

# The Blood of Jesus Cleanses Us From All Sin

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Well, let's once again read 1st John chapter 1, verse 5, down through 1st John chapter 2, verse 2. , "This is the message we have heard from Christ (that's the 'Him') and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (those in the light have fellowship with each other), and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

So, let's pick up where we left off last week. I have so many questions about these verses. When I go through John, 1st John, there are questions, questions. We have to wrestle through many of the expressions, the terminology that John uses, what does he mean? He leaves me scratching my head a lot at times. And I know that before we get through the end of John, we are probably going to scratch it many more times.

Last time, we left off in verse 7. That's where I'd like to pick up again today. And in fact, this is one of the verses that creates questions for me. Perhaps it does for you too. In fact, I think these verses are often misunderstood. Last time, we got up to 'having fellowship with one another' and then I very quickly said some things about the blood, and we brought it to an end. But I by no means was done speaking about the blood of Jesus, His Son.

We need to look at this. There are questions that need to be answered. There are truths here that are very helpful to the people of God. So look at verse 7. Get your eyes there, "If we walk in light" — Now, by the way, If you are not familiar with Scripture, 'If we walk in the light' is some of John's terminology for describing what a Christian is. 'If we walk in the light' means we have drawn near to the God who is in the light. To come to God, to come to Christ, is to come to the light. That is another way that we can define or describe, or another title or designation for a Christian - "to walk in the light." And what he is saying here is that If we are walking in this light as God is in the light, two things are going to be true.

Now listen, this is in contrast to verse 6: "If we say we have fellowship with God"— that's another way to describe a Christian, a Christian is somebody that has fellowship with God. "If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in the darkness,.." — in other words, if we say we have fellowship with God but our life is one that is basically lived in rebellion against Him, it's not walking in the light, it's not walking in the truth, it's not walking according to His word. If we say we are a Christian while we live a life of sin, "we lie and we do not practice the truth."

God's Christianity is characterized by righteousness. Listen, when people get saved, the world ought to

recognize that there is a changed life. And that's exactly what is being said here.

But if we do walk in the light—If we are a Christian and we walk in this light, as God is in the light, then we are going to have fellowship with other Christians. That is key. If Christians are odd people who you can maybe tolerate a little bit on a Sunday; but otherwise, you are more comfortable with people of the world, that is a great indication that you do not know the Lord, and you are not a Christian, and you are not walking in the light. Because one thing that is true is that all those that walk in the light have fellowship. They have things in common. They share things in common.

But notice this: there is something else that is true of the person who walks in the light. “If we walk in the light.. the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Now, what we have to remember here is this: what John is concerned with is fellowship with God; but there's a problem for people like us to have fellowship with God, and the problem is sin. And you see, sin is an issue. You see it in verse 7, “Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” verse 8, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” verse 9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” verse 10, “If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us.” Sin is an issue. Why? Sin is an issue because sin challenges our fellowship with God. That's the issue.

Look, I can remember as a new Christian, I was reading for the first time - I had never heard about Uzzah - until I was reading in the Old Testament and I saw God killed Uzzah because he was trying to protect the ark of the covenant from going into the dirt; falling off the cart. And God killed him because he touched it, because he was not supposed to touch it. And then I saw David numbered the people of Israel and God killed what, 70,000 people through a plague?

As I was seeing this, I was beginning to realize God is different than I have always thought He is. He is holy. There is something terrible about God. There is something awful, if you'll let me use the old 'full of awe.' That's where that term [comes from], though It has a negative connotation today. God can be terrible in a certain sense. Fearful in His holiness, in His righteousness. And the more we have fellowship with God, the closer we draw near to Him; the more we see of these qualities, and the more we become aware of our own sin.

Do you remember what it was like, when Peter went out there fishing, and suddenly he caught a great big catch of fish? and he recognized, the Lord sent those fishes into his net. He began to recognize, Jesus Christ had control over the fish. Do you remember what he did? He fell down on his face before the Lord. What did he say? “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.”

Brethren, I'll tell you this, the more fellowship we have with God; the closer you draw to Him and His unapproachable [light]— isn't that amazing? we can draw close to Him, although He dwells in unapproachable light. There is an unapproachableness and yet, there is an approachableness by what Christ has done for us— But as we come near to Him and as that glory of God becomes more of a reality; as the terrible and gloriously terrible aspects of God become more and more real to us; I mean, there is a tremendousness about God. There are qualities about God that are overwhelming but His purity, His righteousness, His holiness is that when we draw close, (God says it—He is of pure eyes than to behold iniquity) and when we come close like Peter, suddenly there is a recognition of self.

