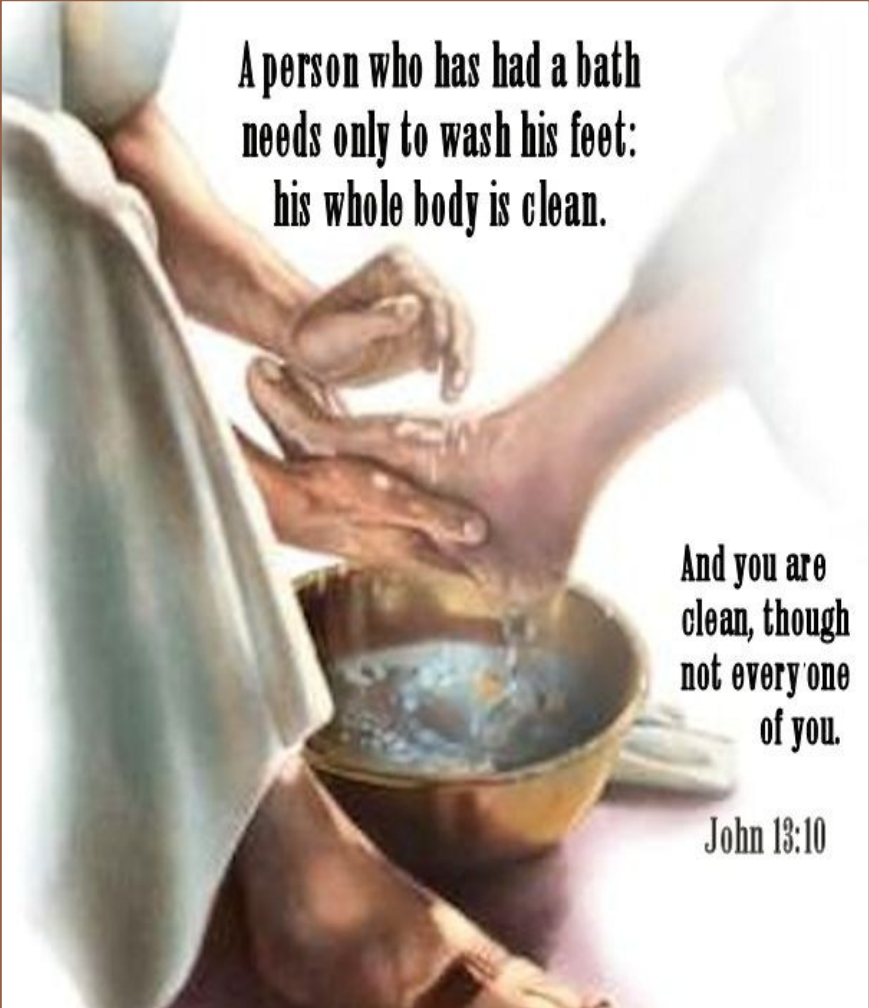


The Christian Life Series—Book 3

Family Versus Fellowship

A close-up photograph showing a person's hands being washed in a shallow, golden-colored bowl filled with water. The person washing the feet is wearing a white garment, and the feet being washed are also in a white garment. The background is blurred, showing more of the person being washed.

**A person who has had a bath
needs only to wash his feet:
his whole body is clean.**

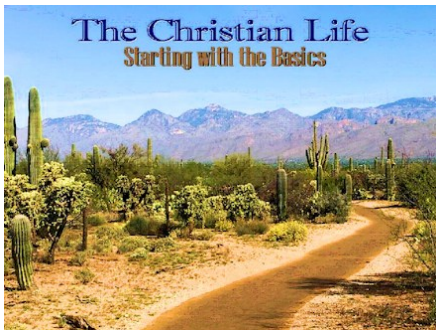
**And you are
clean, though
not everyone
of you.**

John 13:10

Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

In our first book in this series—*The Christian Life, Starting with the Basics*—we laid the foundation by establishing the Word of God as our source of truth. In the second book, we looked at two things that always exist simultaneously for the Christian:



- Our *position* in Christ
- Our *experience* at any moment of time

In this, the third book in our Christian Life series, we again explore two things simultaneously: Our membership in the *Family of God* versus our daily *Fellowship with God*. In the same way that we covered the pair of *position* and *experience* in our last study, today we look at another pair of terms—*family* and *fellowship*. Like the previous book, it is very important to understand both the distinction between the two, as well as how they are related to one another.

