

Jesus' Blood Keeps on Cleansing

Dub McClish

Many years ago (when I was a very young preacher) I believed that unless one specifically named every sin he committed and specifically asked forgiveness of each one, as he became aware of such sins, God would not forgive them. Eventually, I came to see that this was an untenable (and unscriptural) position for various reasons:

1. One would have to be omniscient even to know all of the sins he commits. Surely, we all sin without even knowing we sin; we likely do so every day.
2. Innumerable faithful saints have died without warning, having no time to reflect upon or ask for forgiveness of a sin or of sins they may have very recently committed, even if they are conscious of having committed them.
3. My former understanding of this matter would make it practically impossible for the godliest person on earth to be saved.
4. The Bible does not teach what I once believed on this subject.

I have come to understand that, as long as God's children constantly strive to "walk in the light" (i.e., live our lives devoted to God and in obedience to His Word to the best of our abilities) the blood of Christ continually "cleanseth us from all sin." Note this phrase in John's statement: "But **if** we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son **cleanseth us from all sin**" (1 John 1:7, emph. DM). *Cleanseth* is a present tense form of *cleanse* in the Greek language and therefore has the force of "keeps on cleansing."

Note that this cleansing (i.e., forgiveness) carries the powerful little word, *if*. That is, the constant cleansing is **conditional**, and upon two factors:

1. One must be in fellowship with God and His Son, as were the recipients of John's letter (implied in vv. 1–6 and throughout the epistle). Their fellowship with the Father and the Son further implies that they had heard and obeyed the Gospel terms that brought them **initial** cleansing through Jesus' blood (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37–38; 22:16; et al.).
2. One who is in fellowship with Deity must evince a continual dedication of life (not sinless perfection) to the Christ and His Truth (explicitly stated in v. 7). Thus if one ceases to continue to "walk in the light," Jesus' blood ceases to keep on cleansing him. Note also that the resultant continual cleansing covers "**all** our sin"—even those sins of which we might not be conscious and those for which we might not have an opportunity to ask specific forgiveness. Surely, this most comforting promise is an expression of the wonderful grace of God, apart from which none of His redeemed people can at last enter into Heaven.

My change of convictions on this subject several decades ago does not mean that I am now indifferent to temptation or careless about sin and its consequences. Nor does it mean that I have in any way abandoned the Bible's teaching concerning the need to confess my sins as I become aware of them and, if they are against a person, to the respective party against whom I have sinned (1 John 1:9, et al.). Further, this understanding of 1 John 1:7 in no way suggests the Calvinistic heresy of "perseverance of the saints."

Let us, as God's children, "walk in the light" as fully as humanly possible, knowing that, at our best, we will sometimes fail to do so and thereby sin. To deny this fact means that we have lied and that we have implied that God is a liar (v. 10). Let us also, however, rejoice in the comfort, hope, and assurance the Scriptures afford. By continuing to live in harmony with the Divine will ("walking in the light") as much as it is possible for dedicated saints to do, that assurance is that the blood of our Lord will keep on cleansing us of sin and thus keep us ready (and able) to enter the heavenly portals at last. Herein is that blessed peace "which passeth all understanding" (Phi. 4:7).

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