You remember how it was with Isaiah? Isaiah was probably the godliest man in the land, he's certainly the most used prophet in the land. And here, the Lord is high and lifted up, in the temple, on His throne; and what

does Isaiah do? he falls on his face, “Woe is me, I am undone.” He said he dwells amidst people of unclean lips, he himself acknowledged he had unclean lips. What! Isaiah, are you a liar? You go around and hang out in the brothels and the bars and you tell your big, spun lies all the time? No. He’s probably the most righteous man in the land but drawing near to the person of God presented a problem.

This is the problem that John is wanting to deal with. People who walk in the light, Christians who walk in the light, have a problem: sin is not totally eradicated. And that’s what he’s wanting to deal with. Those who walk in the light are not perfect. In fact, you see it very plain in verse 8 and 10. What is it? (8) “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,.. (10) If we say we have not sinned,”— There are two different tenses here. One perhaps indicates “if I say I presently have no sin, I deceive myself. If I have any idea that I used to be a sinner and God saved me and now I’m perfect, I’m deceived.” The other indicates “if we say we have not sinned, perhaps in the past; If I say I don’t have any sin, there’s no such thing as that; or man is not innately born a sinner, I don’t have sin, we make God a liar.” In other words, we contradict what God has said. God says we are sinners.

But you see, even if we say right now we have no sin as believers, we deceive ourselves. And that’s an issue. That’s what he’s dealing with. Those who walk in the light are not perfect. In fact, any claim to perfection is proof-positive that you don’t walk in the light.

And so, God gives us verse 7 and verse 9. Let’s read them. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” and verse 9 “If we confess our sins”— you see this is what happens: when you are in the light, it doesn’t mean you don’t sin. Oh yes, if you walk in the light, the pattern is a practice of righteousness but sin is not fully eradicated. And the whole thing is that when we are in this light, it exposes our sin all the more.

You know, it’s almost like some people get saved, and then they can hardly believe they are saved because they, all of a sudden, think that they’ve become so much worse. Have you ever noticed that about some people when they get saved? What really happens is: they haven’t gotten worse, but now that they are saved, suddenly their eyes are open and they begin to behold their sin all the more. They begin to see the depth of wickedness, the depth of evil, the depth of sin in themselves at levels that they just never saw before. Suddenly their eyes are being open to that.

What happens when a Christian sins? The question on the table for John is, What happens to our fellowship? I mean, we’re going along, we walk in the light, and I sin. Does it mean all of a sudden, I am walking in the darkness? You don’t ever want to believe that. Scripture never teaches that. Scripture never teaches that one who walks in the light, when they do sin, they’re walking back in the darkness. We’ve been transferred, we’ve been moved out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son that is the kingdom of light. We’re in that kingdom, we will always be in that kingdom. It doesn’t mean that when you sin, you are transferred or translated out of that kingdom. We are in the kingdom of light. We are children of light. Even when we do some things that seem somewhat dark, we are children of light.

But what happens when we sin? Certainly, the closer we draw to God, the more we become aware of our imperfections. This is one of the beauties of just communing and fellowshiping with God. I mean, think about this: the more that Moses dwelt in the very glory of God, the more that shine lit up his own face. When he came down off the mount, It began to what? What happened to the blazing glory that he had to veil? over time, what

happened? It faded.

There's a reality about that. There's a fading; and that will happen in our lives. I mean, your communion with God becomes cold, becomes stale; you become to drift; you become to grow lax in your prayer life, and walking with Him, and talking with Him; and diving in and devouring, meditating and chewing on His word; and what happens to you? This is what happens.

But when we dwell in His presence, it's a good thing to become more aware of our blemishes and more aware of the stains and more aware of the imperfections. The problem is, the closer we draw, the more those imperfections seem to jump out, the more we become conscious of them. And what do we do?

Well, John shows us in verse 7 and in verse 9. I know there's a lot of confusion about these verses, I've wrestled with them myself. But let me show you the conclusions I have come to about these verses, and why I have come to them. And I want you to track through these with me.

David hasn't gotten to his doctrine on justification and his doctrine of sanctification yet. That's undoubtedly months away, maybe next year. It's down the road pretty far, at least sanctification is. But before he gets there (I was glad he didn't deal with that today)— Justification and sanctification, I want to talk about those things today. And there's confusion as to how those things relate to these verses; but follow me, because there's something here that would help you as a Christian if you see this for what it is.

