

God's Confessional Booth (1 John 1:6-9)

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A Christian was talking to a man one day who said to him, "I just came from confession." The Christian said, "That's interesting, I just came from confession as well." The man was intrigued and asked, "Where do you go for your confession?" The Christian said: "I go to the Heavenly Father." Of course, one man went to the Roman Catholic Priest while the other went to the great High Priest – Jesus Christ. Today there are some who feel it's necessary to confess their sins to an earthly priest, especially their mortal sins, so they might be granted forgiveness before God. Of course, the concept of confession of sin to a priest is nowhere taught in Scripture. It is simply one of man's dogmas.

A confessional booth is a small, enclosed area that is used for the Sacrament of Penance, often called confession, or Reconciliation. The Roman Catholic priest and penitent are in separate compartments and speak to each other through a grid or lattice. A crucifix is sometimes hung over the grille. The priest will usually sit in the middle and the penitents will enter the compartments to either side of him. It's here where confession takes place and where people claim to find forgiveness before God through the medium of an earthly priest and not suffer the consequences of their mortal sins.

This type of religious tradition is nothing but hocus-pocus, it lacks meaning and significance, since man cannot forgive our sins. It should not surprise us that only God can forgive sin! Even the scribes and Pharisees recognized this when questioning Jesus: "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). The point is this, Jesus is God and only He can forgive sins! No earthly priest acting in God's place and on God's behalf can actually forgive sin. How can a sinner forgive the sins of another sinner?

As New Covenant believers, we do not need mediators between us and God. We can go directly to the Heavenly Father because of Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Jesus opened the pathway to God for us (Rom. 5:2; Eph.

3:12; Heb. 4:16) so that we can confess our sins directly to the Father. No other person can be a mediator between God and man except Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:5

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

A Catholic man shared this:

“It was his intention that all sin be forgiven through the Church by confession of sins to the priests. It is clear that the ability to forgive and retain sin requires that each of us confess our sins to the priests of the Church, so that our sins can be forgiven or retained.”

Many people have a wrong view and understanding of confession. First, we certainly are not called upon to confess our sins before an earthly priest (1 John 1:9). Second, neither are we called upon to confess our sins to God in order to find legal, perfect, and saving forgiveness before His throne and presence (John 3:18).

We must remember what the Bible says about all of this. It is not confessing our sins that results in our legal forgiveness and acquittal before God but our belief (faith) in Christ alone. In order to be justified or be declared legally righteous and accepted in God’s presence forever, we do NOT confess our sins to God. Instead, we are called upon to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to find eternal forgiveness and acquittal and a standing of righteousness and acceptance before God.

Galatians 2:16 is God’s dogma!

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Justification is the legal declaration of one’s standing of forgiveness and righteousness before God. This is based upon believing or expressing faith in Christ. It’s complete forgiveness, total acquittal, and a standing of perfect righteousness before God that I receive only once and which lasts forever.

In order to possess legal and saving forgiveness before the Heavenly Father and throne of God, I must believe on Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31). But the forgiveness we are going to study about in this lesson relates to our Christian life (those who already know Christ as their Savior). When we sin in our Christian life, we do not confess our sins to God to REGAIN our legal forgiveness before Him, since we always possess this based upon His amazing grace (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). Instead, we confess our sins to God in our Christian life in order to RESTORE our fellowship and communion with God.

This study is called "God's Confessional Booth." It is taken from a specific text in 1 John 1:9. When we need to confess our sins within our Christian life, we must come to God's confessional booth. It is the only place that we can find forgiveness for our sins and restored fellowship with God.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The president of the Bible institute where I attended, John Miles, used to remind us of this verse before we got into our morning theology. Why? It's because it's a very important and practical part of how we stay connected to God in the Christian life. God is waiting with outstretched arms to forgive us and restore our relationship and walk with Him. This is a comforting truth that I need to claim in my own Christian life. God is always willing and ready to forgive! But it is our responsibility is to confess our sins.

Confession is necessary for cleansing and fellowship with God.

This is revealed to us by three different kinds of people.



I. The liars

1 John 1:6-7

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Here is the individual who is living a lie. They claim to have fellowship with God but are really walking according to their own sinful path. A person can say they have fellowship with God, but if they are walking in darkness, which is a metaphor for sin, then they are not walking in communion with the Lord. The old saying applies to them: “Liar, liar pants on fire!” Sin keeps us from having open communion and spiritual intimacy with the Lord. Sin breaks the close communion and contact the believer can share with God.

