in kindness-He asks that we be kind.

He comes to us in gentleness-He asks that we be gentle.

He comes to us in sacrifice-He asks that we live sacrificially.

He comes to us as our servant-He asks that we serve others.

All that the Christian is to do is revealed in, and is the product of, what Christ has done for him. His gift is both the *content* of His claim and the *strength* to fulfill it.

There are a number of texts that ground what believers are to do in the gift, strength, and example of what Christ has done for them. For example:

John 13:34: "Love one another. . . as I have loved you."

Eph. 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (N.I.V.).

Eph. 4:32: "Forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Rom. 12:1: "I beseech you . . . by the mercies of God [God's sacrificial grace described in Romans 1-11], that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (K.J.V.).

Col. 2:6: "As you received the Lord Jesus, so walk in him." †

Gal. 5:25: "If we have gained life through the Spirit, let us live according to the Spirit." †

Rom. 14:8, 9: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

2 Cor. 5:14, 15: "For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

Rom. 14:15: "If your brother is being injured by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. Do not let what you eat cause the ruin of one for whom Christ died."

Rom. 15:2, 3: "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me.'"

Phil. 2:5-11 (Christ's humility and service) in relation to Phil. 2:1-4 (the church's call to

humility and service).

These texts and others like them make it clear that in Christ's act of self-giving our redemption was accomplished, but also that in this self-giving our discipleship was revealed. To see and accept what Christ has done for us is to know what He wishes to do through us.

To live in harmony with His claim, as a consequence of the reality of His gift, is not to save oneself by one's own works. It is rather to accept the Messiah truly and to have one's life shaped by His deliverance. Not to live in accord with His claim is to reject the Messiah and the kingdom He brings, the rule He establishes. How can Christ be *our king* if we are not *His servants*?

Complete assurance necessary

At this point let us consider a further word about assurance. Without complete assurance that God forgives and accepts us we cannot possibly live for Christ and in harmony with His claim. If we do not fully realize our acceptance we cannot be freed from preoccupation and anxiety over self to have sufficient interest and time to concentrate on others. Furthermore, without this personal assurance we will not have the insight or strength needed to accept others fully. How can I understand acceptance and really accept others if I do not know Christ's acceptance of me?

What we receive in Christ determines what we do for Christ. The gift of Christ can be passed on only when it has been experienced. 1John 1:1-3 is relevant in this regard: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, . . . and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life . . . [we] proclaim to you."

According to the New Testament, the event that secures our acquittal also secures our renewal. Forgiveness is linked with a new creation.

I remember a telephone call I received after preaching a sermon that dealt with forgiveness and new creation. The caller said, "During the first half of your sermon I thought,

Here we go again; just another sermon on forgiveness. But when you got to the second part, on being created anew, then you were preaching the gospel!" I appreciated the fact that someone would take the time to call me about the sermon, but somehow I felt that the main point had been lost.

What I was trying to say was that *renewal* is born of *forgiveness*. Without forgiveness renewal is not possible, and without renewal forgiveness is truncated, ineffective, misunderstood.

Ellen White grasped the matter well in two statements on forgiveness. Written from different perspectives, they are united in the vision they afford of what salvation in Christ includes:

"The religion of Christ *means more than the forgiveness of sin*; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. "-*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 419, 420. (Italics supplied.)

"But *forgiveness has a broader meaning* than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He 'will abundantly pardon,' He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:7-9. 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 5 1:10. 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. (Italics supplied.)

Relevant to the discussion of God's gift and claim is Paul's attitude toward, and argument against, two classes of people who falsified the gospel. Paul threatened judgment against both classes. The first class felt that their works of law could contribute to justification, and the second reasoned that the justified could or would continue in the works of sin.

The first class is described in the letter to the Galatians. They are those who would subtract from Christ by adding to Him their own works. According to Paul, justification by works in any sense spells the end of justification by grace in every sense. "If justification were through the law," argued Paul, "then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal. 2:21). The inference is plain: since Christ died for a redemptive purpose, those who would be justified by works of law are severed from Christ and fallen from grace (chap. 5:4). Against those who would alter the gospel of the sole sufficiency of Christ, Paul hurls an anathema (chap. 1:8, 9).

