

Staying in Fellowship With God (1 John 1:9)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

The following story appeared in "The Prairie Overcomer:" A fisherman who was out of fellowship with the Lord was at sea with his godless companions when a storm came up which threatened to sink their ship. His friends begged him to pray; but he demurred, saying, "It's been a long time since I've done that or even entered a church." At their insistence, however, he finally cried out, "O Lord, I haven't asked anything of You for 15 years, and if You help us now and bring us safely to land, I promise I won't bother You again for another 15 years!"

The fictitious story makes us chuckle but the sad reality is that many Christians really don't fellowship with the Lord as they should. This is because sin and self get between them and the Lord and break the sweet communion they can have with God. As Christians, how do we stay in fellowship with God? In short, we must confess our sins, consider God's faithfulness, and then claim His cleansing for our lives. This is what this short devotional study is all about. These three truths are very important to our Christian lives. If we don't embrace them we will miss the blessing of walking in fellowship with God and the wonder of experiencing God's presence and forgiveness for our lives. As sin invades our lives we must be quick to confess it and keep short accounts with God. The failure to confess sin and claim God's cleansing is the downfall of many Christians. Many believers try and cover up their sins, which have broken their fellowship with God, instead of confessing them before the Lord, so that they might receive forgiveness and restored fellowship with Him.

Where are you at in your Christian life? Don't fool yourself. Are you walking close to the Lord? Are you in fellowship with God? Or have you been drifting along life's pathway out of touch and tune with the reality of God's presence? Has your sin kept you from experiencing God's fellowship? Has your apathy or lack of interest toward spiritual things kept you from the blessing of walking with the Lord and experiencing His presence and power in your life? First John 1:9 gives us the answer to regaining our fellowship with God so our days

can be as heaven on earth (Deut. 11:21 – “as the days of heaven upon the earth”). If you want a little bit of heaven on earth then you must walk close to the Lord. You must allow the holiness of God to drive you to the place of confession so that you might regain fellowship and passion for God once again. Life is barren, empty, and meaningless without a personal relationship with God.

How does a Christian stay in fellowship with God? Three things are necessary to maintain fellowship with God.

A. Confession of sin

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 pronoun “we” is referring to Christians or to “My little children” (1 John 2:1). This is not a reference to unsaved people confessing their sins before God in order to find forgiveness. I have had unsaved people tell me that they confess their sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness when they sin. The truth is this. Confession of sin does not save any person. It’s believing in Jesus Christ that saves the lost sinner.

John is talking about family forgiveness, forgiveness that God’s children receive when they sin. This text is not for the unsaved. The unsaved do not confess their sins to God. They must believe on Jesus Christ to be their Savior. There is not one salvation passage that says an unbeliever must confess his sins before God so that he can be saved! Confession has nothing to do with one’s salvation. It’s believing in Christ that saves a person – not confession. God will not hear your confession if you are an unsaved person. God wants to hear your call of faith in the person of Jesus Christ His Son (Rom. 10:13). A person once told me that someone he knew made his confession and peace with God before they died. The truth of the matter is this. No person can confess his sin before God and make peace with God. Peace before God can only come when a person places his faith in Jesus Christ for his salvation.

Romans 5:1

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The confession of 1 John 1:9 does not result in justification before God but restored fellowship with God. The context is talking about “fellowship with him” (1 John 1:6) or the believer’s fellowship with God. To maintain this fellowship confession of sin is required as it invades the believer’s life. An unsaved person places his faith in Christ to receive legal justification before God (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 3:24). A Christian who already is a believer confesses his sin to receive restored fellowship with God. So the key word related to an unsaved person’s life is “believe” (Acts 16:31) but the key word that is related to the Christian life is “confess” (1 John 1:9).

Confession restores the broken fellowship that a believer has encountered before God. A Christian can’t have fellowship with God unless he confesses his sins. I wonder if it really matters to some Christians today whether or not they are walking with God. Does it really bother them that they are not praying and communing with God? Sin has a way of deceiving us, deadening our relationship with the Lord, and our determination to live close to the Lord. Sin can create a lack of interest toward God so that the believer’s life becomes out of tune with God’s life and the intimate fellowship he can have with Him. Confession of sin is the only cure or antidote for a Christian life that has been out of touch with God. Confession of sin is the only way to regain our fellowship with God.