Here is the point. We can lie about our sin and in doing so lie about our walk and relationship with God. Abraham Lincoln used to say that if a man is going to be a liar, he had better have a good memory! This is because you must spend all of your time remembering your lies and covering them up.

The expression to have “fellowship one with another” in this context is talking about the fellowship between the individual believer and God. When we walk in the light (a metaphor for God’s holiness), we can have fellowship with Him, and in order to remain in fellowship with God, we must be cleansed of sin that invades our life. This is why John adds: “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Here is a reality check. We are not perfect. We are not sinless. Satan knows our Achilles heel or weak spots. Sometimes we fail the Lord and give in to Satan’s temptations. The world, flesh, and the devil are constantly trying to make inroads or advancements into our lives and sometimes they are successful. We end up sinning against God and failing Him.

This is why John said in 1 John 2:1:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

John advocates victory for the Christian life but at the same time he knows that Christians will sin when he states: “if any man sin.” The reality is that we do sin and need cleansing. As God’s people, we must use God’s confessional booth and confess our sins to Him, so that we might receive

forgiveness. The result is that our fellowship is restored. How wonderful it is to have fellowship with God! Have you been walking with God these days? Are you close to Him or do you have some specific sins that have made their way between you and God? We need to examine ourselves, confess our sin, so that we might experience this “fellowship one with another.”

“My God and I go in the field together;
We walk and talk as good friends should and do;
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with laughter;
My God and I walk through the meadow's hue.”

This is what we should want in our Christian lives today – cleanliness and communion before the Lord.

It is said that John Fletcher of Madely never met a Christian without saying, “Friend, do I meet you praying?” Though often startled by his salutation, they were reminded in an unusual way that life for the believer should actually be an unbroken experience of fellowship with God. If sin has broken that fellowship and sweet communion with God, then we need to confess our sins to Him and have our fellowship restored.

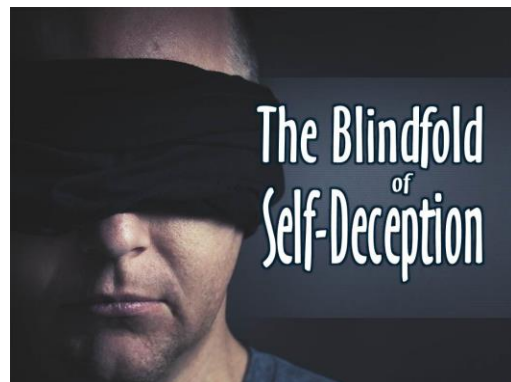
David confessed his sin in Psalm 51:10 by saying:
“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

In Psalm 51:12, he adds these words to his confession:
“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.”

We are called upon to confess our sins to God and not lie about our sinful condition and fellowship with God.

II. The deceivers

1 John 1:8
“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”



The Gnostics or false teachers of that day were really good at this. They claimed to be super, duper saints that had arrived and who no longer sinned. But Paul was bringing this down to our Christian life. He does not want us to live like the religious elite. Even a Christian can deceive themselves about their sinful condition before God. They can fool themselves and conclude that they have a right relationship with God, when all along there is sin in their life that needs to be confessed, so their fellowship with God can be restored.

Sometimes we must swallow our pride and go to God's confessional booth, confess our sins to Him, and get things right. In fact, we must do this many times in our Christian life and even on a daily basis. None of us can claim superiority over other Christians when it comes to our need to confess sins and maintain our communion and walk with God. None of us are super, duper saints. Let's stop fooling and deceiving ourselves. The old saying is true: "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time." We are all sinners – sinners saved by grace.

1 Corinthians 10:12 gives this warning:

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

We must stop pretending and thinking that we are above sin and failure, that we are a Christian that towers above others in relation to spirituality and victory, and a Christian who has little need for confession. Stop living in a fool's paradise! We do sin and are in need of daily confession. We have not yet arrived ("I count not myself to have apprehended" – Phil. 3:13).

At a nearby farmer's market called "The Green Dragon," I once met a man who claimed he had not sinned for an entire year. I was talking to him for a while and I finally said to him, "Sir, I'd like to talk to your wife!" We must stop deceiving ourselves about our sinfulness and need for forgiveness. Self-deception ("we deceive ourselves") and sin's deception ("the deceitfulness of sin" - Heb. 3:13) will keep us from true communion and fellowship with God.

III. The confessors

1 John 1:9

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”



Instead of being a liar or a deceiver, God wants us to be a confessor! If we don't confess our sins, then life will be spiritually empty for us and we won't experience fellowship with God. Don't lie about your sin and don't deceive yourself! Instead, learn to confess your sins before God if we want to be clean and close to God.