May God bless as you pursue this most important of truths.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig', written in a cursive style.

Kevin Redig, pastor-teacher

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

Becoming Part of the Family of God

Something absolutely amazing happens to a people when they place their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In fact, quite a few amazing things happen. These now eternally-saved individuals have eternal life, the very righteousness of Christ imputed to them, a new destiny in God's heaven. . .and quite a few other unmerited blessings. But I have one in particular in mind for today's discussion:

Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 1:12-13

Yet to all who received Him immediately brings to mind the question, "How does one receive Jesus?" Thankfully, the text explains it to us. We receive Him by *believing in His Name*. Now the term *name* needs be understood as it was used at the time John's Gospel was written. It means the sum and substance of the person. When it comes to Jesus, we have a good summary of that in the three names often applied to Him—the Lord Jesus Christ:

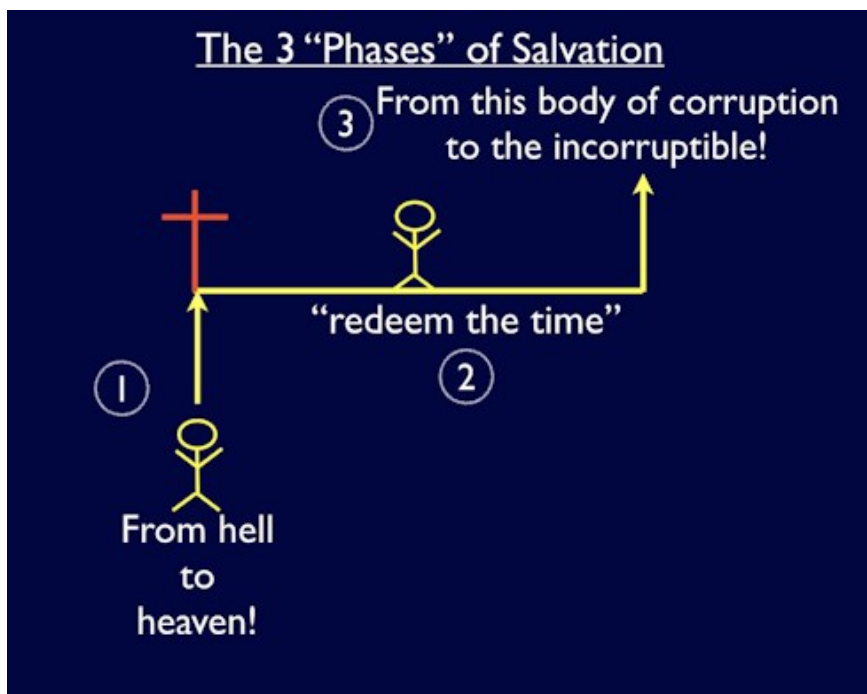
- The title *Lord* refers to His deity as the eternally existent Second Person of the Trinity.
- The name *Jesus* applies to His humanity, which He took on at His First Advent. He had two natures, human and divine, inseparably united forever in one person.
- Then, *Christ*, the Greek form of the Hebrew Messiah, refers to His role as the Savior of mankind.

When you have believed in Jesus—who He is and what He accomplished at the cross—you receive Him, and, in doing so, become a child of God. Not a child born physically, but born supernaturally! What an amazing thing God has

provided for those who believe—that we can confidently claim to be *children of God!*

While we are at it, let me relate this to the diagram depicting *The 3 "Phases" of Salvation*. When we believe, part of our Phase 1 salvation is, not only to change eternal destinies, but also to become a child of God. Then throughout the days the Lord gives us on this earth (Phase 2), we need to understand the calling upon our lives to redeem the time, to make the most of everything He has given us. This is a call upon the child of God to live not only consistently with his or her position in Christ but, as we shall see, also to live as an heir of God and co-heir with Christ.