The Greek word behind the English word “confess” means to say the same thing or be in agreement with God. It does not simply mean to say you are sorry. When you confess your sin to God, it means that you are saying the same thing about your sin that God says. It means that you are agreeing with God about your sin. Therefore, when you pray, you must name those specific sins before God which you know you have committed against Him. Instead of praying, “Lord, if I have sinned,” I need to be naming specific sins before God and confessing that they are horrible and terrible sins in His holy sight! This is real confession! As a Christian, you will never repent over your sins and confess them before God, until you see them for what they really are? Your sin is a stench in the nostrils of God.

When God in His Word says that the thing you did is sin, you are to get over on God's side. You are to say, "You are right, Lord, I say the same thing that You say. It is a terrible sin." This is true confession. Don't go cry on the local priest's shoulder about your sin. Go tell God about your sin! You confess it to God. He is the only One who can forgive it. Some of you are whitewashing your sin! You are perfuming your sin! However, you must remember that you cannot perfume a skunk! You must call sin as sin before a holy God. Confession of sin means that you name your sin as wickedness before God and tell God what He already knows about your sin. When you confess sin in this manner God promises to forgive you of your sin.

The problem with many Christians today is that they are holding on to their sin. They have a secret love life with their sin and are not willing to see their sin as an awful and hideous crime in God's holy sight. You are not willing to really get down on your knees and confess your sin before God and agree with God over your sin. The truth is this. Only when you agree with God about your sin can you have real forgiveness and victory over that sin.

What are the prerequisites to confession? Let's state it in a simple fashion. What must take place before we will confess our sins?

1. We must stop fooling ourselves (vv. 6, 8, 10).

The "if we say" groups of Christians only fool themselves.

1 John 1:6

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

1 John 1:8

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

1 John 1:10

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

Meet the “if we sayers” group of Christians that claim to be free from sin while their hearts and lives are actually infected with sin. They claim to be right with God but in reality they are living in open rebellion against God.

There are three groups of Christians who fool themselves.

a. The fellowship group

1 John 1:6 declares:

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”

The first group of Christians said they were fellowshiping with God. Therefore, they did not need to confess any sins before God and restore their fellowship with Him (1 John 1:9). However, the truth was this. They were claiming to have fellowship with God while all along they had sin in their lives. They were said to “walk in the darkness” which is a metaphor for living a sinful life. Dear friend, you cannot have fellowship with God when you are in the darkness! To walk in darkness means to walk in sin and disobedience (defiance) to God. Don’t fool yourself. John is saying that believers cannot have communion and partnership with God when they are sinning in life and disobedient to Him. There are no gray areas when it comes to sin and fellowship with God. I know that we are living in a day when moral standards are changing drastically and people are rationalizing their sinning and trying to explain it away, but you *cannot* bring God down to your level. If you are living in sin, God will not have fellowship with you. Have you been disobedient to God? Have you been going your own way? If so, then you are not walking with God no matter what you say to other people.

The Bible says “we lie” (vs. 6) which means that we lie to others. After all, if you say that you are fellowshiping with God but have known sin in your life, then you lie to other people, and you are in one sense living a lie. You ought to have your mouth washed out with soap! Don’t lie about your walk with God! My friend, don’t live a lie! You can’t be walking with God when there is sin in your life. You can lie to the brethren but you cannot lie to God and get away with it. I am afraid that many believers deceive themselves over a period of time.

They play a mental game believing they are alright before God, when in reality they are living open lives of rebellion against God, and deceiving themselves.

The Bible says they “do not the truth” (vs. 6). In other words, this group of people is not really walking in the light of God’s holiness and fellowshiping with God (vs. 7). They are not practicing what they preach. The test that we are practicing truth is seen in our actions, deeds, and conduct. The “if we say” bunch of people are all talk. Some people talk the walk while others walk the talk. When a person walks with God they will not be playing in the darkness.

b. The perfect group

1 John 1:8

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

The second group of Christians was actually saying they were living in ongoing victory over sin and therefore did not need to confess and restore their fellowship before God (1 John 1:9). The expression “we have no sin” is in the present tense within the Greek language and denotes that this group of people was saying that the principle of sin (the old sin nature) no longer had any effect or power over their lives. In other words, these people were saying that sin no longer affected their Christian lives. Therefore, they did not need to confess their sin and restore their fellowship with God. They had conquered the sin nature and were living without sin. They said, “We have no sin” or “We don’t sin any more.” This is the old teaching of the eradication of the sin nature which is still with us today in Wesleyan and Nazarene doctrine. They call it entire sanctification when the believer actually overcomes his old nature and a person continues to live in a state of sinless perfection.