Look at verse 7 with me. Now let's just chop the middle stuff out. This is simply because we've dealt with it. "If we walk in the light", now jump to the end, "the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Now the first thing I want to call your attention to is the tense of the verb: cleanses. Notice the cleansing that's going on here. Notice the verb tense. And I don't know how you process this, but I know that if John had used the past tense, and said, "if we walk in the light, well that's proof-positive you have been cleansed (past tense) by the blood of Christ from all your sin", probably most of us would be pretty happy about that; we'd be pretty comfortable with that. And I would admit, I would not have wrestled with this verse the way I have wrestled with it, not just in preparation for this message; but these are verses that have caused me to wrestle for numbers of years. And I know many others have as well.

Oh it's very interesting if you start looking around at different commentaries and different preachers and pastors and theologians and the comments that they make on this, you can tell there's lots of issue here. And this tense is one of the things that tends to send men for a loop. Nobody would have a problem with this if there was a 'd' at the end of that word rather than an 's', and by the way, this is in English. I recognize there is actually something going on in the original language, but this captures it. I mean, in the original language, what you have is a present tense verb. That's what is happening.

So, it might be more theologically correct for us to have John connect 'walking in light' with having formerly been cleansed from sin, once and for all, when we first got saved. Isn't that the way we look at it? Where we come to Christ; there is a call of God; there is regeneration that takes place. What springs forth from that life? Faith springs forth from that life. What happens? Justification is a result of that faith; which means, the merits of Christ are applied to me in such a way that I'm declared righteous in the courtroom of God. Well good, now I go on with life. Now what happens? Well now all this progressive sanctification is taking place, and so I can always look back to the time I first believed and I can say "I got justified back then. I got cleansed of my sin by the blood of Christ

back then.” That’s how we like to talk.

The problem is, that’s not the way John talks here. It’s present tense. It’s not past. He uses an indicative, meaning he’s indicating a reality. It’s a present tense verb. That may mean nothing to you, let me say this another way: John is saying that if somebody is presently walking in the light— in God’s light, as a Christian, the blood of Jesus Christ is presently cleansing that person from all sin, and is doing so in an ongoing fashion. That’s what he’s teaching here.

Now, what ‘cleanse’ means, is something else. I mean, we need to look at “what is the meaning of it?” But I think you can all see it. It’s not a mystery, you can look right there in your bibles; and there’s no textual issue here, none of that. It’s been translated perfectly right according to the original language. The reality is, John is saying if you walk in the light, Jesus’ blood is presently and in an ongoing fashion, cleansing you of your sin. Now is that the understanding that you have? You can probably say, “Yes, that’s the understanding I have because that’s what it says.” But how do you understand that? That’s the issue. What does this mean?

Now, I think we will all agree that having the blood of Jesus His Son cleanse us from all sin is a good thing, right? You definitely get that feeling. People that walk in darkness, that’s not in their description. This is only in the description of those who walk in the light. Our problem is sin. Having your sin cleansed is a good thing; and it’s true that it’s only happening to those who walk in light, not to those who walk in darkness. And that’s clear. But what is not clear is what exactly does it mean that Jesus’ blood cleanses us from all sin?

Now remember, this is a present tense verb, which means it’s an action that is presently taking place in the life of believers. Their sin is presently being cleansed. What does the word ‘cleanse’ mean? That’s not hard, there are no mysteries here. It simply carries the idea of making something clean. It implies, or there’s an assumption, that prior to the cleansing, there’s impurity, there’s dirt, there’s filth, there’s something unclean, there’s a contaminant. That’s the idea. Jesus’ blood specifically cleanses us from what? All sin—that’s the contaminant, that’s the foul, that’s the filth, that’s the dirt. It’s any and all sin the Christian commits.

But the question we need to ask is this: How is sin presently being cleansed in the life of a Christian? Is this saying that when I as a Christian, walk in the light, the blood of Jesus is constantly at work sanctifying me? ‘Cleanse’ is used that way in the New Testament. For instance, 2nd Corinthians 7:1. Go ahead and turn there. 2nd Corinthians 7:1. “Beloved”—Paul, speaking to his beloved Corinthian believers— says “let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”

If you’re not familiar with this, holiness is in the same word group as sanctification. That’s the idea. What is he calling Christians to do? Cleanse themselves of the things that defile. In other words, be working towards greater and greater Christ-likeness; greater and greater purity; greater and greater goodness; greater and greater righteousness. You see, the word ‘cleanse’ can apply to sanctification— cleansing the actual sin that you commit, out of your life. It can.

I think you know that I am going to say, But; perhaps, perhaps that’s not what I think it means. Turn back to 1st John 1:7. Is this what John is alluding to? Is he wanting us to think sanctification in 1st John 1:7? Now notice, over in 1st Corinthians, who was doing the cleansing? We were. It’s something that we are actively seeking to live a sanctified life, cleansing the filth of my mind, my action, my body and spirit; bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. Getting rid of these defilements; Me, cleansing the defilements out of my life.