Let me be quick to point out, that this is not hyperbole, an exaggeration without substance. Nor, is it an isolated *one-verse* doctrine that we have taken out of context. Rather, this precious *heavenly Father-child of God relationship* is



emphasized in many ways and in many places throughout the Scriptures. Let's look at three examples:

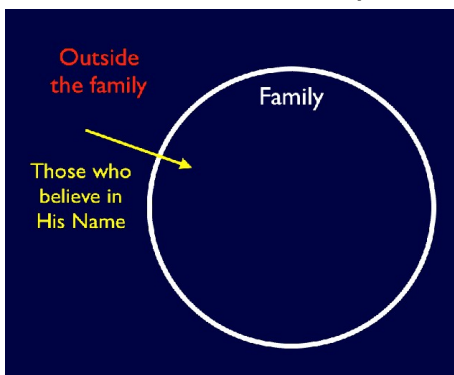
How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!
I John 3:1

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . .
Galatians 3:26

The Spirit Himself testified with our spirit that we are God's children.
Romans 8:16

Perhaps you are thinking, "I don't feel like a child of God." Nonetheless, if you have trusted in Jesus Christ for eternal life, then, upon the authority of God's Word, that is what you are! Your membership in the family of God is the result of a lavish act of love on God's part. Further, if you will allow the Spirit of God to testify to your spirit through the Word, He Himself will make it clear that, as the result of your faith in Christ Jesus, you have entered into a family relationship with God Himself!

For our purposes, we can picture the believer's family relationship this way. Those who have placed their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ are in the *family of God* by virtue of having become a child of God. We don't work for or earn this wonderful status, we obtain it by believing in Jesus Christ.



You see every member of the human race is born *dead in trespasses and sin* (Ephesians 2:1) and are thereby an object of God's wrath (Ephesians 2:3). But, when we turn to the Savior, placing our faith in who He is and what He accomplished on our behalf on the cross, God Himself changes our status from an object of wrath to family!

Being in the Family Means Inheritance

If we dig deeper, we will find there is even more. Consider the idea of inheritance:

. . . we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. . .

Romans 8:17

At first glance, this passage just doesn't seem possible! How could we have an inheritance coming from God? How could we be co-heirs with Jesus Christ? If we understand and believe the change that occurred at our salvation, when we entered into a family relationship with God the Father, then the reality should sink in. We could then say: "Wait a minute, if I am truly a son, and now part of the family of God, then I have by definition become an heir!" This very same idea is reinforced by Peter:

In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope. . .and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. . .

I Peter 1: 3-4

The new birth that accompanies faith in Christ is the first step that leads to our becoming a child of God. Once again, if we are a child then we are naturally an heir. This passage makes clear that, as an heir, we have a very special inheritance on reserve in heaven for us. Thank goodness this inheritance doesn't depend upon us! For it is the Holy Spirit Himself who guarantees what is to come based upon nothing more than our having believed:

. . .having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. . .

Ephesians 1:13-14

Perhaps you are still wondering about that idea of being a co-heir with Christ. How is it that we can share in that which is coming to Christ? Start with the following:

Both the One who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

Hebrews 2:11

Jesus took on humanity at the time of His first coming, and for that reason can be said to be *of the same family* as every born-again child of God. As we have already seen, our family relationship to the Father makes us an heir, and that helps us understand how it is that we are co-heirs with Christ.

He is the Son of God, and we are brothers by virtue of becoming children of God—co-heirs!

It Also Brings a New Body

Wait, there is more:

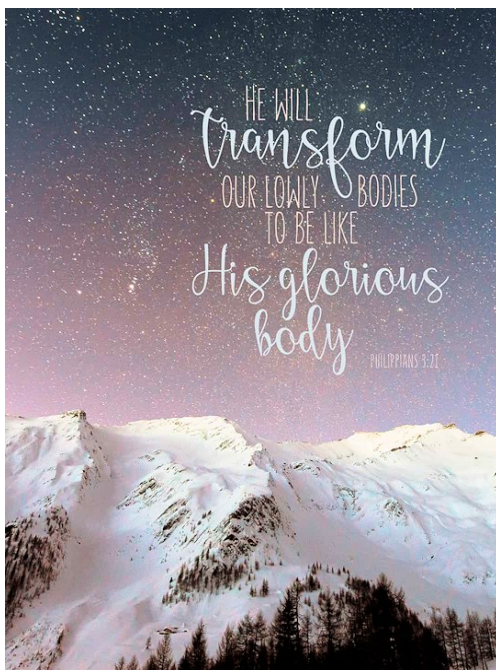
And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

I Corinthians 15:49

. . .the Lord Jesus. . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

Philippians 3:20-21

It is true that we often glory in the message of these passages: We are going to have a resurrection body one day and it is going to be like the resurrection body of our Lord and Savior. The connection that we typically fail to make is this: Of course we are going to have a body like our brother, for we are of the same family. Jesus has led the way, and we are following in His train. As children of God, we are going to share in what is His. Our gracious God has been so very good to us by bringing us into His family!