I once met a man who thought he had arrived. He told me that he never sins anymore. He said to me that he does not sin but he does make mistakes. Somehow he drew a distinction between mistakes and sins. Let’s stop deceiving ourselves (“we deceive ourselves” – vs. 8). The Christian who believes his evil nature has been completely eradicated within his soul is deceiving himself, nobody else. All others

can see sin sticking all over his life. It's sin that comes from the indwelling sinful nature (Romans 7:17, 18, 20). A man once told a group of people that he never had a fight with his wife. A godly elderly woman sitting in the back said, "Will the next liar please stand up!" Let's stop deceiving ourselves. We are not perfect. We have not arrived. We still have our sin nature. To conclude that "we have no sin" or don't sin anymore is one of the worst deceptions that a Christian can bring upon himself.

Philippians 3:12

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

This is the true Biblical perspective on Christian living. Nobody is perfect and can say they no longer sin. When we come to the conclusion that we no longer sin "the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). What truth is this? It's the truth that only God is perfectly holy (1 John 1:5) and that we are still sinners who need forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). Also, when we think we have arrived the truth about God's light or holiness (1 John 1:7) has not taken root in our soul and taught us how sinful we really are in the presence of a holy God. In other words, God's holiness or light has not hit our soul like a lightening bolt and revealed to us that we are a sinful person and not a perfect person.

My friend, the holiness of God will keep us from making the outlandish claims that we are no longer capable of sinning and no longer susceptible to sin. When we are constantly viewing ourselves in the light of God's impeccable and flawless holiness we will see just how sinful we are - not how perfect we are. If you are one of these super duper saints who claim to have no more tendencies to sin and have arrived, I have some news for you, you are as blind as a bat! You have deceived yourself but you are not fooling God, your wife, your friends, or anyone else.

It remains to be true that whenever the principle of sin is denied, as an ongoing reality in the life, there will always follow a denial of responsibility for individual actions ("we have no sin"). This is why Christians who gossip, who have hatred toward some brethren, who

are jealous, and who are boasting can actually come to believe these are acceptable actions and can sanction them as being non-sinful. It's as if certain people can sin and get away with it because they no longer are capable of sinning. People can deceive themselves. The whole character of sin is deceptive. People can live in a fairy tale book. However, God's holiness will keep you from the outlandish claims of eradication and the so-called second work of grace!

J. Vernon McGee said that he ran into this problem of sinless perfection very early in his training for the ministry. He relayed this message. "When I went to college as a freshman, my first roommate was a young man who was also studying for the ministry. He was a sweet boy in many ways. The only trouble with him was that he was *perfect*. When I found the room which had been assigned to me, my roommate was not at home, but when he came in, he introduced himself and informed me that he had not committed a sin in so many years—I have forgotten if he said one, two, or three years. It shocked me to meet a fellow who didn't sin. I had hoped he would be my buddy, but he wasn't a buddy.

"You see, in every room where I have lived, things go wrong once in a while. And there I was living in a room in which there were only two of us and one of us couldn't do anything wrong. So when something went wrong, guess who was to blame? Now I admit that *usually* it was my fault—but not *always*. Although he was a nice fellow, he hadn't reached the level of perfection, which he claimed; he wasn't perfect. After the first semester, a freshman was permitted to move wherever he wished, so I told him, 'I'm moving out.' He was greatly distressed and said, 'Oh, no! Where are you going?' I told him, 'I have met a fellow down the hall who is just as mean and imperfect as I am, and I'm going to move in with him.'"

c. The denial group

1 John 1:10

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

The last group of Christian people takes no responsibility for sins which they have committed in the past. The expression "have not

sinned” is in the perfect tense in the Greek language and indicates that the speaker is saying that he has not committed some particular sin in the past and therefore does not need to confess any sins before God (1 John 1:9). In other words, this fellow is acknowledging that he is not guilty of certain past sins and that he is presently standing in a perfect relationship before God.

The thrust of this verse is this. After believers sin they should not deny that they have sinned. They should not say “we have not sinned” and remain in a state of denial. This statement should be read in direct connection with verse 9. When a Christian is confronted by God’s Word about his sins, he should admit them, rather than deny he has committed any sin in the past. To deny one’s personal sin in the face of God’s testimony is to make God out to be a liar (“make him a liar”). In other words, when God’s Word tells us we have sinned, we need to admit these sins and face up to them. When God tells us through His Word that we have sinned, but we deny it, we make God into a liar. A man once said that he did not sin for a period of sixth months. Don’t tell me this for I will call you what God calls you – a boldfaced liar! The Bible says, “Let God be true and every man a liar!”