The Bible teaches that confession is necessary for cleansing and fellowship with God.

This is illustrated in four ways.

A. The responsibility of confession

“If we confess.” This means we are responsible to confess our sins to God. In order for us to walk day by day in fellowship with God we must take the initiative to confess our sins. If we do it, we can have our relationship restored with God, if we don't do it, we won't live close to God. We will sense that our life is empty and our relationship with the Lord is cut off.

We must understand that our salvation is not cut off every time we sin before God. The matter of our salvation is not based on an “if” but our fellowship and walk with God is based upon and “if.” This is talking about a Christian's responsibility and the desire to walk close to God in his daily Christian life. Sin robs us of fellowship and closeness to God. Therefore, it's our responsibility to make things right!

Sometimes pride gets in the way of our confession. We are too proud to admit we have sinned against God. All true confession means we are willing

to swallow our pride. By the way, pride is a sin that we need to confess before God.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer said:

“Forgiveness is always free. But that doesn't mean that confession is always easy. Sometimes it is hard. Incredibly hard. It is painful (sometimes literally) to admit our sins and entrust ourselves to God's care.”

At other times, fear gets in the way of confession. We fear that others will reject us if we confess our sins and get right with God. We also fear that God's won't accept and forgive us. Satan would have us believe this but this is not true as we will see in our continuing study. There are many barriers to confession, but the responsibility lies with us to do it!

We must come to God's confessional booth and keep our life right with God.

B. The meaning of confession

What does it mean to “confess our sins”? Well, to confess sins means much more than simply “admitting” that we have sinned before God. The word “confess” means to “say the same thing” about our sin that God says about it. It means to agree with what God says about our sin – that it is dirty, defiling, and detrimental to our lives.

William James said:

“For him who confesses, *shams* are over and *realities* have begun.”

Again, we sometimes need a reality check! We must come to grips that we have sinned and agree with God about it in confession. Why is it that Christians do not confess some particular sins? Why is it that Christians do not give up certain sins? It's because they do not agree with God about their sins! Again, the word “confess” means to agree with God about our particular sin. We agree that it is a sin and name the sin before God in our time of confession. But there are times when Christians are not willing to let God's holiness (“the light”) reveal their sin for what it really is. They do not want to call their sin what God calls it – dirty, rotten, and no good. They

don't want to agree with God that what they are doing is a sin. Instead, they would rather sanctify their sins. To them, some sins are acceptable. Certain sins in our society have become acceptable sins and it's easy to go along to get along.

In fact, today many are redefining what sin is and labeling it as something contemporary, relevant, and artistic. They sometimes hide behind their sins when misusing the words legalistic and liberty. People also invent excuses for their sins instead of seeing their sins as offending God's holy character. Instead of crying out as Isaiah did in Isaiah 6:5, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips," some Christians conclude, "I'm not so bad and God will accept me the way that I am." Christian friend, when we try and avoid our sins, by covering them up with the words "contemporary" or "relevant," we cannot prosper in our spiritual lives.

Proverbs 28:13

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Duncan Campbell said:

"Do not expect God to cover what you are not willing to uncover."

We cannot prosper or grow in our spiritual lives when we fail to face our sins and see them as something that is dirty, rotten, and which defiles our lives (James 1:27; Rev. 3:4). Walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and living on the heights of spiritual sensitivity is the most effective way to stifle sinful inclinations. We should never seek to cover up our sins and avoid them; instead, we should face them head on.

"I want a principle within
of watchful, godly fear,
a sensibility of sin,
a pain to feel it near.
I want the first approach to feel
of pride or wrong desire,
to catch the wandering of my will,
and quench the kindling fire."

A pilot said that as he was flying his small plane one day, he heard a noise which he recognized as the gnawing of a rat. Wondering what the rat's sharp teeth was cutting through, he suddenly realized with horror that it might be an electrical wire. Then he remembered that rodents can't survive at high altitudes. Immediately he began climbing until finally he had to put on his oxygen mask. Soon the gnawing sound ceased, and when he landed, he found the dead rat. The pilot's sensitivity toward a rodent may have saved the entire plane from crashing!

Dearly beloved, in a similar way, we must be spiritually sensitive to sin and God's holiness and allow His spotless purity to bring us to our knees in confession. Instead of covering up our sins and trying to flee from the light, we should follow the light or walk in the light of God's holiness (1 John 1:7). This means that whenever the light exposes our sins, we immediately confess them to God (1 John 1:9). The light of God's holiness will bring the skeletons out of the closet and do its sanctifying work in our hearts and lives. The light of God's purity will drive the skeletons out of the closet and bring us to God's confessional booth! This is why we must engage our lives in knowing God, His character and ways. Of course, this comes through reading and applying the Scripture to our hearts and lives (John 17:17).