But is this what John is talking about? Go back to 1st John. Here in 1st John 1:7, is this saying that if I walk in the light, the blood of Jesus is washing me a little cleaner all the time? By the way, you have to remember this about sanctification: sanctification never gets completely done. So if the blood is cleansing us in a fashion that regards sanctification, it's never fully accomplishing it in this lifetime, if that's what he means. What's going on here? Is that what he means? Is he talking about washing me a little cleaner, a little cleaner, day by day, making me more and more like the image of Jesus Christ? Or is John speaking about justification here?

Is he saying that somebody walking in the light who stumbles into sin... (here you have somebody walking in the light, they admit they have sin, they're not these people who say "I don't have any sin." They do have sin, but they don't practice it. Yet, they are walking in the light, they are not walking in the darkness, they are walking in the light. They've come to God. It exposes their sin and they confess their sin, and they are not saying, "I don't have any sin or I've never had any sin." They are acknowledging, "I do have sin." And the closer they are to God in communion, the more they are being made aware of it, just like Peter was. They see those defilements, they see those things.

So, is he speaking of justification, is he saying that somebody that's walking in the light who stumbles into sin, the blood of Jesus Christ is applied again? In other words, something needs to happen again? The once and forever thing that happened at the beginning actually requires something more? Or at least, something in an ongoing fashion? Is that what it is? That, when I sin as a Christian, the blood of Jesus Christ is immediately applied and the guilt of that new sin is cleansed away right then? Does a Christian live only based on something that happened back then? —"Oh, I was justified back then when I first believed. God's gavel came down and pronounced me clean and righteous, and washed away my sin, and cleansed me then, and I live on that past thing."

Or is John saying, 'No that's not the way you want to understand justification; justification actually has a present and ongoing reality.' Now just hang with me here. What we are asking is whether this blood cleansing is legal or practical? or they like to use the term 'forensic'. What does forensic mean? It means legal. It's just another way of saying it. Is it legal or is it practical? Is it forensic? Is it experimental? Does it mean that as we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus Christ is at work, keeping us from sinning? Or does it mean that as we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus brings pardon and forgiveness for the sins we commit, and washes the fresh guilt away? Is this cleansing related to the presence of our sin or the guilt of our sin?

You see the difference. This is the difference between justification and sanctification. Justification is God declaring me innocent based on the merits of another; not on my own, based on the merits of Christ. Sanctification is a process where I'm becoming more and more holy. Does Jesus blood wash me so that I'm becoming more and more holy? Or does Jesus blood cleanse the guilt of every sin, as I commit it, immediately on the spot in an ongoing fashion? That's the question we're asking. Is God regarding us as righteous based on this cleansing? Or is God applying the blood to actually take the sin out of our life as far as our practice of it, our doing of it? You see, one is legal and one is practical.

Let's talk about this a second - define our terms a little more.

Justification — Maybe you're not really familiar with that. Maybe you've heard it, maybe you haven't heard it. What is justification? Justification is a theological term that basically means this: You walk into God's courtroom with all your sin, and God looks at you, and boom! The gavel comes down and He says "Righteous! You are righ-

teous.” — You may say “But I got all my sin here.” — because that sin was laid on Jesus Christ, and Christ paid the penalty. He who knew no sin became sin; that you might become the righteousness of God in Him. That’s what happens. God takes our sin and lays it on Christ, and takes His righteousness and lays it on us. This is justification. Justification is the act of God declaring sinners to be free of the guilt of sin. It is the opposite of condemnation.

If a man walks into a courtroom and he’s guilty of the crime, he’s condemned for the crime. Justification is the opposite of that. Justification is a man coming into the courtroom and he’s found innocent. But how can a man who actually did do the crime be found innocent when he did do the crime? Well, because Jesus stands in his place and takes the punishment for that sin, and Christ’s perfect law-keeping is imputed to that man. And so the man counts Christ’s righteousness as that man’s righteousness. God counts that man’s sin to Christ, and Christ is the one who is slaughtered in his place and takes the punishment in his place.

Justification is a legal term. It is a courtroom term. It is God regarding us as ‘righteous.’ Let that sink in. Justification is the glory of the Gospel. How can a sinful man be made right with God? Oh because Jesus Christ earned our righteousness for us. This ought to make us jump all over again, just to recognize the reality. This is the heart and soul of the Gospel. Justification - It is God regarding us as if we have committed no sin. And yes, there’s forgiveness in it, but more than that; God not only does not punish us for our sins, He regards us as though we had never done those sins. He regards us as ‘righteous.’ That’s amazing! But that’s what Christ accomplished. That is the Gospel.