There is another group that comes under the ire of the apostle. They are those who claim that Paul's doctrine of the justification of the ungodly by faith apart from works of law leads only to continued life in sin. If grace superabounds where sin abounds, as Paul claims, then continued sinning is good-it gives God's grace a chance to work! This objection is reflected in Romans 6:1, 2, where Paul says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." Paul was especially sensitive to the objection. In Romans 3:8 he condemns such a view with utter seriousness: "And why not do evil that good may come?-as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just."

As Romans 6 shows, while Paul teaches the justification of *sinner*s, he does not teach the justification of *sinfulness*. Far from it, he shows that the Christian is united to Christ in His

death and risen life (verses 3-8). Therefore, just as Christ died to sin and henceforth lives for God (verse 10), so also does the person united to Christ through baptism.

Real forgiveness leads to freedom

It is difficult to see how such an objection as that referred to in Romans 6:1 could have arisen. Surely the consideration of God's radical goodness to us is the foundation of a new ethic and not its demise. Can we truly be forgiven and then go on hurting God and fellow humans all the more? Is it not true instead that real forgiveness leads to real freedom not only from the penalty of sin but also from its power?

It is clear and sad that behind the objection that grace spells sin rather than service stands one who by the very question he asks-"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"- shows that he has a wrong relation to the gospel. The objection envisions one who affirms his acceptance of grace but for whom grace is not the definitive power of his life, the power that defines and gives substance and shape to his entire life. Such a position places grace merely at the perimeters of life and makes Christianity to be the bearer of a legal fiction, namely the pardon of criminals who continue on in their criminality as the habitual pattern of life. (This was the charge against Paul's theology.)

This view is not merely the reduction of Christianity to the message of forgiveness alone, but it is the reduction of forgiveness to an act devoid of the creative element, devoid of the power of renewal. Forgiveness, which is the essential meaning of justification (see chap. 4:6-8), comes to mean only freedom from penalties, and not positive reconciliation and commitment to and service for God-a new orientation in life and a new life principle, in this view the gospel provides a way to extend life quantitatively in the eternal world, but not a way to live new lives qualitatively in the present world.

One who ascribes this kind of position to Paul or espouses it himself transposes the categories of sin and grace into personal experience in such a way as though sin were not

fundamentally conquered by grace in salvation-history, as Romans 5:12 and following verses asserts it was. According to this passage, sin, which came into the world by Adam, was so strong that even the revelation of God's holy law on Sinai could not stop it. The problem was not diminished but aggravated, and sin multiplied as transgression (verse 20). But what the law could not do, because it was weak through the flesh, God did through Jesus Christ (chap. 8:3). By His obedience, in contrast to Adam's disobedience, He won the victory over sin.

The Christian is called upon to participate in this salvation-history victory of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, not to create in his experience once again the conditions that made Christ's historical victory over sin a necessity. To allow sin to reign in experience that grace *may come* is, for Paul, to reject what God in His grace *has done* historically in Christ.

The person who utters this objection does not understand the sovereignty of grace either as making possible a new morality or as making it necessary. Grace is not seen as God's radical claim to the whole person of the believer. Something blocks the passage to this recognition, for one would think that he who is forgiven much would love much in return (see Luke 7:42, 47), that he would try to serve and please the injured party.

It is clear that, from the Pauline standpoint, we have here a cheap understanding of grace in which there is no call to discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is right when he says that "the only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ." -*The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 43.

As a matter of fact, in respect to the reality of discipleship, is it gift or claim when Christ says, as He did to Matthew, "Follow me"? Is this not both gift and claim in one? Is not Christ's call grace, and can this grace ever be received truly if we will not follow the Saviour? Similarly when Paul speaks of "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22), is he referring to a gift or a claim? Surely the fruit of the Spirit must be gift and claim in one.

In response to those who accuse or abuse God's grace, Paul protests in Romans 6:2 and 15 with a resounding "God forbid" (K.J.V.). This "God forbid" finds its full meaning in Romans

6 in the fact that just as Paul has shown in the previous chapters of Romans that God's righteousness spells grace and life for the believer, now he will show that God's grace spells out in the believer righteousness and a new kind of life. If human sin requires God's righteousness, God's righteousness also requires human obedience to our Lord, with whom we participate in death and resurrection. In contrast to the objector's "Let us continue in sin" (see verse 1), Paul says, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies" (verse 12).