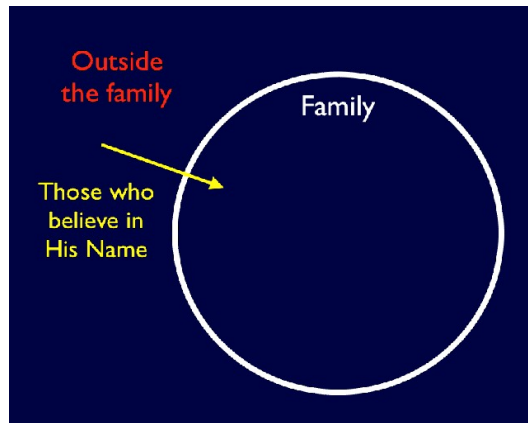
Our Family Relationship Is Permanent

Now, at some point, you are going to wonder, “Is it possible to lose this family relationship? Can some failure mean that I can cease being a child of God?” A full answer to this question is part of what is often referred to as eternal security and assurance. We will cover both topics in a future lesson.

For now, let me answer it this way: Although it is true there can be a great deal of turmoil in a human family, a DNA test will always show the relationship between family members. So, too, from the spiritual perspective, we can create problems between ourselves and our heavenly Father, but we are once and for all members of His family. We can disappoint, disobey, and anger Him, we can also displease Him. No matter! Just like the human realm, once God has brought us into His family, causing us to be children of God, that status is permanent and irrevocable!

God gave us this wonderful standing. It wasn’t based upon anything we did. Further, He knew beforehand of every failure and disappointment on our part and still He gave us the right to become children of God through faith in the work of His Son. I

have shown it in this way on our diagram—we get into the family of God by believing on His Name, and it is a one way arrow. God doesn’t send anyone back! Praise God that every blessing we have in the Christian Life depends upon the faithfulness of our God and not upon ourselves.



But There Are Consequences

Now this discussion is not to imply that, although our membership in the family of God is permanent, there are not consequences associated with disobedience or a failure to grow. There most certainly are! Let's discuss three passages of Scripture that make clear that there are consequences associated with the life we live as Christians.

My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son. Hebrews 12:5-6

The Lord disciplines every one of His children—as any Father would. If you are really beginning to understand your standing as a member of the family of God, then this should be completely expected. In fact, both the inheritance associated with being an heir, and the discipline associated with being a son, are simply part and parcel of having become a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Something would be wrong if God didn't discipline us when we disobey His revealed will to us—including His command to grow spiritually!

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:30

Do not quench the Spirit.

I Thessalonians 5:19

Sin in our lives and disobedience to the revealed will of the Father also inhibit the Holy Spirit's ministry to us. In these passages, our sin is said to grieve and then possibly even quench the Spirit's ministry. As we learn more about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our next book, you will see it is a serious issue indeed to lose the ministry of the Holy Spirit when it comes to living the Christian Life. The Christian Life is simply not possible without His involvement.

In short, there most certainly are consequences for failure in the Christian Life—loss of our family relationship just doesn't happen to be one of them. That raises the question, when we do fail, either by sins of commission or omission, how does this impact our Christian Life? We will begin to answer this question by moving from the subject of *family* to that of *fellowship*.

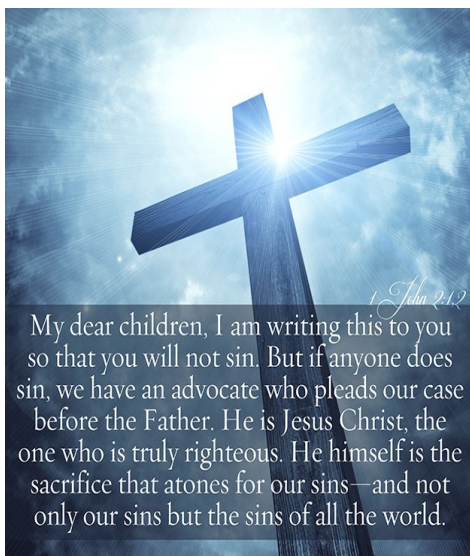
The Issue of Fellowship with God

Being *in fellowship with God* is a Biblical concept that stands on its own. But, as we develop our understanding, it will be very helpful to compare and contrast it with what we have just learned about the *family of God*. The term *fellowship* comes from the text of I John. At this point, it would be helpful to read the entire first chapter, before I comment.

