

## 2. Fellowship Develops as We Experience Forgiveness and Cleansing

In our last topic, we saw that one of our goals, as Christians, should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in fellowship with the Father, and with Christ, as they walk in the light. Today, we are going to see how to show our children the way that this fellowship, with the Father and the Son, develops as we experience forgiveness and cleansing. Many Christians are Christians for years before they finally realize that Christ paid the penalty for all of their sins. Sometimes, Christians continue to live with guilt in their lives because no one has taken the time to help them understand the meaning of forgiveness and cleansing. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In 1 John 1:8, we read, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Most Christians realize that they continue to sin after they become Christians, even though there are a few who deceive themselves and think that they no longer sin. This verse speaks to those who deceive themselves. However, it is also a reminder that we do continue to sin after we become Christians. The fact that Christians do continue to sin causes many to live with great guilt, unless they understand what the Bible teaches about forgiveness and cleansing.

That is why 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” One of our goals, as we help our physical and spiritual children in their spiritual growth, should be to help them learn how to understand and explain to others how to experience both forgiveness and cleansing from sin. We want to help them understand five things Christ did for them at the moment of salvation. Acts 26:18 says that Christ does the following five things for every person at the moment of salvation. That verse says, “To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Here, we see that at the moment of salvation, Christ:

- Opened our eyes
- Turned us from darkness to light
- Turned us from the power of Satan to God
- Caused us to receive forgiveness of sins
- Caused us to receive an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ

The fourth thing Christ did was that He caused us to receive forgiveness of sins. The word “forgiveness” means *to let go, to send away, or to give up a debt*. We want to help our children understand that at the moment we placed our trust in Christ, He let go of all of our sins: those we committed in the past; those we commit today; those that we will commit in the future. 1 Peter 2:24 tells us, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Every sin that we ever committed, or will commit, was placed on Christ as He hung on the cross. The penalty for our sin was paid that day on the cross.

Because Christ paid the penalty for our sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew

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no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This verse explains what happens at the moment we repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sin when He died on the cross. At the moment we repent, God forgives our sin and sends our sin away from us. However, the Father does a second thing for us at that moment. 2 Corinthians 5:17 said, a few verses earlier, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Because we are now in Christ, verse 21 says that the Father has placed the righteousness of Christ on us. This means that as the Father looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ instead of our sin.

However, as Christians, we still continue to commit sins. That is why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children understand 1 John 1:8-2:2. 1 John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” We have already seen that 1 John 1:8 tells us that we deceive ourselves when we say that we no longer sin. That is why 1 John 2:1-2 tells us what happens when we do sin again. We see that when we sin again, Christ acts as our Advocate or defense attorney.

These verses give us a picture of a courtroom. In Revelation 12:10, we see that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. In 1 John 2:1-2, we see that the Father is the Judge and Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney. When I sin, Satan accuses me of sin to the Father because he is the accuser of the brethren. After Satan accuses me, Christ immediately speaks as my Advocate or defense attorney. Christ says that He paid for my sin and that I accepted His payment by repenting of my sin. We must help our children understand the meaning of the word “propitiation” in order for them to fully understand what happens next. The word “propitiation” means *that which satisfies*. As a result, when Christ says that He paid for my sin, and that I accepted the payment by repenting of my sin, the Father says, “I am satisfied with the payment. Case dismissed.” We became the children of God at the moment of salvation, and Satan can never destroy that relationship.

We also want to help our children understand that the sin people must repent of, in order to become the children of God, is the sin of unbelief. John 16:8-11 shows us that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces unbelievers of three things. Those verses say, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The Holy Spirit convicts those who are not Christians of their sin of unbelief. He convinces them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One who could pay the penalty for their sin. He convinces them of the fact that Satan was already judged at the cross and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment. As our children learn to understand these verses, they learn how to work with the Holy Spirit as they share the Gospel with others.

We also want to help our children understand, so they can explain to others, what God does with our sins at the moment of salvation. We see that God:

1. Removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west – Psalm 103:12 (Aren’t you glad that He did not say as far as the north is from the south).

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2. Cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea – Micah 7:19
3. Promised He will remember our sins and lawless deeds no more – Hebrews 10:17
4. Blotted out our sins at the moment we repented – Acts 3:19

One of the other things that happens at the moment of salvation is the fact that God renewed our conscience. As Christians, our conscience now convicts us immediately when we commit sin. However, the purpose of convicting us of sin is not to cause us to have to live with continual guilt. Instead, our conscience is renewed so that we are very aware of the fact that we are committing sins so that we can confess those sins. As we confess our sins moment-by-moment, we are able to have a good or clear conscience. Hebrews 13:18 says, “Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.” Once we have placed our trust in Christ, we have a desire to please God by living honorably. We have that good conscience because we do confess our sins.

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We have already seen that our sins are forgiven and that is what established the relationship so that we are the children of God. However, we also need to experience the cleansing so we can enjoy moment-by-moment fellowship with God. Hebrews 9:14 explains, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The blood of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins so that we experienced forgiveness at the moment of salvation. In addition, we see, in 1 John 1:9, that the blood continues to cleanse us so that we are able to experience moment-by-moment fellowship with the Lord.

We also learn two things about the character of the Father from 1 John 1:9. First, we see that God is faithful to forgive and cleanse us. This means that regardless how many times we sin after we become a Christian, God will always cleanse us, because He has already forgiven us. Second, we see that God is just to forgive and cleanse us. The reason why the Father is just when He forgives us is due to the fact that our sin was paid for by Christ, and the Father is satisfied with that payment, as we saw earlier. In order for God to be just, the penalty for sin had to be paid. However, as we saw earlier, the Father was satisfied by the payment Christ made by shedding His blood. As a result, the Father is just when He forgives and cleanses sin because the penalty for that sin has already been paid in full by Christ.

It is a great privilege to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that they can enjoy fellowship with the Father, and with Christ, because of the fact that Christ provided the payment both for their forgiveness and for their cleansing. As each Christian confesses his or her sin, that person can know the joy of fellowship because their conscience is being cleansed as they confess their sins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to help others experience fellowship with Christ and with the Father.