Paul shows that it is precisely the person justified by grace, apart from works, who dies to sin so as to live for God. According to Romans 6:2: "How can we who died to sin still live in it?" This dying to sin is not a second stage after justification, but is a reality that coheres with justification itself.

What does Paul mean by dying to sin? He means, in brief, an exchange of lordships. Previously sin had been lord, and now Christ is. To have a new Lord is at once to be freed from the old lord (this is the gift) and to be enlisted in the continuing service of the new (this is the claim).

Far from this exchange being a static state of sinlessness, Paul contends that under the new lordship of Christ, the Christian wages war against sin (verses 12, 13), the old lord of his life. It is precisely because the shackles of sin are off that he is free to struggle, and because sin still continues to pose a challenge, it is necessary to struggle.

The risen Christ rules

The challenge in Romans 6:12 not to let sin reign means that freedom gained by the gift of Christ is the freedom to be used in the cause of Christ. Obeying Christ as Lord is a part of belonging to Christ as Saviour. The risen Christ rules from the cross over all who have been baptized into His death.

In a word, according to Romans 6, death to sin means freedom from sin's sovereignty so as to resist sin's solicitation. It is deliverance from sin as one's ruler so as to fight against sin

as one's enemy.

Regarding the judgment, the relevance of all that has been discussed in this section may be summarized as follows. By looking for works as the fruit of faith, the judgment testifies to the reality of salvation. The judgment according to works in relation to justification by faith gives expression to the wholeness and unity of salvation seen in the relation between Christ as Saviour and Christ as Lord, between the gift of God and the claim of God, between freedom from sin's authority and warfare against sin's appeal.

When one sees the nature of the connection existing between these relations, it can be said of the judgment as related to justification that it does not stand in the relation of antithesis or contradiction, but of complementarity and fulfillment. To reject the judgment according to works, then, would be to reject the totality of God's redemptive intention. The Christ of the cross never leaves a person where He found him. The Christ of the cross always says to the one He justifies, "Take up the cross, and follow me." The judgment tests and witnesses to this reality.

#

Pre-Advent Judgment and John's Judgment:

**As Saviour and Lord, Christ judged sin at the cross,
justifies the sinner by faith, and judges the justified by works.**

Summary of the previous article

By recognizing salvation as a gift from God, do we then abandon the idea that Christ is to rule as sovereign over us in this earthly life? To do so would distort Paul's intent, for when he stresses the first he by no means negates the second.

The saving act of God is at once a gift and a claim upon our lives. Jesus is both Saviour and Lord in dimensions that involve not only eternity but the present as well. In no sense is it an issue of grace with added works. Both stem from God as an indivisible unit. Forgiveness and renewal are complementary sides of one package. Dietrich Bonkeffer is right when he says that "the only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ." - *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 43.-EDITORS

Seventh-day Adventists believe the Bible teaches a process of judgment that takes place prior to the second advent of Christ. Traditionally this judgment has been known as the investigative judgment. What is the significance of this pre-Advent judgment? Does it stand in conflict with the scriptural teaching on justification by faith and judgment according to works? Does it take away the assurance of salvation that justification by faith brings? Critics of Adventism have said Yes. At times inadequate presentations of the investigative judgment may have suggested that such a "yes" was warranted.

It is my contention, however, that the investigative judgment, rightly understood, is in harmony with justification by faith and judgment according to works. It encompasses within itself the ingredients of these two fundamental teachings.

A correct understanding of the investigative judgment will not view it as an independent

event, something apart from the flow of salvation history, for that would make it another track of salvation. Such would be a grievous error. Rather, the investigative judgment can be properly understood only when it is seen in relation to the final judgment on the one hand and, on the other hand, Christ's judgment on sin at the cross leading to His justification of the sinner by faith.

Some have wished to say that in Ellen White's depiction of the investigative judgment in the book *The Great Controversy* (pp. 479-491) she misused the Bible, for she applies texts about the final judgment to the investigative judgment. Another and better interpretation is possible. Ellen White uses final judgment texts because in her thought and the thought of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, *the investigative judgment is an integral part of the final judgment.*

Two major considerations support this view. First, pioneer Seventh-day Adventists, including Ellen White, foresaw Christ's second advent as very soon. The ending of the investigative judgment and the appearance of the Saviour with His reward were on the horizon. In such a setting it was impossible to separate the investigative judgment from the final judgment, with its divine recompense, which would take place at the coming of Christ. In fact, the period of the investigative judgment was a time of special preparation to meet Christ and in peace pass the execution of His just decision. They believed in the most intimate continuity between the opening of the books and the rendering of the decision in the pre-Advent judgment and the execution of the decision, for good or ill, at the Advent judgment. It was all part of one symphony of the judgment, and the finale soon would be reached.