Recognizing the Audience

The first thing we need to do is to settle the question of audience. Specifically, to whom is John's first epistle written? A few references should settle that question:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ. . . I John 2:1



John calls his audience dear children because they are those who have responded to the call to believe in Jesus that he presented so clearly in the Gospel account that bears his name. In his Gospel, John urges the lost to believe—using some form of the word 99 times. Now, he is urging this group not to sin. Naturally, that is the logical next step for those who have believed!

I write you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name. I John 2:12

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! I John 3:1

So these dear children have had their sins forgiven. These dear children are also children of God! We know who that would be. It is those who *received Him, those who believed in His Name!* John's first epistle is clearly written to believers. Do not be deceived by those who attempt to use this epistle as a series of tests as to whether or not one is really saved. John is starting with saved individuals, and then delivering a number of very important lessons to them. The first of those lessons is *fellowship*.

Explaining Fellowship

I John 1:3-4 reveals to us John's intent in writing his first epistle, and at the same time introduces us to the subject of fellowship with God.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

I John 1:3-4

What John really wants this group of believers to have is the same fellowship with God that He has. Remember, this is the Apostle that John's Gospel describes as the *one*

whom Jesus loved. (John 20:2) This is the same John who saw those glorious visions of heaven and the prophetic future and preserved them for us in the Book of Revelation. He wants us to have the same fellowship with God that he has—that is the one thing that would make his joy complete. I can certainly, in my own small way, identify with his desire. For, after studying God’s Word, I delight to teach it to those gathered, and the one thing that makes my joy complete is to explain it with sufficient clarity that others understand it as I do.

Take John’s goal of promoting *fellowship with God* and ponder the next few verses in I John 1.

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.

I John 1:5

God is perfect righteousness—in Him there is no darkness whatsoever—not the least sin. That fact has ironclad ramifications when it comes to us having fellowship with Him. This is made clear in the next verse:

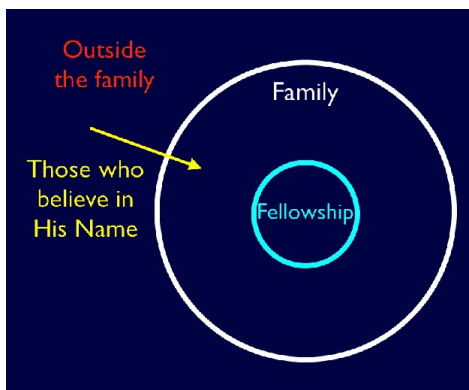
If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

I John 1:6

This verse is very dogmatic. If there is sin in our lives, we do not have fellowship with God no matter what we claim! Why? Because there is no darkness in Him! In short, God cannot have fellowship, even with those who are in a family relationship with Him, if they walk in darkness because there is sin in their lives.

We still have a bit more to develop, but this gives us enough to amend our graphic. We already know how you enter the *family of God*—by placing your faith in the person and work of Christ. What the graphic is now depicting by means of the inner circle is a subset of the family of God—those who are in *fellowship* with Him.

The inner circle would be those believers who are walking in the light as He is in the light. As I John 6 makes perfectly clear, you can be a dear child of God and yet not be in fellowship with Him. All it takes to be out of fellowship is to walk in darkness. For a believer, that simply means sins in thought, word, or deed.



You may find Ephesians 5:8-11 to be helpful in order to see the connection between darkness and sin.

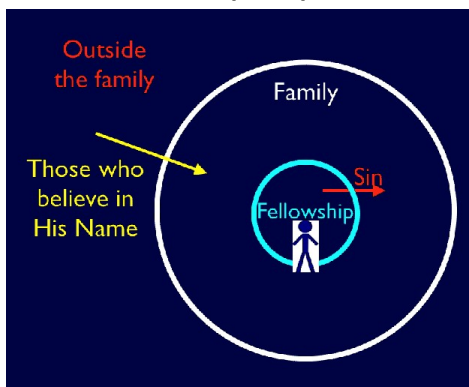
For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness. . . it is shameful to even mention what the disobedient do in secret (in the dark). Ephesians 5:8-11

Verse 8 further clarifies the parallelism between sin and walking in darkness. In Verse 6, John speaks of darkness and light, while in Verse 8, John uses the synonym for darkness—sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

I John 1:8

The unfolding of the above passages allows us to make two further additions to our graphic. First, how do we break our fellowship with God? As the result of



any kind of sin! For when we sin, we walk in darkness and God is perfect light. Because in Him is no darkness, that means the believer who has sinned has no fellowship with God. The believer is still in the family of God, but is no longer in fellowship with God.

