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“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleans us from all unrighteousness,” I John 1:9.

## Cleansing From Sin

**Lesson Aim:** Stress that it is God only who forgives sin, and that only through the blood of Jesus.

**L74. Date:** August 1966. **Text:** I John 1:1-10.

**Topic:** Christ: Blood of; Sin: Forgiveness of.

### INTRODUCTION

There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

—William Cowper.

With such words the familiar Christian hymn speaks of a fountain which has been opened for the washing away of sin. It was opened because of the universality of man's guilt, Romans 3:9-12. It was opened because of the consequences and penalty of man's sin, Romans 5:12. It was opened because it is the only way man can be freed from his sins, Hebrews 9:22; Acts 4:12. It was opened so that all who hear and believe the gospel may be freely and completely justified, I John 1:9.

The significance of the provision of the fountain of cleansing is evidenced in view of the mercy of God which provided it and the sacrifice of the Lamb through whose blood sinners are cleansed. Its significance is further shown in the uniqueness of the provision: there is no other way of salvation.

Cleansing from sin is God's work, not man's. A clean thing could never come out of an unclean. No more could the leopard change his spots or the

Ethiopian his skin than a sinner could cleanse himself and do right before God. God is too holy to look with favor upon sin, Habakkuk 1:13. Yet He desires fellowship with men. Therefore He provided a way whereby men could be cleansed from sin and enjoy perfect fellowship with Him. What is the aim for this study?

## EXPOSITION

### I. THE ASSURANCE OF CLEANSING, 1:1-3.

1. Personal experience.—There is no substitute for personal experience in religion. The religion of the New Testament is a religion of the new birth and that means a personal relationship with God. Look at the first person personal pronouns which John uses. “We have heard . . . we have seen with our eyes . . . we have looked upon . . . our hands have handled . . . we have seen and heard and declare. . .” verses 1-3.

The senses of the physical body are called to testify. John says, “We have known God in Jesus Christ by sight, sound and feeling.”

**They heard Him!** How intimate their relationship as they listened to the instruction, prayers, reproofs, comfort, and commands which issued from his lips. Even His enemies testified. “**Never man spake like this man,**” John 7:46. His words are the words of God, John 14:24. They are spirit and life (John 6:63) and will never pass away, Matthew 24:3. Those who listened marveled at the gracious words which proceeded from His mouth, Luke 4:22. His words abide unto this day and will be the standard by which men will be judged in the last days, John 12:48. He was, indeed, “a prophet mighty in word and deed,” Luke 24:19. The early believers heard His words and reported them to us. Oh, the wonder of His words!

**They saw Him!** All doubt is removed when the testimony of sight is added to that of hearing. John uses a grammatical structure which means they actually looked upon the Lord Jesus; they saw Him with their own eyes. If anyone denied the reality of the Lord, John would answer, “Not so, I heard Him with my own ears and saw Him with my own eyes. . . .” Such testimony cannot be controverted. John had seen Jesus as the man of Nazareth. He had also seen Him as the glorified Lord at the transfiguration. Like Peter, he could say, “**We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty,**” II Peter 1:16. No room for doubt was left.

**They touched Him!** As if the senses of sight and sound were not

sufficient, John calls for the testimony of the sense of touch. Both before and following His death and resurrection, they handled (touched) Him who is “the Word of Life.” Blessed privilege to have known the Lord in such an intimate and personal relationship.

August Van Ryn points out that we can experience what John and the other disciples did. “Hear Him, with the hearing of faith. See Him, with the eyes of our hearts. Look upon Him, as we study and meditate on God's Word. Handle Him, in blessed intimacy, in communion and service.” Ours is still a religion of personal experience.

It is in such a personal relationship that cleansing from sin is perfected. From the initial experience of redemption on through daily cleansing, personal experience with the Lord brings personal cleansing by the Lord. We have the assurance of cleansing because of a personal experience with Jesus.

2. Self-revelation.—Man did not find God by searching for Him. God “was manifested” to men by His own act, verse 2. Elsewhere John puts into words that which human tongue dare utter only with reverence: **“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth,”** John 1:14. Paul writes of “the mystery of godliness” in these words: **“God was manifest in the flesh . . .”** I Timothy 3:16.

Christianity is more than a theory of religion. It is the revelation of a Person. It is more than belief of a system of doctrine. It is personal acquaintance with a Person. It is more than a temporary emotional experience. It is an eternal vision and fellowship and relationship with God through His Son.

