

**Study Aids**  
**Discussion Items**  
For “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson 145

In his book, **A Summary of Christian Doctrine**, Dr. Edward Koehler makes three statements about the role and function of faith in the act of justification: (1) The Gospel reveals and offers to men the forgiveness of sins; (2) The promise of forgiveness must be accepted by faith; and (3) Faith justifies the sinner. It is the third statement we will focus upon for the moment, which he amplifies as follows:

“...the reconciliation of the whole world by Christ and the forgiveness of sins of all men is an accomplished fact, which, in itself is not affected by the attitude of men (Rom. 3:3). This fact is proclaimed in the Gospel to every slave of sin; and the very moment that he applies this fact to himself, believing that for Christ’s sake also his sins are forgiven, he *has* the forgiveness of all his sins, is free from the guilt and punishment of sin, and is personally justified before God.

“This fact must be accepted in true faith, which pre-supposes a penitent heart, and consists in confidence and trust in this forgiveness. The function of faith in this matter is merely instrumental; it does not achieve forgiveness of sins; it does not earn it; it does not make us worthy of it; nor does it move God to forgive our sins. It is not a condition we must fulfill before forgiveness is available for us. On the part of God the forgiving takes place before we ever came to faith, yea, before we were born, because with God the forgiveness rests on the atonement of our sins through Christ. The forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of Christ are ready for all men, and are being freely offered to them in the Gospel. All things in the kingdom of heaven are now ready (Matt. 22:2-4). But if they are to benefit us, we must accept them; a promised gift can be accepted in no other way than by faith. The moment, therefore, our faith trusts in the promise of God, we apply and appropriate to ourselves what the promise offers, and God confirms the gift upon us personally. Thus it is that man is justified by faith (Rom. 3:28). ... The believer does not have to wait for the forgiveness of his sins; it is ready for him, and he *has* it the moment he takes it, and he keeps it as long as he holds it. He loses it as soon as the faith, by which he held it, ceases. Thus the function of faith in justification is that it takes and holds with a trusting heart what God offers in the Gospel.” (*Excerpted from A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Concordia Publishing Company, pages 147 – 149*).

Discuss the above. Do you agree, or disagree? Why, or why not? Support your position with appropriate Bible passages.