Instead of confessing their sins before God (1 John 1:9) many Christians, in one way or another, are denying they have sinned. They would rather become part of the exclusive fellowship group (those who deny they are out of fellowship with God), the perfect group (those who deny they can sin), and the denial group (those who deny that they have sinned). These kinds of Christians are deceiving themselves, denying the reality of sin in their lives, and declaring God to be a liar.

Christians can cover up their sins by telling lies! First, we tell lies to others (1 John 1:6 – “we lie”). We want our Christian friends to think we are “spiritual” so we lie about our true spiritual condition in order to make a favorable impression. Second, we sooner or later lie to ourselves (1 John 1:8 – “ourselves”). The problem now is not only about deceiving others, but deceiving ourselves. It is possible for a believer to live in sin yet convince himself that everything is fine in his relationship to the Lord. He can live like “Alice in wonderland.” He can live a fairy tale life where he claims to have beaten the sin nature and

no longer is affected by sin's power. Third, he can lie to God saying that he has not sinned when all along he has sinned against the Lord (1 John 1:10).

Yes, God says we deceive ourselves if we make the exclusive claim that we don't sin in our Christian experience (1 John 1:8). The fact that John says we will need to confess our sins (1 John 1:9) would clearly indicate that we will sin in life. However, this does not mean it's necessary for Christians to live lives of continual defeat. God says that we should "sin not" (1 John 2:1) meaning that we don't have to be overcome and defeated by sin. As we walk in fellowship with God and in obedience to His Word, He gives us power to resist sin and have victory over temptation. In other words, we will sin in our Christian lives, but we do not have to be overcome by sin and live in continual defeat.

2. We must stop fleeing from the light (vs. 7).

1 John 1:7

"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."

This is the second thing that must take place before a person will confess his sins. Many times we read 1 John 1:9 without considering the surrounding verses. We must remember why we confess our sins. It's because we have offended God (Ps. 51:4 – "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in they sight") and the holiness of God drives us to the place of confession (Isa. 6:5 – "Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone"). If we confess our sins for any other reason, then we have not truly confessed our sins in the Biblical manner. Sooner or later we should become so empty and distraught about our unholy lives that we find ourselves confessing our sins to God.

The Bible does not separate God's holiness from confession. The word "light" (vs. 6) is a metaphor for God's holiness. Those who fellowship with God follow the light of God's holiness. They are willing to do what is right instead of wrong. Therefore, if any believer wants to maintain or regain fellowship with God he will be willing and ready

to follow the light of God's holiness and do what is right instead of rebel against the Lord. Many Christians are running from the light instead of following the light! It's no wonder why many Christians don't confess their sins. They are not allowing the holiness of God to drive the skeletons out of the closet. They are not allowing the holiness of God to reveal and condemn their sins.

When a rock is overturned the bugs that don't want to live in the light, begin to move away from the light, seeking once again to find a dark spot to live. This is why some Christians don't want to confess their sins. They are fleeing from the light instead of walking in the light. They don't want the light of God's holiness to reveal the sinful things in their lives, lest they are seen as guilty, and in need of confession. Dear friend, are you walking in the light or walking in the night?

The truth is this. God's holiness will drive each of us to confess our sins as they invade our lives. When we desire to walk in the light of God's holiness our hearts will be broken when sin breaks our fellowship with God. Therefore, a person who has disregard for God's holiness will not confess his sins. God's holiness must grab our hearts today so we might see our sins as despicable and dirty in His presence and confess these sins before a holy 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."

Why is it that Christians do not confess their sins or some particular sins? Why is it that Christians do not give up their sins? I'll tell you why. It's because they do not agree with God about their sins. This is what the word "confess" means. They are not willing to let God's holiness attack their sin and reveal their sin for what it really is. They do not want to call their sin what God calls it! Today many redefine what sin is and label it as something contemporary, relevant, and artistic. People also invent excuses for their sins instead of seeing their sins as offending God's holy character. However, when we try and avoid our sins by covering them up, 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.”

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). Many Christians simply love their sins and want to live in their sins, instead of following the light of God’s holiness, which exposes their sins as evil, wicked, and dastardly acts before God. Here is the truth. Christians cannot possess fellowship with God or peace in their hearts, until they see their sins as God sees them, and confess their sins before the Lord. Only then can communion be restored.

