

ADOPTED "IN CHRIST"

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In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are tempted to partake of the forbidden fruit. At that time, the fate of the entire human race trembles in the balance, "in Adam." If he yields to the temptation, the human race comes under his condemnation and is lost. Adam *is* the human race! Whatever happens to him happens to all of us.

In the Garden of Gethsemane and on His cross, Christ wrestles with a fearful temptation. Satan reminds Him that His own nation has rejected Him, one of His own disciples has betrayed Him, another has denied Him with cursing, and all have forsaken Him. Why give His eternal life for such ungrateful people? Again, the fate of humanity trembles in the balance. *He* is now the human race. As with Adam, whatever happens to Him happens to the entire human race, to all of us. We read:

"It was here that the destiny of *a lost world* trembled in the balance. Should He refuse to drink the cup, the result would be eternal ruin to *the human race*. . . . I have thought of that cup trembling in the hands of Christ; as I have realized that He might have refused to drink, and left the *world* to perish."¹

"The awful moment had come—that moment which was to decide the destiny of *the world*. The fate of humanity trembled in the balance."²

¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 102, 103.

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 690.

If Christ had accepted that temptation and refused the cross, what would have been the result? Only one possible answer: the "world" would have been "lost," "*humanity*" would have "perished."

But Christ rejects the temptation. What then has been the result of His sacrifice? Only one possible answer: the reverse. The "world" and "the human race" have been "saved" from ruin.

If He renounces the cross, "*humanity*" as a corporate whole is "lost." If He makes the sacrifice, it follows that "*humanity*" as a corporate whole is "saved." *In that sense*, as He hangs on His cross, "*humanity*" or "the human race" is "in Him." He becomes "the last Adam," the new Head of "the human race," and all are now "in Him" by redemption as surely as they were by nature and by physical birth "in Adam." "With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race."³ "He hung on the cross, the sin-bearer of the race."⁴

This must mean that all that Christ accomplished in His person has been won for the corporate humanity for whom He died. *In this sense* it must include justification, sanctification, and glorification—all of which He realized in His person as our "Elder Brother," and second Adam.

But this does not mean that any individual is saved *eternally* against his personal choice or will. Our "redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24) has set us free to choose which way we want to go. We can resist and reject all that Christ has achieved for

³ *Ministry of Healing*, p. 90.

⁴ *Review and Herald*, June 12, 1900.

us and has given to us. But nonetheless, He *did* it and He *gave* it.

It follows that everything that Christ accomplished by His sacrifice is ours already in reality “in Christ,” and will become ours by practical experience *when it is grasped by our personal faith*.

As the second Adam, Christ is the “firstborn among many brethren.” To use a crude illustration, an inventor builds a prototype of the machine which he will manufacture in quantity. The new Cadillac was once a prototype which looked exactly like the many cars that will roll off the assembly line. Christ is the Prototype of a glorified humanity. All that happened to Him has become the inheritance of humanity, even as the infant child of a millionaire is already a millionaire, but will realize it only when he comes of age *unless he separates willfully from the family*.

Was Christ “perfected”? Hebrews 2:10 says yes. Was He “sanctified”? Verse 11 says yes. Was He “glorified”? A multitude of texts say yes (John 7:39; 11:4; 12:16, 23; 13:31, etc.). Therefore, in a corporate sense we too who believe are “perfected,” “sanctified,” and “glorified” *in Him* and will realize it if we choose not to separate from Him.

This is the intent of Hebrews 10:10: “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” And verse 14: “For by one offering He has perfected [past tense] forever those who are being sanctified.” And 13:12: “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” What He did, He did at the cross (also past

tense). The blood was shed *there* “once for all,” for all people. The root meaning of the word “sanctify” in the Greek is to set aside for a holy purpose, an objective act of God “in Christ.” But the word “sanctification” has acquired for us the meaning of character transformation, which is a subjective experience. But only as we behold and appreciate the Prototype can we become like Him in experience.

As the new Adam, the new Head of the human race, Christ has reversed all that the first Adam did. Whereas we suffer “condemnation” “in Adam,” now we enjoy the opposite “in Christ”—“justification.” Shocking as it may seem to our ears, the Bible describes Christ as “the Saviour *of the world*,” “the Saviour of *all men*” (John 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10). When this truth is understood and appreciated, a message can lighten the earth with glory, and a people are prepared for translation.

How is this accomplished? “The love (*agape*) of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves [meaning, they cannot, if they believe!], but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). This means an earth-shaking, cataclysmic spiritual reformation in the church—of a dimension that many unbelieving “saints” think is impossible.