In the second place, the investigative judgment and the final judgment deal with a basic question common to both: Is the believer's life one of continuing faith, repentance, confession, and obedient service in love? These terms summarize the many expressions Ellen White uses in her *Great Controversy* chapter on the investigative judgment to describe what God expects in the life of those who have claimed His justification. They are the same in essence as those

in which Scripture represents the divine Judge as expecting of His people in the final judgment. The two judgments are really one, but the one judgment has two phases.

But there is one other element considered in the investigative judgment—a primary element—and it corresponds to the reality of God's manifestation of His righteousness at the cross (Rom. 3:21, 24, 25) and His justification of the sinner by faith (chap. 3:22, 25, 26).

According to Adventist thought, when the repentant sinner comes to Christ and confesses his faith in the Saviour's atoning sacrifice, pardon is registered next to his name in the heavenly books (*The Great Controversy*, p. 483). When the books are opened in the judgment this record of forgiveness can be seen. Plainly, the investigative judgment does not deal merely with the sins of mankind but with the forgiveness of Christ.

Consequently, when the whole package is put together, and justification by faith and future judgment according to works are seen as the content of the investigative judgment, it can be stated that there are two questions this judgment answers. First, has the sinner sought and received Christ's forgiveness of his sins? Second, has this forgiveness brought forth good fruit in his life?

To expand the combined content and effect of these two questions so fundamentally pertinent to the investigative judgment, the following questions may be asked in the form of direct address, detailing the concerns of this judgment toward believers. Has Christ been both your Saviour and your Lord? What have you done with the cross of Christ and the grace revealed therein? Have you affirmed the cross for the whole of your existence or for only part of it? When the crucified Christ came to you with His gift and claim, did you submit to Him and follow Him, taking up your cross, or did you go your own way—the same way you went before you met Him? Have you let your thoughts and actions be taken captive to Christ? Or have you—God forbid—separated yourself from His grace by denying with your life what you have professed with your lips? Has your freedom from the condemnation of God's law led you to a new faithfulness to that law in the strength of Christ's grace? Have Christ's love and

forgiveness to you become the basis of your forgiveness and love to others?

Only when the answer to such questions is a fundamental Yes can the final revelation of God's forgiveness and mercy be extended to believers, in accordance with Christ's words: "Forgive us our debts [in the future judgment] as we also have forgiven our debtors [in this world]" (Matt. 6: 12).*

If such an approach of God to man in the investigative judgment takes away assurance of salvation, as some have alleged, then the same must be true of the final judgment as well. One can hardly claim to hold to the Biblical view of the final judgment and then raise objection to the appearance of the same issues in the investigative judgment. One cannot fairly maintain that God's claim is not contrary to the believer's assurance in the final judgment, but that it is contrary to the believer's assurance in the investigative judgment. The only way this could be done is by viewing the final judgment in terms of a once-saved-always-saved theology. Such a theology and the automatic assurance it brings obviously would be contrary to the investigative judgment and the assurance it supports-assurance by continual adherence to Christ.

However, the Biblical passages on judgment, such as those adduced in this article, make it abundantly evident that the once-saved-always-saved theology is indefensible. If this is so, then the issue of the true nature of assurance arises with full force for everyone who confesses that believers "must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10).

If we say that the investigative judgment's call to perfection takes away the believer's assurance, then it must be replied that Scripture makes the same call. 1 Thessalonians 3:13 and 5:23 are sufficient to illustrate the point. But believers can rejoice that no matter how great the stringency of God's appeal, "He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). And, believers can "give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever" (Ps. 106:1).

The relationship of the investigative judgment to justification and the final judgment may be represented in its totality in this way. On the one hand, the investigative judgment ratifies and confirms the justification procured by Christ at the cross and received by believers through faith. On the other hand, the investigative judgment inaugurates the final judgment that is consummated when Christ returns, the second time and again after the millennium. The initial, phase of the final judgment exposes the true relation of believers to Christ, and the closing phase rewards believers in accordance with the true nature of their service for Christ.