Regaining Fellowship

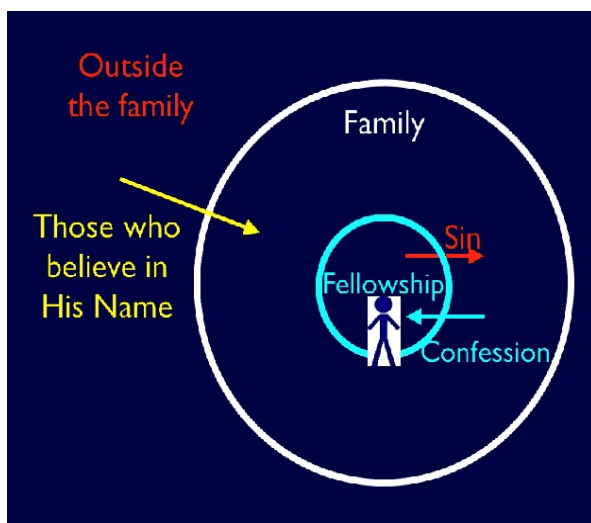
Since we can readily realize that every believer is going to sin at some point, that means that every believer is going to break fellowship. It is good that we are still in the family of God, but surely God must have provided a way for us to regain fellowship with Him? He has! Every time we have a need, His grace has an answer. We find that answer in Verse 9.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1:9

So for the final time we have updated our graphic. Sin gets you out of fellowship with God, and confession in accordance with

1 John 1:9 gets you back into fellowship. Just to reinforce the concept, sin and confession are a relational matter. They effect the intimacy of the believer's relationship with God, yet do not impact the believer's family standing as a son or daughter.



Now we need to take a closer look at Verse 9, to make sure we more fully understand what it is saying:

- **If:** It starts with the word *if*. In Greek it introduces what is known as a conditional clause. Maybe we will confess following our sin or maybe we won't. The action is not automatic. If we want to guard our fellowship with God, and we should, then we are going to have to choose to do what comes next.



- **Confess:** In the Greek language this word literally means to *say the same thing*. When we sin, we lose our fellowship with God and will remain in that condition until we come to Him and *say the same thing about our thought, word, or deed that He would say*. It is as if we need to choose to take God's side against ourselves by coming to Him and saying, "Father, I confess that unkind word as sin. . .I confess that lack of faith as sin. . .I confess that covetous thought as sin. . ." As you can imagine, there often needs to be a lot of confession going on in the life of a believer! Now what happens when we choose to confess our sins?
- **He is faithful and just:** Being faithful means God will do the same thing every time. Then, He is *just* which means whatever He does will be compatible with His perfect holiness.
- **Will forgive us our sins:** God restores us to the light and wipes away the hindrance to our fellowship.

- ***And purify us from all unrighteousness:*** Our confession and God's forgiveness makes all clean. This means that there is nothing to hinder our relationship with God because we are fully restored to fellowship.

There are several very important things to note at this point in our discussion of family and fellowship. First, pay very close attention to what God wants us to do: respond by faith to His promise that our confession will lead to forgiveness and cleansing. That's all He wants us to do. There is no making it up to Him, no promising to do better next time, no alms-giving. There is nothing to do but make a faith-based confession.

Second, understand the basis for God's forgiveness. You might be asking, "How can God forgive us?" An even better question is, "How can He forgive us for the umpteenth time?" The answer should give us great peace. God can forgive because Christ already paid for every and all our sins. He declared on the cross, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) This phrase could also be translated *paid in full*. This is why our sin doesn't cause us to lose our salvation (family relationship), for it was already paid for at the cross.



What our sin does do is cause a barrier to exist between God, who is perfect righteousness, and the one who is walking in darkness. How can there be fellowship between a holy God and one of His children who has rebelled? When we confess, we are acknowledging that the break in fellowship is our fault and not God's. This allows Him to take our sin back to the cross and allow the finished work of the cross to cleanse.