The reason why many believers do not overcome certain sins in their lives is because they do not really confess their sins to God, they do not say the same thing about their sins, as God does, with the view of wanting to forsake them and do away with them. Some people use 1 John 1:9 as some type of spiritual rabbit's foot for good luck. They go ahead and sin over and over again, while saying, "Oh well, God will forgive me over and over again, and after I sin, I will confess my sin to Him again and again and again." This type or mentality is not true confession. When the holiness of God drives you to confession you will really confess and forsake your sins. The Bible says "but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13).

1 John 1:9 talks about "our sins" which mean they are personal and we must face them. They are also multifaceted and refer to all types of sins such as sins of thought, sins of act, secret sins, and public sins. We must drag all of them out into the open before God, call them by their names,

take sides with God against them, and forsake them. One thing is certain, all true confession involves the forsaking of sins! If we confess our sins, knowing that we are going to go right back and do them again, then our confession is phony! It's as phony as a three-dollar bill! Let's stop all of our half-baked and half-hearted confessions! We rend our hearts and not our garments (Joel 2:13) when it comes to confession. We need heartfelt conviction and confession.

A letter was sent to the IRS which read:

Gentlemen:

Enclosed you will find a check for \$150. I cheated on my income tax return last year and have not been able to sleep ever since. If I still have trouble sleeping I will send you the rest.

Sincerely, A Tax Payer

True confession involves the forsaking of sin! A counselor was trying to help a man who had come forward during an evangelistic meeting. "I'm a Christian," the man said, "but there's sin in my life, and I need help." The counselor showed him 1 John 1:9 and suggested that the man confess his sins to God. "O Father," the man began, "if we have done anything wrong" - "Just a minute!" the counselor interrupted. "Don't drag *me* into your sin! My brother, it's not 'if' or 'we'—*you'd* better get down to business with God!" The counselor was right. Confession is getting down to business with God! We name our sin and have the desire to forsake our sin. This is real confession.

C. The promise of confession

When we confess our sins, we must believe on the authority of God's Word and promise that He forgives us. What a promise! And if He forgives us, we must be willing to forgive ourselves! Many Christians live with guilt the rest of their lives for some of the sins they commit against God. They live with past regrets for the failures and sins of their lives. If God has forgiven you, then you ought to reach out and accept His forgiveness and forgive yourself. Don't live with a heavy heart the rest of your life. Don't live like there is still an iron weight on your shoulders. Accept God's forgiveness, receive it, and

bask in the sunshine of His loving, faithful, and merciful forgiveness. The promise is this: God will “forgive us” (1 John 1:9) and therefore restore our fellowship and walk with Himself.

The forgiveness John is speaking about here is a forgiveness related to God’s children (family forgiveness). He is not speaking about forensic (judicial or legal forgiveness) which means forgiveness from the penalty of sin. Legal forgiveness occurs only once and takes place when an unsaved sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1-2). It is called legal or judicial because it is granted by God acting as Judge. But what about all the sins Christians commit after their conversion? How does God deal with them? He forgives them on the basis of our judicial forgiveness that we already possess before God’s throne.

- As far as the penalty of sin is concerned, which is related to our salvation and justification before God (Rom. 3:24), the price has already been paid for all the sins we will commit in our Christian life, providing us with *forensic* (legal) forgiveness in God’s presence for every sin (past, present, future). This forgiveness is possible because Jesus Christ died upon the cross of Calvary.
- As far as fellowship in the family of God is concerned, God’s children (sinning saints) need *family* forgiveness, which is unrelated to our salvation and justification before God. This occurs when they confess their sins and are restored to fellowship and communion with the Heavenly Father.

We need *forensic* or judicial forgiveness only once for all of our past, present, and future sins (Eph. 1:7), and this forgiveness frees us from sin’s penalty forever (Gal. 3:13; Rom. 6:23). However, we need *family* forgiveness throughout our entire Christian life to continually maintain our fellowship and communion with the Lord (1 John 1:7-9).

The Bible says that God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” This is God’s response to our confession. If a Christian is going to stay in fellowship with God, he must remember that God is faithful and will always forgive his sins. Dearly beloved, let us never forget that “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9).

What a wonderful promise for us to claim as believers! God faithfully forgives our sins every time we come to His confessional booth. But how is God's faithfulness and justice related to His repeated acts of forgiveness? In short, God expresses that He is "faithful" (trustworthy in His dealings with the sinner) and "just" (righteous in His dealings with the sinner) as He looks upon the precious blood of Jesus Christ His Son.

