



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

**A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)**  
**Lesson 7.2.2 – The Doctrine of the Way of Salvation (Soteriology)**

**Universal or Objective Justification**

As we saw in the last chapter<sup>1</sup>, the Bible clearly teaches universal justification, that is, that God has declared the whole world righteous because of the atoning death of Jesus Christ for the sin of the world. Because this truth is rejected by so many, we review this truth again as part of our study of justification.

In Paul's grand comparison between Adam and Jesus Christ, the word "all" is used: **"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life"** (Romans 5:18). This sentence is difficult to put into good English, and the above translation adds a few words to clarify the meaning. Literally it can be translated like this:

**As  
through one man's trespass  
to all persons  
condemnation**

**So also  
through one man's righteous act  
to all persons  
justification of life.**

The meaning is clear. Adam's sin brought about condemnation for all men. Christ's righteousness brought about acquittal or justification of life for all men. God says to each and every sinner: "I acquit you, I pronounce you not guilty, because Christ took your place. I forgive you your sins." The Judge carefully investigates the defendants and sees that their sins have been fully covered by Jesus. In church language this teaching is called universal justification. Another term that is sometimes used is objective justification. This means that justification for all is a true objective fact, whether or not it is accepted or believed. It is independent of any person's opinion. Forgiveness of sins has been won for all, and it is available and offered to all as a free gift.

Paul teaches the same truth in Romans 3:23-25. Notice again the word "all": **"All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth as a propitiation."** The word "all" applies not only to "sinned" but also to "justified". As many as have sinned, have been declared righteous by God because of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ that has redeemed the whole world.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is God's declaration to the whole world that the sins of all, which were laid on Christ in His suffering and death, have all been removed. Jesus, the Lamb of God, has succeeded in taking away the sin of the world. For God **"raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification"** (Romans 4:24-25). Jesus went to the cross and suffered and died because our offenses were laid on Him, and He rose from the dead because God has now declared us all righteous and forgiven on the basis of His sacrifice.

**"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them"** (2 Corinthians 5:19). The whole world of sinners has been reconciled to God. God does not impute the world's sins to the world, because He imputed those sins to Christ, and Christ paid the full price to

<sup>1</sup> see Lesson 6.7.2.6 – Universal Atonement and Universal Justification

atone for all of them. There is pardon for all, because, as Paul wrote: **“If One died for all, then all died”** (2 Corinthians 5:14). On the other hand, **“if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins”** (1 Corinthians 15:17). Since Christ did rise from the dead, our faith is not futile; we are not still in our sins. They have been fully paid for by Christ. There is forgiveness for all.

When the apostle Paul went on his missionary journeys, he proclaimed the true Gospel (Good News) of forgiveness of sins for all, justification for all. These are his words in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia at the close of his address: **“Let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins”** (Acts 13:38).

Consider carefully what God has done for us through the sacrifice of Christ. In earthly affairs a just judge condemns the guilty and acquits the innocent. Isaiah the prophet says: **“Woe to men...who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away justice from the righteous man!”** (Isaiah 5:22-23). Yet, miracle of miracles, what God condemns in earthly judges He Himself does! And it is a just act, for He has done it. On the cross of Calvary God condemned the Innocent (Jesus) and justified the wicked (all mankind), as Paul says in Romans 4:5: **“Him who justifies the ungodly.”** God justifies the ungodly because He condemned the Innocent. He acquits the sinner because He punished the Sinless. Jesus was our Substitute. This is the amazing truth of the Gospel. How else could we be saved?

One of our old Lutheran hymns puts it like this:

The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;  
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;  
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted, --  
God is committed. (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, #143:5)

## Questions

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1. How many persons were condemned because of Adam’s sin?
2. How many persons are declared righteous because of what Christ did?
3. Prove that universal justification is the teaching of the Bible.
4. What is meant by objective justification?
5. How did God announce to the world that all sins have been forgiven?
6. In what way is God’s forgiveness of sinners different from the way earthly judges make their judgments?