I have been saving Verse 7 to show you exactly this point:

But 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, purifies us from all sin. I John 1:7

Pay particular attention to the last part of the verse—when we confess, the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. His work is that sufficient!

Third, we often overlook the last phrase in Verse 9: *purify us from all unrighteousness*. It is something that is very precious as we struggle to continually walk in the light. It is one thing to recognize sin in our life and confess it that we might regain our fellowship with God, it is another thing altogether to be able to recognize every single sin we commit. What happens if we miss one? Does that mean we have not yet been restored to fellowship?

Here is how I think God handles this: We are responsible to confess every sin of which we become aware. We can become aware in any number of ways—through Scripture, the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, or the counsel of a friend. If we confess all the sins that we are aware of, God not only forgives us, but He is faithful and just to purify us from every sin—even if we are not aware of them. He cleanses us from all unrighteousness!

I can also tell you this, as each of us mature in the Lord, we are going to become increasingly sensitive to the issue of sin. When we do, we are going to have to face the truth

that some area of behavior that had been going on for years was actually sin. Thank God that for all those years while we were unaware, He was graciously cleansing us of all unrighteousness while we were in the process of growing spiritually.

Maintaining Fellowship

Let's finish I John Chapter 1 by looking at Verse 10, which should help to bring home the seriousness of this issue of maintaining our fellowship with God.

If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His Word has no place in our lives.

I John 1:10

It is as simple as: If we don't think sin is a problem in our lives and if we don't think the issue of fellowship with God is vital, then our rejection of God's Word is tantamount to calling Him a liar and we are simply not living in light of what He has clearly revealed. Let's be very clear at this point, the promise in I John 1:9 to *purify us from all unrighteousness* is in no way shape or form meant to be a license to sin. The very next verse after I John 1:10 makes that clear:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.

I John 2:1

John's intent, really God's intent, is that we do not sin—ever. But your experience should already have taught you that you will—and so does the Word of God as we have just seen in Verse 10. But when we do fail, what a gracious Savior we have that makes provision:

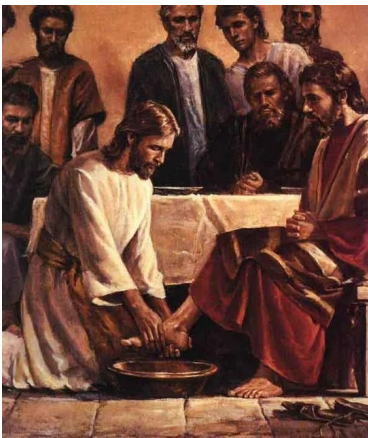
But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

I John 2:2

When Jesus is your defense counsel, you need have no worries about the Father's forgiveness for those who will come to Him in confession.

This is a marvelous provision for the believer. But let me share a principle of Bible interpretation with you. I am always very uncomfortable about building a practice of the Christian Life on just one passage of Scripture. I like to find repetition and reinforcement in the Scriptures. For when I do, it helps build my confidence that I am correctly interpreting God's revelation to us. So to that end, let me introduce you to a precious lesson from John Chapter 13.

After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. John 13:5



The scene is the Upper Room, following Jesus' Last Supper with His 12 disciples—11 of whom are saved and one still as lost as can be. Jesus does something that is simply shocking to His disciples. He rises after dinner and one-by-one washes their feet. This should have been done before dinner by either a servant or one of the disciples. Instead, the Lord of glory took it upon Himself. Follow the dialogue closely:

He came to Simon Peter, who said to Him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For He knew who was going to betray Him, and that is why He said not everyone was clean.

John 13:6-11

Peter, realizing the complete inappropriateness of the Lord washing his feet, is the first to speak. In fact, it is simply too much for his conscience and he resists the washing.

Then the Lord says something shocking:

“Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”

There are many examples of things that indicate Peter is saved. In fact, the Lord shortly tells Him that He is *clean* and only needs his feet washed. To what could Jesus be referring? We have 11 disciples who just need their feet washed, and one, Judas, who needs a whole body bath! Again, what is Jesus teaching? With our understanding of I John Chapter 1, these are very easy questions to answer.

First, consider the physical situation. The disciples had picked up grime from walking the streets in and around Jerusalem—think sandals on dirt roads and streets. They didn’t need baths, but just the removal of grime from their feet before sitting down to enjoy fellowship while dining together.