1 John 1:7 once again says:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

John includes the last part of this verse regarding Christ's blood for the simple reason that Christians need the cleansing of Christ's blood to restore their fellowship with God when they sin. In order for us to be cleansed from daily defilement, we need the continual work of the cleansing blood of Christ to grant us restored fellowship with God. The word "cleanseth" (vs. 7) is in the present tense and connotes continuous action. The blood of Jesus "keeps on cleansing" us from all sin. The translation "all sin" can be understood as "sin of every kind" or "sin in its every form" We could describe them in more detail such as sexual and lustful sins, material or covetous sins, or the sins of pride, envy, jealousy, anger, swearing, gossip, etc. Sins of every kind and any kind are forgiven when we come to God's confessional booth.

John is teaching that the blood of Jesus Christ can continually cleanse us from sins that we commit in the Christian life because it's Christ blood that maintains our standing before God. In other words, based upon our standing of acquittal and justification before God in Heaven, which is unchanging and eternal, we can have our sins forgiven in relation to our Christian life and be restored to fellowship with God. Reflect on this for a few moments.

Romans 5:9 declares:

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The Bible teaches that we have been justified before God's presence through the blood of Jesus Christ. His cleansing blood provides the BASIS for our righteous standing and acquittal before God's presence. Through His blood all of our sins are forever washed away in the sight of God and we are judicially forgiven and saved from God's wrath (John 3:18; Rom. 8:1). In other words, God, as the Judge, sees us as being completely and forever pardoned of all our sins in His holy presence. The blood of Jesus Christ speaks for me! It writes me down as righteous where there was no righteousness.

“When the harvest has been gathered
And all my work is done,
When the last mile is traveled
And I've sung my final song.
When I'm called to give an answer
At Heaven's judgment seat
Then let the blood of Calvary speak for me.

May it write me down as righteous,
Where no righteousness has been.
Shielding me from wrath and judgment
As it covers all my sins.
There's no work that I've accomplished
Nor my goodness I would plead.
Just let the blood of Calvary speak for me.”

Romans 5:9 speaks of salvational forgiveness and acceptance before God's presence but 1 John 1:9 speaks of family forgiveness and our fellowship in God's presence which is based upon our legal record of forgiveness in Heaven. When John states that “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” he is reminding us that since the blood of Jesus Christ maintains our justified standing before God in Heaven, we can as believers receive repeated cleansing from sin and experience forgiveness in our Christian life on earth, in order to have our fellowship or communion restored with God.

We must remember that salvation and judicial cleansing is something that has taken place in the past and cannot be repeated. I am not justified over and over again before God. However, my fellowship needs to be restored to God over and over again. 1 John 1:9 is talking about family cleansing and maintaining our fellowship with God, which is based on the eternal and saving forgiveness we already possess before God. The cleansing of 1 John 1:7 and 9 is referring to the kind of cleansing that is needed and repeated many times in the Christian life for restored communion with God. We need the daily washing!

There are many advertisements about soap and which brand of soap is better. We are told that the superb brand of soap has qualities that none of the rest have in cleaning the skin. Well, one thing is certain, no soap will do you any good unless you apply it to your body. The same is true regarding the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ's blood is applied to your Christian life through confession. When we confess our sins, Christ's blood cleanses us from our sins and we are cleaned up and ready for fellowship with God once again.

The Biblical teaching is this. The Heavenly Father is always faithful and just in dealing with His children when they sin because He looks upon the blood of His Son as preserving our justified standing before God (Rom. 5:9). For this reason, the blood of Christ can be a continual and constant cleansing agent for my sins in the Christian life, so that I can have restored fellowship with God. Our pardon, peace, and perfect justification before God never changes (Heb. 7:25; Rom.5:1-2). However, our fellowship or communion and walk with the Lord does change and needs restoration (John 13:8), and this "forgiveness for fellowship" is based upon Christ's sacrificial blood on Calvary's cross.

Satan sometimes will come along and whisper in our ear, "You don't really think that God is going to forgive this sin again. Admit it, you are a loser, you might as well throw in the towel. Your sin is too great for God to forgive and you have sinned away God's grace and forgiveness." If you believe Satan, then you have been sold a bill of goods! The Bible says that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins based upon the unchanging sacrificial blood of Christ that maintains our forgiveness and justification before God. I'm

thankful that the blood of Jesus Christ speaks for me today! It preserves my standing before God (“preserved in Jesus Christ” – Jude 1) and therefore can repeatedly cleanse me of my sinful state in the Christian life. But we must confess our sins. We must admit that we have sinned against God and His holiness and confess our sins.