Now, what is sanctification? All of justification is legal. In all that, He didn’t do anything to actually take my sinful nature away or deal with my own sinning at all. That’s a legal declaration based on faith! I trust Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith in what Jesus Christ did in His person, His work.

What is sanctification? Sanctification, on the other hand, is the process of being made holy. Now, that deals with me as a person. It deals with my habits of sin. It deals with the real righteousness in my life. It’s a process of making me holy. It’s a process of making me like Christ. The truth is, when I first get saved, in a lot of ways I am not like Christ. And what God is doing is through the life, this is progressive. Yes, there’s a positional sanctification but that’s not what we’re talking about here. We’re talking about God’s work by the holy spirit where more and more as we walk in faith with our eyes upon Jesus Christ, we are being transformed into His likeness. That’s the idea of progressive sanctification. This is a process of making one like Christ.

Justification is legal, sanctification is the operation of God’s Spirit where He powerfully works in us to change us. This is the process of making us more and more good; more and more godly; more and more upright, e.t.c. This is the process by which the presence and activity of sin in our life is being squashed and quenched; it’s being taken out of us and removed until we get to the point of glorification. I mean, really our problems are attached to this flesh and when we break free from it, oh the Christian is free forever. But we’re in a process right now. That’s sanctification.

So, brethren I am going to tell you this, I whole-heartedly believe that 1st John 1:7 and 1:9 are dealing with justification, not sanctification. I believe that there is an ongoing reality to our justification. If that’s new to you, I hope that you will see I’m not making it up. If you say, “I’ve never heard this before, this doesn’t sound orthodox.” Listen. I want you to hear that John is saying this; that we are cleansed as we walk in the light, we are being cleansed now from our sins. And I’m going to prove to you it is justification.

First, I don't want you to turn to these, but just listen to me. When we're talking about the blood of Jesus Christ, what is the blood all about? It's about His death. The life is in the blood. His blood was spilt and His life was given. Jesus Christ died on that cross. He was dead. He gave His life. His blood was shed. Now, I would just challenge you all to do this: Do a study through the New Testament and look at the blood. You know what you're going to find? You're not going to find that the blood is just put out there as that which is connected with sanctification. What you're going to find is, the blood... is connected with justification. The blood is connected with pardon, forgiveness, justification, propitiation; It's attached to those things that have to do with our being justified, our pardon in God's courtroom.

Let me just fly through a number of these; you can do the study for yourself. Matthew 26:28, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."— You see 'blood' there is not connected to sanctification, 'blood' is connected to forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins."— You see shedding of blood, forgiveness of sins. Romans 3:25, talking about Jesus Christ "Whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood."— Propitiation is the idea of God's wrath being quenched. Romans 5:9, "We have now been justified by his blood." Colossians 1:20, "Making peace by the blood of His cross."— There is peace that was made. This doesn't have to do with our sanctification. This has to do with, bang! We get saved and there's an immediate peace. Ephesians 1:7, "In Him we have redemption through His blood (the purchasing of us), the forgiveness of our trespasses."— There's forgiveness again. , "You were ransomed with the precious blood of Christ."

We have the idea of ransom, redemption, forgiveness, peace, justification, propitiation. That's what's tied to the blood; never 'sanctification', never 'being made holy'. Revelation 5:9, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God." It's got to do with a purchase price. It's very difficult to prove that Christ's death and His blood are ever directly connected to sanctification. When you look at the doctrine of blood in the New Testament, it goes directly to justification or to those other aspects of 'being purchased', 'being forgiven', 'being propitiated for.'

But that's not the only thing. One of the things we need to remember is that fellowship [is the issue]. Remember fellowship back up in verse 3 "So that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father," verse 5 - "This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." Fellowship is the issue. Fellowship with God. One of the things we all need to remember is that fellowship is what John has in his mind here.

Now think about this: The blood is what answers to our problems as Christians when we're in fellowship with God, and we sin. Why isn't our fellowship immediately destroyed? Doesn't God say it's sin that separates between us and Him? How come when I'm going along in the Christian life, and I sin, why isn't that fellowship just wrecked? That's what John is dealing with here. That's the issue. And if we say that we must be cleansed by His blood with regards to sanctification? We're never fully sanctified in this life; so if that's what he's dealing with, we will never be made right. We will never be fully purified that we might have fellowship with God. We'd be in trouble. Sanctification is a process. It's a process that in this life, is never done.