God was manifested in Jesus so that He became intellectually or sensibly known to man. John places a parenthesis in verse two as if to say, “Yes, what I said above is really true. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, actually manifested Himself so that we saw and understood Him.” This revelation of Himself is God's own gracious act.

3. Testimony of others.—**“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ,”** verse 3. There is an encouragement in knowing that my experience is not unique, I have met God in Jesus Christ, but I am not alone in that experience. Many others testify to a like experience. Indeed, because of what I have found in Him, my fellowship with other believers is vibrantly real. This is a proof that my experience is genuine. It gives me assurance that I have been cleansed through the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. THE BLESSING OF CLEANSING, 1:4-7.

1. Joy.—Fellowship is the result of experience and joy is the result of fellowship, verse 4. This joy is not the result of nor dependent upon outward circumstances, artificial entertainment, nor sensual satisfactions. It is not the kind of joy which the world gives, John 14:27. This joy is found only in Him in whose presence there is “fulness of joy” and at whose “right hand there are pleasures forevermore,” Psalm 16:11.

In these days the believer needs to experience this joy in the Lord. It is possible in a world beset by evil and constant trials, since it is based on internal relationship with God and not on external relationship with the world. It is not a frame of mind nor condition of circumstances, but a relationship of the heart. The believer can rejoice in the Lord. **“Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice,”** Philippians 4:4. Such joy is possible to those who have been cleansed.

2. Fellowship with God.—Read verses 5-6. A child defined fellowship as “two fellows in the same ship.” Perhaps there is a real meaning here. Fellowship involves two persons of like mind, purpose, and goal who are in agreement in working toward the same end. More exactly, fellowship is a companionship of persons on friendly terms; friendliness; comradeship. This is the kind of relationship the forgiven sinner enters into with God.

In Christ the believer becomes a member of the divine family and a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Fellowship begins with an experience of grace in regeneration. We can have fellowship with God only if we bear His nature. (See II Peter 1:4.) God promised. **“I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people,”** II Corinthians 6:16. But this fellowship is maintained only by purity of heart and hands. **“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth,”** I John 1:6. Blessed privilege to share a common spirit with the Lord God!

3. Fellowship with believers.—**“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. . .”** verse 7. Fellowship between men is based on a common fellowship with God. They who share the common experience of cleansing from sin and eternal life are bound together in a relationship more enduring than blood kinship. Appreciation, understanding, sympathy, help, and kindred expressions of concern will be manifest between them. This is why John repeatedly relates love to God and love to man. Fellowship between Christian brethren does not depend upon wealth, rank, nor such externals, but a common relationship to God. If God is

our Father then all we believers are brethren. We live together with the same relationship between us that is between each of us and God. Look about you in the church and community and call to mind people whom you love in the Lord.

4. Continual cleansing.—“. . . The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin,” verse 7. This refers to the cleansing of sanctification as well as to the cleansing in salvation. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses once-for-all the soul of the repenting believer. But it is the same blood which is needed to cleanse the believer from daily defilement as he walks in the world. The same blood which cleanses and saves the penitent believer also cleanses and sanctifies the humble saint.

The city of Damascus has a river which flows through it and which served a dual purpose in ancient times. Near its source the water was clean and provided the needs of the people of the city. As it passed through the city, however, it was used as a convenient sanitation device and all refuse was cast into it. By its constant flow it carried away that which was cast therein and kept the city clean. Just so, the blood of Christ provides the water of life and the water of cleansing to the believer. It flows into the soul to bring eternal life. There it becomes a well of living water which continually flows to keep his life pure and clean.

Every faltering believer, every fearful person, can take heart in this blessed truth. God does not just save us and leave it up to our own ability to get to heaven pure. He keeps on exercising a continual cleansing by the blood of Jesus. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, keeps on cleansing us from all sin.”

### **III. THE NECESSITY OF CLEANSING, 1:8, 10.**

There are two basic errors people make regarding sin. Both of them are dealt with here. Verse eight speaks of those who deny that they have any sins of which to repent and receive forgiveness. Such a claim is evidence of pride, ignorance, or self-deception. It is a willful thing. The Christian Science philosophy declares there is no sin. John positively contradicts such absurdity. He says of such teachers that they are self-deceived and there is no truth in them. Pretty strong language but it is the truth of God.