Someone said:

“The blood of Jesus cannot cleanse us from excuses!”

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from every sin that we commit in our Christian life. However, we must see our sin as sin. We must face our sins for what they really are before God’s holy presence. They are rotten and deplorable. We should never view our sins as mistakes, blunders, or errors. Let’s stop candy-coating sin! We should see our sins as serious offences in the eyes of a holy God (1 John 1:5; Hab. 1:13).

What a wonderful promise to claim today. When we truly confess our sins before God, He is always “faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Why? It’s because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all our sins once-and-for-all through the shedding of “the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:20). His blood gives me a perfect standing of righteousness before God. The blood will never lose its power!

“The blood that Jesus shed for me
Way back on Calvary.
The blood that gives me strength from day to day
It will never lose its power.”

Christ’s blood never loses its power because it continually maintains my standing of acquittal and forgiveness before God (Rom. 5:9). This occurs as Christ declares the value of His sacrifice before the throne, which in return allows each Christian who confesses their sins to receive cleansing, forgiveness, and restored fellowship with God. This is called the advocacy work of Jesus Christ. The presence of the risen Christ in Heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:8; 7:25) provides us with the assurance of our acceptance before God through His finished work on the cross. For this reason, God can faithfully (in a trustworthy manner) and justly (in a righteous manner)

restore a believer's fellowship with Himself. God can provide the believer with repeated cleansing, forgiveness, and regained fellowship in his Christian life based upon Christ's death as the sufficient payment for his sins.

1 John 2:1 reveals what happens when we sin in the Christian life:

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

An advocate is someone who argues for a cause or pleads on behalf of another person. Jesus is like a lawyer, mediator, and helper. When we place our faith in Christ the penalty related to our sins is paid in full and all of our sins are erased forever in God's sight (Eph. 1:7). So, what really takes place when we sin in our Christian life? When we sin as a Christian, we are not condemned to hell over and over again, since we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ, who pleads our case before the Father. Christ presents the value of His sacrificial death as the ground for casting out of court all of Satan's accusations that are hurled against us (Rev. 12:10).

Christ's continuing work as our advocate (a heavenly defense lawyer) reassures us that He is working on our behalf to preserve our standing and acceptance before God. This work is one of defense and is based upon the work He has already accomplished on Calvary (Heb. 10:10). The advocacy work of Christ does not repeatedly provide judicial forgiveness before God. This is provided only once (Rom. 4:3-8; 8:30; Gal. 3:24; Titus 3:7) through Christ's one-time death on the cross (Heb. 10:14). Christ's advocacy is not the sacrifice itself but a *reminder* of that sacrifice. What God said in Exodus 12:13 is still true: "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood of Jesus has turned away God's wrath from us, and on this basis, it provides us with the wonderful privilege to receive constant cleansing, forgiveness, and fellowship with God in our Christian life.

Romans 8:33-34 declares:

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Yes, God is faithful! He is faithful to the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus Christ. For this reason, He is faithful and just in dealing with His children by forgiving them and restoring their relationship to Him within their Christian life. The blood of Christ keeps the way of fellowship open for Christians when they break God's laws and need forgiveness and restored communion with Him. This is what the epistle of John is emphasizing – fellowship with God. Our fellowship with God can be restored because God is "faithful" (trustworthy, reliable, dependable) and "just" (perfectly righteous and upright) in His dealings with His children based upon Christ's sufficient payment for sin. Christ's blood can continually cleanse us (1 John 1:7) from the sins that defile our Christian lives and provide us with repeated cleansing and communion with Himself on the basis of Christ's finished work on Calvary's cross. When we confess our sins, the Father sees the blood, and we are repeatedly cleansed from all spiritual defilement, which results in our fellowship restored with God (1 John 2:1). However, we must confess our sins to receive this cleansing and restored fellowship with God (1 John 1:9).

We may sometimes come to God and wonder if He will forgive us again and again. Oh, my friend, God is faithful to His promise! God is faithful to the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. He sees the blood as paying the necessary penalty (Gal. 3:13) and ransom (1 Tim. 2:6) for us, and on this basis, God grants restored fellowship between Himself and the Christian. God is faithful! We are not as faithful, as we should be, but God is always faithful. If you do business with God, God will do business with you! In other words, if we confess our sins, then God will forgive our sins and restore our fellowship with Him. God is waiting for you to return to the place of fellowship with Him. The open arms of a loving God are waiting to greet you! He is waiting for you to make the move. Confess your sin to Him.