Listen, the Bible doesn't teach anywhere, think about this: The Bible does not teach anywhere that you can-



not have fellowship with God or that fellowship with God is prohibited because you are not fully sanctified. Does it? I mean, can't the least who has put their trust in Christ, the guy that was saved only yesterday and the sanctification process has just begun, can't he enjoy full fellowship with God? Is there anything in the Bible that teaches us we have to be fully sanctified before we can have fellowship with God? There's nothing that teaches us that.

David came to God with all of his sin and he confessed it. It seems that John's very objective in these verses in 1st John chapter 1, is to show us that even when we do fall into sin, and have this guilt staining us, we can indeed still have fellowship with God. Look, brothers and sisters, as Christians, when I sin afresh, what is needed to maintain my ongoing fellowship with God is not further sanctification. I need the guilt of that sin dealt with. I need the barrier taken away; I need the stain removed. What is needed is the cleansing of my guilt, not the total eradication of the flesh.

Look, of course sanctification is critical. It's absolutely necessary; much of 1st John is concerned with it. But that's not what John is concerned with, here in verses 7 and 9. Maybe this demands another question.

The question is this: Isn't Justification by faith in Jesus Christ a once and for all declaration made by God, where all my sins - past, present and future - are just, all at once, put away? All of them, they're forgiven and that's just it. Justification - it's done, it's over, the gavel of God's courtroom came down; it's fallen once and all, based on the merits of Jesus Christ. I'm now pronounced innocent, guiltless. Justification, over and done, and the need for Jesus' blood to cleanse any further from that guilt is no longer needed. I mean, a lot of us view justification that way. Well, His blood was shed and it got applied, and it cleansed us and justification happened. And in the courtroom, I was declared innocent it's done; nothing else needs to be done.

Or, is justification an ongoing reality? Well, think with me about 1st John 1:9. If we say it's an ongoing reality, doesn't this threaten our doctrine of justification? Listen, perhaps it threatens our understanding of justification but perhaps not the biblical teaching on justification. Let's think here. Let's unravel this more. I'm not anywhere close to having proven this to you. I'm just telling you, there's nothing about a lack of full sanctification that prevents our fellowship with God. The issue is: When something arises in the life of the Christian, what is it that keeps us in fellowship with Him? It's not that He comes along and by His blood, He makes us a little bit more like Christ. There's nothing about sanctification or a lack of sanctification or being anywhere along the line of progressive sanctification that says that I can't have full fellowship with God at the beginning of that line, versus the end of that line, or anywhere in there.

Look, where I am headed with this is, what I'm saying is: Every time you and I sin, there is need for the blood of Christ right then. We can't just rest on the past. Oh yes, we can rest on what He did on the cross. But as far as that first moment we believed, Did everything He did 2,000 years ago on that cross apply to us right when we first believed and now there's no need for it? That's what I'm arguing against. If that is your understanding of justification, I don't believe it's a biblical one and I don't believe John teaches us that that is the way we ought to understand justification.

I mean, look there in 1st John 1:9. Can you imagine a brother or sister walking in the light, they long for fellowship with the Lord but there's this remaining pollution. "What can I do? Is this not going to destroy my fellowship with God? I fall into this sin or that sin, how can I dare approach Him now?" And John says this, "If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive our sins."

Again, it's a response. It's at that time. It's happening when the confession takes place. It's happening in the present, in the now. "If we confess our sins, He's faithful and Just" — not only to have forgiven us in the past (yes when we first come to Him, there is forgiveness, and all that has been done has been forgiven; all of our past sins are forgiven). But what you have here is a reality that as we're going along and we're confessing our sins and dwelling in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. "And He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse" — there's the word 'cleanses' again. I mean, he's ringing the same note — cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

This 'cleansing' does not relate to sanctification. It's a cleansing in which sin is forgiven. That's what we see here. It goes hand in hand with forgiveness. It's not dealing with sin being sanctified out of me, it's dealing with forgiveness.

And brethren, if this doesn't convince you — maybe somebody's saying "Well I don't even know if this is speaking about a Christian, this might be speaking about somebody when they first come to Christ." Well, I don't think it's that. But even if you're wrestling with that, all you have to do is go a little further to 1st John 2:1 and 2 I mean, this seals the deal here. "My little children" — these are Christians. This isn't dealing with somebody when they first come. These are the people that dwell in the light. These are the people that are confessing their sins. These are the people who are having fellowship with other people in the light. These are people that don't fall into this error to say they don't have any sins. They recognize their sins and when they recognize their sins, they confess their sins. And what they're finding is, that God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse, through this blood of Jesus Christ, from all of our sins.