People who talk like this are out of touch with the Lord. The closer one walks with the Lord the more he knows of his own exceeding worthlessness in the presence of His glory and grace. When Isaiah saw the Lord in a vision he cried, **“Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes**

**have seen the King, the Lord of hosts,”** Isaiah 6:5. So if any person says he has no sins of which to repent and receive forgiveness, he is revealing a basic ignorance of God. Look at God and sin becomes vividly real.

The second error is set out in verse ten. There are some who say they never have sinned. Such an assertion denies repeated statements of God's Word. Read Romans 3 noting especially verses 9-23. “All,” “all,” “all,” repeatedly occurs. **“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,”** Romans 11:32. But before one can be cleansed of sin, he must admit that he needs cleansing. Otherwise, there is no hope. God knows all men are sinners and has prepared a way whereby all who repent and believe on Jesus will assuredly be saved.

#### **IV. THE WAY OF CLEANSING, 1:9.**

This is the heart of the whole lesson for those who have not yet trusted Jesus for forgiveness. To answer the question, “How can I receive forgiveness,” examine I John 1:9-22. Remember that there were no chapter and verse divisions in the original manuscripts of the Bible and this is all one section of the Epistle. John says three things are basic to forgiveness and cleansing from sin.

1. Confession.—Observe the statement, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” verse 9. The conclusion is “if we confess.” The assurance is “he is faithful and just.” The promise is “to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This promise applies equally well to the sinner who comes for salvation and to the believer who comes for daily cleansing.

Confession of sin is made directly to God through Jesus Christ. It is unnecessary to depend upon any advocate between God and man except the Lord Jesus. Neither priests, saints, angels, nor any other can help here. This is a personal matter before a personal God. Jesus Christ alone can minister here, and He is enough. **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,”** I Timothy 2:5.

Like the publican in Luke 18:9-14 who would not so much as lift his eyes toward heaven, but smiting himself upon the breast, cried out, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” so every man who confesses his sins to God asking for forgiveness will be cleansed, **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy,”** Proverbs 28:13. Just so, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,”**

verse 9. Try it and see!

2. Advocacy of Jesus.—I John 2:1 states, **“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the righteous.”** An Advocate is one who represents our interest before God. In legal terminology, he would be called a lawyer. This passage says Jesus is in the presence of the Father to represent our interest there, to see that we are fairly heard, and to intercede in our behalf. Hebrews 7:25 says, **“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”** Jesus also said, “. . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” John 14:6. Paul presents the same idea in Romans 8:34, **“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.”**

This is the way we come to God, The repenting sinner comes to God trusting Jesus to represent him there with His own atonement. Through repentance and faith, forgiveness is given because Jesus intercedes. In like manner, the believer approaches God through Jesus Christ. His prayers are heard and he receives an audience with God because Jesus is his advocate. Anyone who rejects Jesus closes the doors of heaven against his soul.

3. Propitiation of Jesus.— **“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world,”** I John 2:2. A very intricate and important argument is set out in Romans 3:21-26. It states, in substance, that God is able to justify the sinner without doing violence to His own just law because that Jesus has died and His blood has become propitiation through faith.

Propitiation means atonement or covering. The blood of Jesus provides the covering for sin. Without His blood there is no remission, Hebrews 9:22. Paul says that in Him “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,” Ephesians 1:7.

The repenting sinner comes to God believing that the blood of Jesus is sufficient for his forgiveness. God sees his faith and pronounces him justified because the blood of Jesus actually covers and cleanses his sin. In like manner, a disobedient believer comes to God confessing his sins and asking restoration to fellowship and the joys of salvation. God receives him and restores him because “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sins.” I John 1:9.

## CONCLUSION

God desires to enter into the fellowship of forgiveness with any man

who will come to Him through Jesus Christ. If any reader will forsake his sin, turn to God for forgiveness, and trust in the Lord Jesus to secure forgiveness before God, he will be received and given eternal life. Look at the promises in John 5:24 and 3:14-18. If any believer who erred from the way will turn to God asking forgiveness and restoration, he will be received. Try God and see. **“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon thee,”** Psalm 86:5

### QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be cleansed from sin?
2. Who needs cleansing?
3. How can we be sure God will actually forgive and cleanse?
4. What blessings come when one is cleansed?
5. Does I John 1:7 apply to the saved or unsaved? Explain?
6. What do verses 8 and 10 say about sin?
7. Why is confession essential to forgiveness?