Since this “in Christ” reality spells the end of Laodicean lukewarmness, it must be the message the world church at present is starving to understand—especially in North America. It is well

known that in the Third World church, as living standards rise, and as Third World Adventists migrate to North America, they quickly become as materialistic and worldly as North American Adventists. It is here that the temptations to lukewarmness and sensuality have become almost overmastering; thus it is here that the solution must be found.

(1) The only person who has ever been promised such assurance is Jesus Himself. Paul gives us this surprising insight: “To Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many [plural], but as of one [singular], ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). There is only one “elect” person: “Behold! My Servant [singular] whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!” (Isa. 42:1). Anybody else who inherits eternal life will do so only “in Him.” (Incidentally, even Abraham gets a blessing only through His “Seed, which is Christ”).

(2) The Father has adopted the human race “in Christ.” When John baptized Jesus and He heard that Voice from heaven say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” the Father was speaking to you me at the same time. He has “predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph. 1:5). “The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,’ embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. . . . ‘He hath made us accepted in the Beloved’ [Eph. 1:6]” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 113). The word “us” that appears some twelve times in Ephesians 1 therefore means

the entire human race! “We” are “blessed with all spiritual blessings,” “chosen in Him,” “predestined to adoption” in Him, “we have redemption through [in] His blood, the forgiveness of sins,” “in Him . . . we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to [His] purpose.”

(3) Since Christ is the “second Adam,” the new Head of the human race, you don’t have to do anything in order to be “accepted in the Beloved.” If you were born on planet earth, the promise applies to you; but as a member of “humanity” you do have to believe this Good News in order to *realize* the blessing!

We often hear that when we believe, God puts us “in Christ.” But the good news of the gospel is that God put all men “in Christ” by uniting the divinity of the Son of God with the fallen humanity of Adam. Thus sinful flesh (yours and mine) was corporately united in the divine nature of the Son of God. This is the miracle of the incarnation, “God with us,” which Paul sometimes refers to as “the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4).

With this in mind, we begin to see how God accomplished the justice that His law required. When Christ died on His cross, the human race died in Him, as Paul says: “If One died for all, then all died” (2 Cor. 5:14). The justice required by the law was satisfied, and the “righteousness of God” was revealed “by [the] faith of Jesus Christ” as the Greek text in Romans 3:22 is properly rendered in the King James Version. This faith which took our Redeemer to His cross is given as a gift to all who believe.

Paul is not redundant when he says in verse 22 that this righteousness is ‘to all and on all who believe.’ In other words, God’s revealed righteousness is given as a gift to all men, but it rests only upon those who believe. Righteousness resides in Christ, but Christ has been given to all men, namely the world (John 3:16).

Jews and Greeks (pagans) are both under sin (Rom. 2:9), and there is no difference between them because both are given the righteousness of God in Christ. How can this be? Remember, the gift of Christ has been given to the world, which means to “all men,” and in Him the righteousness of God is revealed.

Paul gives two principal reasons why the righteousness of God is given to both Jews and Greeks, thus explaining why “there is no difference.’ First, (they both) “all have sinned” and (they both) “fall short of

[God could only reveal His righteousness in the likeness of sinful flesh through the faith of Jesus!]

the glory of God.” The apostle is not being redundant here when he says, “all have sinned and [all] fall short [sinned].” Literally, all men sinned corporately in Adam’s original sin (the historical sense), which condemned the whole race of men (Rom. 5:12, 18), but in addition all men personally have fallen short (sinned) themselves.

Now the good news. The second principal reason the righteousness of God is given to all men is that not only have all sinned and fallen short themselves of the glory of God, but all (same subject, same sentence) are “being justified freely by His grace

through the redemption that is Christ Jesus” (3:24). This is a corporate justification of the whole race of men and is totally independent of man’s faith; it is totally a work of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:33). This justification was accomplished by uniting the fallen nature of Adam with the divine nature of the Son of God, who then took our humanity to the cross and tasted death for all men. The law was satisfied. The human race died “in Christ.’ By so doing, God redeemed and purchased all men from the curse of the law, in “Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5, 6). Yes, “Jesus paid it all and all to Him I owe.” But let us appreciate that this good news encompasses all men. Jesus ransomed all men and everyone owes everything to Him.

Paul is utterly explicit in describing in Romans 3:24 how God justifies all men corporately in Christ. This justification is done (a) freely, (b) by His grace, and (c) through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We seldom give a passing thought to the little-noticed adverb, “freely.” The word is translated from *doorean* which literally means “gratuitously.” A gratuity is a gift given without asking anything in return, even our faith, or something given without cause or justification. In a court of law, a gratuity is something given without receiving any return value.