"He was there all the time
He was there all the time
Waiting patiently in line
He was there all the time."

God is there for you. As the Father looks upon the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, He faithfully restores us to a right relationship with Himself. Because

of the blood of Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness in the family of God! God brings us back into a joyous fellowship and restored communion with Him and it's all because He is faithful to the blood of Jesus Christ.



At this point, we must raise a question. What about those sins we commit without having the knowledge that they are sins? What about those sins we commit without really knowing we are committing them? Can we sin without knowing it and still have fellowship with God? For instance, there are sins of *ignorance* (Leviticus 4:2; Numbers 15:28) and sins of *omission* (James 4:17). There are specific sins that we can commit because of our lack of knowledge and growth in the Christian life. Can such a person as this have fellowship with God? Can a young Christian who is still discovering about many of his sins and who might overlook a sin out of ignorance and omission have fellowship with God? The answer is simple. Yes! This is because the blood of Jesus, God's Son, keeps cleansing us from "all sin" (1 John 1:7) which refers to sin of every kind and sin in every form. This would include even our sins of ignorance and omission.

Naturally only God knows at any moment the full extent of a person's unrighteousness. Each Christian, however, is responsible to confess or acknowledge whatever the light of God's holiness makes him aware of (1 John 1:7), and when he does so, a complete and perfect cleansing is granted him. This means there is no need to agonize over sins of which a person might be unaware. God does not want us to live like this. The blood of Jesus Christ also avails for sins of ignorance and omission - those specific sins we are not aware of in our Christian life.

In our own personal Christian lives, we confess specific sins that we know we have committed against God, which are sins of *commission* (Numbers 15:30). However, it's not wrong to practice a general confession of sins by acknowledging our own sins of ignorance and omission as we lay ourselves bare before God's omniscience and holiness. This is one way to demonstrate our sincere desire to keep learning more about God's ways

and walking in the light. It reveals our love for God, a desire to please Him in every way, and deepen our fellowship with Him.

We should pause and give thanks today for the blood of Jesus Christ that grants daily forgiveness and renewal with God. First John 1:7 and 9 declare that God is faithful and ready to cleanse your life from every sinful act of unrighteousness. Because of Christ's blood, God faithfully forgives us and cleanses our life. You might think that God won't forgive and cleanse you again. But you are wrong. The devil has put this idea in your head. God is forever faithful in granting our forgiveness, cleansing, and restoring our fellowship with Him on the basis of His Son's blood.

God does not look at your sin; He looks at Christ's blood when you come to Him to receive forgiveness and restored fellowship. God does not look at the number of times you have sinned or broken His law. God looks at the blood and restores your fellowship with Himself. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ, we can have our sins continually forgiven and receive constant cleansing for every sin that we commit and repeatedly commit in the Christian life.

Andrew Murray wrote:

"Of all the glorious things that the blood means, this is one of the most glorious: His blood is the sign, the measure, yes, the impartation of His love."

Christian friend, God loves us and wants our fellowship and communion. Fellowship is closeness - a friendship. This is what we are to experience with God on a daily basis. Because God loves us, He forgives us in our Christian life on the basis of the greatest display of love ever known to mankind, which is the shedding of Christ's blood. Christ's blood not only saves us from God's wrath, but it restores us to God's fellowship in our Christian life.

D. The result of confession

The result of confession is simple. God cleans us up! When we confess our sins, God provides us with cleansing for the Bible states that He will "cleanse us from all unrighteousness" or every unjust, wrong, violation that

we commit against God's holy nature (1 John 1:7). This cleansing is a beautiful way to speak of forgiveness. Whiter than snow!

Isaiah 1:18

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."



The Bible says that God needs to cleanse us and restores our relationship with Him. This is because our sins not only make us guilty but they also make us unclean and in need of cleansing "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1). David declared, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Psalm 51:7).

James 1:27 declares:

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

When we sin, we become spiritually soiled. I remember when I had to replace my old, oil-burner, water heater. We were carrying the water heater up the steps from the basement and some oil came out of the motor and soiled my pants. My wife needed to wash them separately. Well, in a similar way, sin makes us spiritually defiled and dirty and in need of spiritual cleansing (forgiveness). If we meet the condition (confession) God will keep His promise (cleansing).

In John 13:8-9, Jesus spoke to Peter, and referred to the need for spiritual cleansing in the life of the believer: "Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." In washing Peter's feet, Jesus was teaching him a very

important and practical lesson. We get dirty feet in this world. We sin in our Christian life and need cleansing or forgiveness. We need this same washing today that Christ portrayed when washing Peter's feet. The Lord must cleanse us from spiritual defilement so we might walk in fellowship with Him and be used by Him.