Purpose of investigative judgment

When Seventh-day Adventists speak of an investigative judgment, it should not be understood as meaning that God seeks information He does not have. After all, God is the Author of the books which His judgment opens. The books stand not for new knowledge that God has yet to acquire but for old knowledge that God now will expose. So the purpose of the investigative judgment on God's part is not to discover reality but to unmask it, not to find out the truth but to reveal it.

As a result of this process of exposure and disclosure, the redeemed cry:

Great and wonderful are thy deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are thy ways,

O King of the ages!

Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord?

For thou alone art holy.

All nations shall come and worship thee,

for thy judgments have been revealed (Rev. 15:3, 4).

As Paul writes: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind

of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

It will be helpful now to turn to certain aspects of the apostle John's teaching on the judgment. His teaching has been used at times to make of little or no effect the general New Testament teaching on the judgment to come and the issues involved in that judgment. So what will be said here will be relevant both to the pre-Advent and Advent phases of the final judgment.

The fact is, according to John, that the cross is God's judgment on sin (John 12:31-33; 16:11) and that the judgment of the believer, as well as the unbeliever, is in the past. This depends upon acceptance or rejection of the light that Christ brings (chap. 3: 18-21)-and these truths should be gratefully acknowledged. They contribute significantly to the overall New Testament understanding of judgment.

However, these Johannine truths must not be allowed to override what Paul and the rest of the New Testament clearly teach, that is, that a day of judgment for the world is yet coming, and even believers will be called to account before the King. In other words, the pastness of the judgment in John should not be utilized to negate the futurity of the judgment elsewhere.

However, to speak this way is to speak too simply, for it is not the case that the judgment in John is only past and the judgment elsewhere is only future. Paul, for instance, teaches a past judgment as well as a future one. This is explicitly taught in Romans 8:3, where he says that God sent His Son and "condemned sin in the flesh." It also is the obvious implication of justification by faith. Justification by faith means that the verdict of the future judgment has moved into the present, initiating Christian existence (but without negating the future judgment according to works, as we saw earlier in this series).

John, on the other hand, can speak of a future judgment as well as a present one. According to John 12:48: "He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge;

the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." John 5:29 speaks of those who will be raised "to the resurrection of judgment." In 1John 4:17 we read about Christian "confidence for the day of judgment." We see that both Paul and John have an "already/not yet" theology. But in Paul's teaching the "not yet" of the judgment involves believers, and it can lead to a negative result if Christ has not been honored in the body. How is it with John? Do believers come into the future judgment, and especially one with the possibility of a negative result?

Some have answered this question by an emphatic "No," basing their answer particularly upon John 5:24 where Jesus says: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." While this text contains the wonderful news of an already-accomplished movement from death to eternal life on the part of those who hear and believe Jesus word, several considerations show that it would be wrong to use this text to teach that John thought believers have no relation to a future judgment.

1. The text does not necessarily say that believers do not come into judgment in any sense. The Greek noun for judgment here sometimes bears the meaning "condemnation" in John (chaps. 3:19; 5:29; see the same use of the Greek verb in 3:17, 18; compare Acts 13:27; Rom. 14:22; and 2 Thess. 2:12).

Since judgment is the opposite of eternal life in John 5:24, the text must be saying that the believer does not come into a judgment of condemnation, meaning a judgment which issues in condemnation. How does the believer avoid such a judgment? This brings up the second point.

2. What makes it possible for the believer to escape a judgment of condemnation and come into possession of eternal life is that he hears and believes Jesus word. The Greek words for hearing and believing are in the present tense, hence they refer to a continuous action and not a mere one-time hearing or believing.

It is by continually hearing and believing that one continually has eternal life and avoids the judgment of condemnation that comes upon those who have done evil (chap. 5:29). Deny the one reality (hearing and believing), and one necessarily denies the other (having eternal life and avoiding condemnation). After all, does not John 3:18 teach that he who *believes* in Christ is not condemned, but he who does *not believe* is condemned already? The presence of "already" in the second half of this verse does not restrict the meaning of this verse to the past. If a person stops believing-and John nowhere denies its possibility-the "already" becomes operative. John 3:36 is applicable: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey [believe in] the Son shall not see life." Unless John operates with a once-saved-always-saved mentality, cessation of belief must mean cessation of life. We see that *eternal* life is contingent upon *continual* belief.