And this is exactly the truth that he lays out here. He says, Christians, "I am writing these things to you — in other words, that helps us know that 1st John 1:9 is written to us — so that you may not sin. But, if anyone does sin, (Here's a Christian, and they sin) We have an advocate." Do you see what he's saying? You sin in time, you have an advocate, an advocate with the Father. What is an advocate? It's somebody that represents someone else. It's somebody that acts on their behalf.

Why does he tell us you have an advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous? Oh, the beauty is He earned our righteousness. That righteousness that's imputed to us. There's blood, back in 1:7, there's righteousness in 2:1, we have these magnificent qualities of Christ and He stands as an advocate. He stands as one who is there to take up our case before the Father. Jesus Christ the righteous; He is the propitiation for our sins.

These truths are thrown at us right in the life of the Christian as they sin. Little children are being addressed, clearly a title for Christians. If any of these Christians do sin, what does John say? Does he say there's no need for anything to be done? because after all, all their sin was pardoned, forgiven and washed, and the guilt was put away once and for all, and now there's nothing to be done? Is that what he says?

No, that is not what he says. He points out that we have an advocate. An advocate is one who pleads another's cause before that judge. John is specifically concerned with what happens to us Christians in the point of time when we're living our life, and we sin. And the need for that advocate is right then. He's not talking about the past, he's talking about the present. He's talking about the fact that we have an advocate presently, and His blood presently cleanses us; and there is presently forgiveness and He is presently faithful and just to forgive us our trespasses and cleanse away all unrighteousness.

Look: Yes, justification is the declaration of innocence in the courtroom of God when we first believe on Christ; but you know what our problem is? Not long after that, we sin. And look, you do not want to take by this, that when we sin, God is angry again and Jesus has to jump in there and pacify Him again. And so we've got this quick back and forth, you know—wrath, appeased; wrath, appeased; wrath, appeased.

You don't want to look at it like that. How you want to look at it is, Jesus has done the work. Jesus has completed the propitiatory work in behalf of His people. He drank the cup of wrath. And Jesus having done the work and bore the sin and bears the wounds, He stands in the presence of God. His very presence is our vindication. It speaks. His blood speaks. There is cleansing instantaneously, because that blood speaks of our redemption. It speaks of our cleansing. It speaks of the wrath being put away.

And listen, this is not contrary even to Paul's teaching. Paul says, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" And he's not saying no charge ever comes against God's elect. When he says "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Back in Romans 8, he's not saying it never happens. But rather, he's saying when it happens, it won't stand. It won't stick. And you know, some of the charges that get brought against us by the devil or by other people, they are often true. Not every charge brought against us is false. Oh yes, there are slanders and there are lies, but a lot of the things that get said against the Christian are absolutely true.

But listen to what he says, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect?" Well, there are people that bring it but what does Paul mean? He goes on to say, "It's God who justifies." — Again, it's interesting he has that, not in past tense - He justifies. Well, "Who is to condemn?" I mean, right at the moment when we sin, who is there to condemn? "Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

So who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Who's going to separate us from the fellowship? Who's going to separate us from His love? Who's going to do that? Why? Because we have Jesus Christ acting as this advocate in an ongoing sense.

This is the ongoing reality of justification. It's that He who is the justifier—based on the merits of Christ—has this intercessor, this advocate standing in His presence, full of all this merit and worth from the work that He has done.

Christian, your nature is one of light. When you sin, you do not cease to be in the light. God has delivered you from that. Christians walk in the light even when they sin. We don't change realms; we don't change kingdoms. You don't want to buy into the lie that you jump back and forth or that by falling into sin, you return to the darkness. You're in the light. And as a child in the light, that blood is effectual for you all the time. That's what John is wanting you to know. It's effectual in cleansing, all the time.

Look, what happens? The devil wants to jump in there and tempt God's children into hopelessness, right when we sin. You fall on your face, you fall down (the righteous man does fall seven times). And we fall but it's not what we want. Our life is characterized by light, it's characterized by righteousness. We're in God's word, it's changing our life. Many things are changed. There is sanctification that's taking place, but we fall. Sometimes, we miserably fall. And the devil is right there and what does he say, "Look at you. Look at you! You think He wants anything to do with you?"

He wants to drive us into this corner of hopelessness and despair; and I'll tell you, some of you fall for it.

Some of you fall for that very thing. The devil says, “You’re so wicked, you’re so vile, God doesn’t want any fellowship with you, He doesn’t want to see your ugly face. Go do penance for a week and then maybe.”