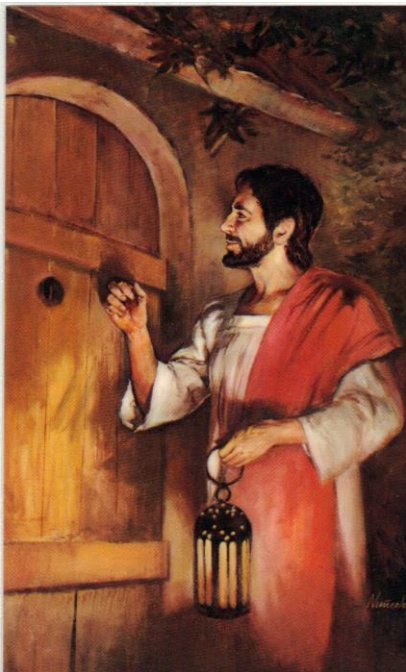
Cleansing in the Christian life is family forgiveness. It's a family matter. Dear Christian friend - come home! Come home and receive the family forgiveness and cleansing that God is offering you today and restore your walk and fellowship with the Lord. God is a great forgiver. He has a big eraser! He longs to forgive you so He can fellowship and commune with you today.

Jim Elliot wrote of his fellowship with God when he said:

"To stand by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him."

Revelation 3:20 portrays how Christ longs for our fellowship:

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."



Beloved, you are not waiting for God; God is waiting for you! This well-known picture is used to teach how God wants to fellowship with the wayward believers in this local church (Rev. 3:19). The concept of a guest entering a home and finding fellowship with the people of that home is clearly portrayed in this word picture. Christ wants to establish a relationship with His children who have strayed from Him. He wants to redevelop His communion with them. God wants to enter into a relationship with them once again, where He can sit down at the table of fellowship. But you must open

the door to fellowship with Him. The knob to open the door is on the inside!

It's supper time! It's time to sit down at the table and fellowship with God. God not only saves His children; He wants to sup with them repeatedly in life. The dinner bell is ringing. The Lord wants to restore His fellowship with you because you are already His child. He longs for your companionship and communion.

"Come and dine," the Master calleth, "Come and dine";
You may feast at Jesus' table all the time;
He Who fed the multitude, turned the water into wine,
To the hungry calleth now, "Come and dine."

Today, we need to be reminded of God's confessional booth. Confession is the key that opens the door to fellowship with God. Are you ready to open the door and ask for His forgiveness and fellowship with Him once again? You must open the door and confess your sins. When you do, the Lord will cleanse you and grant you sweet communion with Himself. So keep short accounts with God. Confess your sins and keep walking close to God during these last days and as the world changes around you.

I remember walking around a neighborhood garage sale. I noticed that one of the homes had an organ sitting outside and they were selling the organ. The owner of the organ began playing it to demonstrate how good the sound was. To my surprise, she kept playing the same song over and over again. The song was "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." As we walked from house to house throughout the neighborhood, we kept hearing this same tune and it was a good reminder. We should constantly strive to live close to the Lord.

"Just a closer walk with Thee
Grant it, Jesus, is my plea
Daily walking close to Thee
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be."

May it be true in our hearts and lives! We should desire to have a close walk with God. Enoch and Noah walked with God in obedience and fellowship (Gen. 5:22; 6:9). When we have our sins confessed and are walking with

God, life has a newness, much like the newness of the springtime flowers and the singing of the birds. Confession and communion with God gives us a sense of daily renewal, freshness, and newness that can be compared to the springtime.

The Song of Solomon 2:11-12, which speaks of marital love, gives a beautiful word picture of a believer returning to fellowship with the Lord and enjoying His presence again. The picture is that of springtime. "For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."



The enjoyment of the believer's communion with God can be likened to the springtime. Kurt Kaiser spoke about the springtime and related it to the Christian confessing his sins and having a new start, coming back into a state of newness and fellowship with God. In a sense, after confession there is a

spiritual springtime that occurs in the heart of a Christian, a time of renewal, freshness, and life. In conveying this, Kaiser wrote these lovely words – "Bring Back the Springtime."

"When in the spring the flowers
Are blooming bright and fair
After the gray of winter's gone.
Once again the lark begins its tuning
Back in the meadows of my home.

Lord to my heart bring back the springtime
Take away the cold and dark of sin.
O refill me now sweet Holy Spirit
May I warm and tender be again."