When John 5:24 uses the present perfect tense to picture the transfer from death to life, this does not mean the text is talking about an irrevocable transfer that even unbelief could not alter. The believer, as a result of transfer, is in a *state of life* (the significance of the perfect tense of the Greek verb) only as long as he keeps on hearing and believing. The text indeed talks about permanence, but not a permanence separated from the permanence of faith.

In like manner, the fact that in John 10:28, 29 Christ's sheep shall never perish and no one shall snatch them from Christ's or the Father's hand is contingent upon their hearing the Shepherd's voice and following Him. Nothing suggests that this hearing and following are by necessity (preparing the way for the concept of the necessity or automatic permanency of eternal life) rather than by choice.

We are to abide in Christ

3. Other texts in John strongly support the fact that believers can be adversely judged. John 15 urges believers to abide in Christ and bear fruit. The branch that bears no fruit, the Father "takes away" (verse 2). Or in more dramatic form: "If a man does not abide in me, he is cast

forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (verse 6).

4. In John we find several tests for the presence of life:

- a. Believing in and confessing Christ (chaps. 2:22; 4:2, 3, 15; 5:9-13).
- b. Abiding in Christ (chap. 2:24, 25, 28).
- c. Keeping God's commandments (chaps. 2:3-5, 17; 3:21-24; 4:21; 5:2, 3).
- d. Walking as Christ walked (chap. 2:6).
- e. Doing the right and avoiding sin (chaps. 2:29; 3:6, 7, 10).
- f. Loving one another (chaps. 2:7-11; 3:1 1-17; 4:7, 8, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21; 5:2, 3).
- g. Not loving the world (chap. 2:15, 16).

These are tests of life because, according to John, by their presence or absence it is shown that a person has or does not have life. Notice, for example, 1 John 3: 14 (which may be compared with John 5:24): "We know that we have passed out of death unto life, because we love the brethren. *He who does not love abides in death.*" According to 1John 4:16, 17, "he who abides in love abides in God," hence has "confidence for the day of judgment." The implication seems obvious: He who does not abide in love can have no confidence for the day of judgment.

In light of the larger patterns of Johannine thought, as well as the more immediate exegetical particulars of John 5:24, we cannot conclude that for John there is no relationship of the believer to the future judgment. This conclusion is strengthened when one makes inquiry of John 5:28, 29, a passage that is related intimately to John 5:24. Are those who have done good here, hence are resurrected to eternal life, those who have only believed-doing good being *equivalent* to believing in John 5:24? Or are these they who have done good *in consequence* of believing, the inference being that if faith has not issued in good works, there is only a resurrection to judgment (condemnation)? Surely the second option is best. More than likely the kind of doing of good spoken of in John 5:29 refers, at least in part to loving

other people as in 1 John 3:14, a text which, like John 5:24, speaks of passing from death to life.

In conclusion

The main considerations of this series now have been presented. We need to be clear: Justification and assurance of salvation are not achieved by human works or by faith *plus* human works. Justification and assurance come only by the all-sufficient work of Jesus Christ as Saviour.

But Christ our Saviour also is our Lord. Only by beholding Him and seeing the inseparable connection between His saviourhood and lordship can we rightly explain the relationship between justification and judgment, faith and works. As Christ cannot be divided, so these realities that relate to Him cannot be separated from each other. Through the power of the Spirit faith always leads to fruit in the lives of the justified.

In His dual office as Saviour and Lord, Christ judged sin at the cross, justifies the sinner by faith, and judges the justified by works. The cross is the means by which justification is effected; faith is the means by which justification is accepted; and good works are the means by which justification is manifested. Works of righteousness testify to the reality and vitality of justification. Their absence indicates a broken relation with Jesus.

As Saviour, Christ obeyed God for our sake; as Lord, He summons us to obey God for His sake. As Saviour, Christ gave His life for us; as Lord, He bids us live for Him.

The more deeply one understands the riches of Christ's grace, the more He hears Christ's call to obedience. The believer heeds the call, however, not as stern obligation but as heartfelt appreciation. In the context of Christ's infinite love, obligation ceases to be hard duty and becomes the easy yoke of Christ. The apostle Paul captured the beautiful balance in God's salvation when he said:

"I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle.

. . .But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:9, 10).

As a result of your receiving the gift of God's justifying grace, Paul's words apply to you: "It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Phil. 1:9-11).