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 but face them head on. The following experience illustrates this truth. 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 its sharp teeth were 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 rat--dead. The pilot’s sensitivity toward a rodent may have saved the entire plane. Dearly beloved, in a similar way we must be spiritually sensitive to the light of 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 the light we should follow the light (1 John 1:7) and allow it to do its sanctifying work upon our hearts and lives.

The reason why many believers do not overcome certain sins in their lives is because they do not really confess their sins to God. Some people use 1 John 1:9 as some type of spiritual rabbit’s foot. They go ahead and sin while saying, “Oh well, God will forgive me after I sin when I confess my sin to Him.” Dear friend, God will not forgive your sin if you think that way. Do you know why? It’s because your confession will not be genuine. When the holiness of God drives you to confession you will really confess and forsake your sins (“whoso

confesseth and forsaketh them” - Prov. 28:13).

B. Considering God’s faithfulness

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 text goes on to say 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 forgive his sins. Dearly beloved, let us never forget that “God is faithful” (1 Cor. 1:9). What a wonderful promise to every believer today. We know that God is faithful and just but in what way is His faithfulness and justice expressed when forgiving the Christian who sins? Let’s state it in a simple fashion. How is God’s faithfulness and justice seen in His 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

“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 maintain their fellowship with God. The light convicts us when we sin and the blood forgives us when we sin. Two things are true of believers who walk in the light of God’s holiness: (a) They are in fellowship with God (b) They are being cleansed from every sin. In order to maintain fellowship with God we must receive God’s cleansing through His Son’s blood. This means that whenever God’s holiness reveals sin in our lives we must remember that Christ’s blood grants forgiveness for that sin. This is why John includes the particular saying about the blood of Christ in this section of Scripture which deals with fellowship with God. In order to maintain our fellowship with God, we need to be cleansed from the invading sins that can so easily beset our lives (Heb. 12:1). In order for us to be

cleansed from daily defilement we need the continual work of the cleansing blood of Christ to forgive our sins and grant 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.” John is teaching that the blood of 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.

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 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. 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. Likewise, 1 John 1:7 is not referring to our judicial cleansing before God. Salvation or judicial cleansing is something that has taken place in the past and cannot be repeated. 1 John 1:7 is talking about family cleansing and maintaining our fellowship with God. This kind of cleansing is repeated many times in the Christian life for the blood of Christ continually cleanses us providing restored fellowship with God.

Let us never forget that family cleansing (1 John 1:7) and forgiveness (1 John 1:9) is available to us on the basis of our judicial cleansing and forgiveness (Rom. 5:9) before God. We might conclude that the blood of Jesus maintains our judicial standing before God and because of this, the blood of Christ grants us the repeated privilege of forgiveness within our own Christian life, so we can have fellowship and communion with God on a daily basis. The cleansing and forgiveness in John's epistle is necessary to restore our fellowship before God - not our salvation and acceptance before God. Our justification before God never changes (Heb. 7:25), but our fellowship or communion with the Lord does change, and needs restoration (John 13:8).

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 them as sins. We shouldn't view our sins as mistakes, blunders, or errors. We should see them as serious offences in the eyes of a holy God (1 John 1:5; Hab. 1:13). When you truly confess your sins before God He is always "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now here is the doctrinal teaching. Our forgiveness is based upon God's faithfulness and justice which is related to the shedding of Christ's blood and sacrificial death (1 John 1:7 – "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"). Christ paid the penalty for all our sins once and for all through the shedding of "the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). The blood will never lose its power!

Christ's blood 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 providing us with cleansing, forgiveness, and restored fellowship with God.

This is called the advocacy work of Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1). 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. God can provide the believer with repeated cleansing, forgiveness, and restored fellowship in his Christian life based upon Christ's death as the sufficient payment for his sins.

1 John 2:1 says:

"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. He 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. 1:6). So what happens when we sin in our Christian life? When we sin as a Christian we are not condemned because we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ, who pleads our case before the Father. Christ presents the value of His atoning 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 (heavenly lawyer) reassures us that He is working on our behalf to maintain 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 (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."