Don’t you feel that? I mean, that’s a reality. But John gives us the words to answer that old snake with. “Well, you know what? that’s true. I’ve sinned, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. And I’ve confessed my sins to Him, and He tells me He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And you know what? I did sin, but God comes right to me and through His apostle, He tells me, ‘When you sin, (it’s good if you don’t - - God’s word is written to us that we not) but when we do, we have an advocate.’” And it’s not just we ‘had’ one, we ‘have’ one. which means He pleads your case now. And it’s an ongoing pleading of your case. The moment you sin, Jesus is there before the Father.

The shed blood of Jesus Christ put me in the light, and it is the same shed blood of Jesus Christ that’s going to continue to deliver me from the guilt of my sins now that I am in the light. The blood - you can see it - If we walk in the light, the blood guarantees that our fellowship is maintained in an ongoing, continuous basis. I can look to the cross, trusting in the work of Christ. I can confess my sins, you don’t want to deny your sins.

These people that say they don’t have any sins, that’s not just a guy that believes in perfectionism, that’s when you’re just denying any sin. It’s the world out there today that says “oh yeah I’m a sinner”, but they don’t believe they’ve done anything that’s worthy of hell. That’s denying sin all over the place. That’s saying we don’t really have any sin, by God’s definition.

Listen, God is going to be faithful. That’s what it says, “God is faithful and just.” Oh! think about that. “Yeah devil, when I sin, you tell me I need to go hide over in a corner; but you know what? God’s justice — His justice — allows my fellowship.” What? Justice? “Yeah. Do you see that advocate sitting at the right hand of God? Do you see those wounds? You remember that blood He shed, because it crushed your head. He led captivity captive in that day, you remember that, devil? Because of that, God is faithful and just to forgive me. I have an advocate, He made propitiation. Do you remember that, devil? He drank the wrath of God.”

Brethren, draw close to the light; draw close to God. You know what’s going to happen? I mean, Christians will do this: “Oh Father, I want a closer walk with you.” And then you go talk to that brother or sister a week later, they’re feeling all the more unworthy than ever, and defiled and sinful; What happened? Well, it may be that God brought them a little closer and what it did was, that light shined all the brighter.

Yes, we’re going to be aware, especially if we draw closer and closer, of our continual unworthiness and failures and faults—it’s sin. We sin. we do bad, even as Christians. And we can be ashamed of it, but it’s true. And what do we need to do? We confess. Should we run and hide in hopelessness? No, No. What John is saying is, you look to the blood; you look to Christ, and there I see the justness of God. He is faithful, He is just to honor that lifeblood that was poured out.

Brethren, this doesn’t make us anymore bold to sin. It doesn’t cause us to count His blood as a cheap thing. Christians love the light, they walk in the light. They desire and long for the communion and fellowship with God. I want to be with Him, I want to be like Him. But when I sin, I know there is One there who has spilled His blood to take away the wrath of God on my part. God’s wrath was poured on Him. There’s tremendous power in that blood to wash away guilt of the most heinous sins.

I would just have you all wrestle with this. Look, I don’t have any problem when somebody says “Oh, when

I believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, all my sin - past, present and future - were dealt with (or put away).” Well, I think it might be more accurate to say: On the cross, all your sins - past, present and future - were dealt with; but as far as application, there definitely seems that there is a necessary work of the blood of Christ, the advocacy of Christ and the intercession of Christ, day by day, in our life.

So if you say, “Ah, when I first got saved, all my sin - past, present and future - were forgiven, pardoned”, I’m not going to argue with you. I’m not going to challenge that. But I think we might be a little bit more explicit about what we mean. I think that definition might be just a little bit inadequate in light of verses like these.

I think the way we want to think about justification is certainly not that Christ needs to do any sacrificial work over again; but in the application of its merits, it seems it’s just like: You sin, and He’s there. You sin again, He’s there. His advocacy is instantaneous. It deals with your sin on the spot, so that the whole time, even when you fall flat on your face, there is God’s smile. There is His hand outstretched, “I still want fellowship with you.”

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for the powerful blood of your Son; for the ongoing advocacy and intercession. Lord, I pray that the reality of this would be helpful to us. that we might live in that hope Lord, that none of my brothers or sisters would be led into this deception that when they sin, now all of a sudden, fellowship is broken and busted and parted, and that they have no access. We know that He that saved us in the beginning, we’re told that how much more, how much more. Having being justified by the blood, how much more, now, is His life there. Alive. The Advocate. The Intercessor. How much more, now, are we going to be saved from the wrath of God. And we are; because that blood ever speaks in our behalf. Thank you for such a glorious salvation. Amen.