One should not understand the advocacy work of Christ as involving Christ at the right hand of God *repeatedly forgiving* the sins which believers continue to commit throughout their lifetime on earth. His advocacy work or ministry involves Christ *defending* the believer against the charges of the law and Satan. The law says, “Guilty as charged” and the slanderer or devil says, “This believer has sinned and deserves hell.” Now what does Jesus answer to all these accusations? He answers like this: “Even though these charges are true, I have already paid the penalty in full for this person’s sins. Based on my death, shed blood, and finished work, I have already forgiven these sins, and for this reason no one can lay any charge to this person.” The blood of Jesus has turned away God’s wrath from us!

Romans 8:33-34 now 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.”

So God is “faithful” (reliable, consistent, dependable, trustworthy) and “just” (acts in accord with His impeccable nature) in forgiving our sins in view of the cleansing blood of His own Son (1 John 1:9). He looks upon the offering of His Son as the ground for both judicial forgiveness that saves a person from hell and the forgiveness that brings a believer back into restored fellowship with Him. 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.

Since Christ paid the penalty for our sins, through the shedding of His blood, we can have restored fellowship with God. God is “faithful” (trustworthy) and “just” (righteous) in His dealings with His children based upon Christ’s sufficient payment for sin. God 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. This is what John is teaching in 1 John 1:7 and 9. We receive continual cleansing in the Christian life based upon the cleansing we have already received at the time of our salvation. The salvation cleansing from sin is once and for all (Eph.

1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 John 2:12). It is the *foundation* or *basis* for the repeated cleansing we can receive over and over again in our Christian experience (1 John 1:7).

As the Father sees the blood (Exodus 12:13) we are repeatedly cleansed from spiritual defilement and our fellowship restored to 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. Oh my friend, God is faithful! 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. God is waiting for you to return to the place of fellowship with Him and He will be standing there with open arms. The arms of a loving God are waiting to greet you. He is faithful. As the Father looks upon the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, He faithfully restores us to a right relationship with Himself. There is forgiveness in the family! God brings us back into a joyous fellowship with Him and it's all because He is faithful to the blood of Jesus Christ.

But 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 unknowingly sin and still have fellowship with God? For instance, there are sins of ignorance (Numb. 15:28) 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 have fellowship with God? The answer is simple. Yes, since the blood of Jesus, God's Son, keeps cleansing us from sins of every kind (1 John 1:7). Sins of omission (James 4:17), sins of ignorance (Lev. 4:2; Numb. 15:24), and sins of commission (Numb. 15:30) are included in this list of sins. These sins would prevent our fellowship with God if the divine provision of constant cleansing was not taken care of by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should pause and give thanks today for the blood of Jesus Christ that grants daily forgiveness and renewal with God.

C. Claiming your cleansing

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.”

God faithfully grants forgiveness and cleansing to us on the basis of His Son's death on our behalf. A Christian must recognize this to be true if he wants his fellowship restored with God. Every believer must claim his personal cleansing in order to regain fellowship with God. There is no sin too great that God cannot and will not forgive. This is because the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from every sin that we commit (1 John 1:7). Our sins not only make us guilty but they also make us unclean (John 10:13; James 1:21). Therefore, we need to be cleansed from the filthiness of our sins. What you need to do is come to God with a broken heart and confess your sins to Him. It's then that God will cleanse you from the sins which have spiritually defiled you. God is willing and ready to grant your cleansing. Are you ready to claim your cleansing? If we meet the condition (confession) God will keep His promise (cleansing).

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. You may think that God won't forgive and cleanse you again. But you are wrong. God is forever faithful in granting our forgiveness 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. Dear Christian friend, come home! Receive the forgiveness and cleansing that God wants to offer you and restore your walk and fellowship with the Lord. God is a great forgiver. He longs for your fellowship and communion today.

Jim Elliot wrote:

“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 says:

“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.”

You are not waiting for God. God is waiting for you. The well known picture of fellowship within the home is used to teach how God wants to fellowship with the wayward believers in this local church. 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 the believers in this assembly who have strayed from Him. He wants to redevelop communion with them. God wants to enter into a relationship with them once again where He can commune with them at the table of fellowship.

It's supper time! It's time to sit down at the table and fellowship with God. God does not save His children again but He wants to sup with them again. 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. 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 once again? The Lord will cleanse you and grant you sweet communion with Himself.

The Song of Solomon 2:11-12 gives a beautiful word picture of a believer returning to fellowship with the Lord and enjoying His presence.

“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.”

“It is glory just to walk with Him
Whose blood has ransomed me;
It is rapture for my soul each day.
It is joy divine to feel Him near where'er my path may be.
Bless the Lord, it's glory all the way!”

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.