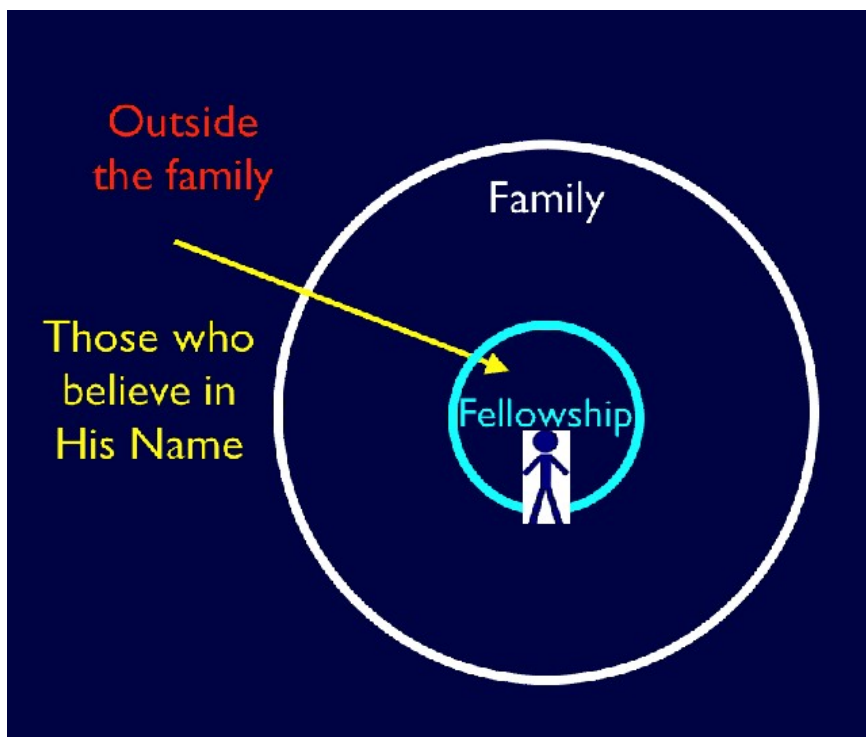
What, then, is the spiritual lesson in all of this? When any person places his or her faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the result is that he or she becomes part of the family of God. This is a permanent status that even our failures can’t change. On the other hand, when we pick up *grime* from this world—and by that I mean sin—we need cleansing from that sin! We don’t need a whole body bath—salvation. Instead, we need a foot washing—cleansing as the result of confession.

To confirm our understanding of this spiritual lesson, the one person in the group who wasn’t saved—Judas—was the one person that Jesus pointed out as being unclean. Judas didn’t need to be restored to fellowship, he needed to become a part of the family of God through putting His faith in Jesus!

Putting It All Together

At the moment you place your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, you are in the family of God, as well as in fellowship with Him. As a new believer, that fellowship may be short-lived, lasting only until you sin for the first time as a believer. But your new status as family is something that is a permanent blessing from God to you, as shown in our diagram.

You cannot change or nullify your family relationship, in part because it is based upon your position in Christ! Our position is based upon what God has graciously given to all those who believe: His righteousness, eternal life, union with Christ, and acceptance in the Beloved!



You Can Affect Your Fellowship

Although nothing you do can change your membership in the Family of God, you most certainly can affect your fellowship with God. In fact, the Scriptures guarantee that you will.

If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar.

I John 1:10

... "You shall never wash my feet" . . . "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

John 13:8

A photograph of a person's hands holding an open Bible. The Bible is open to a page with dense text. Overlaid on the image is the text: "If We Say That We Have Not Sinned, We Make Him A Liar, And His Word Is Not In Us" in yellow and white. Below this is "1 JOHN 1:10 KJV".

If We Say That We Have Not Sinned, We Make Him A Liar, And His Word Is Not In Us

1 JOHN 1:10 KJV

Sin will occur in the life of every believer as John's epistle makes clear. If we don't deal with it, and by that I mean avail ourselves of the cleansing that God provides via confession, then as Jesus makes clear we will have *no part*, that is *no fellowship*, with Him. To state this truth another way, if we are not abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ through regular confession, then there will be no fruit in our lives:

... apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

Don't be confused about the meaning of the phrase *no part*. In this same passage, Jesus makes clear that Peter is *clean* in His sight—a reference to his salvation. Jesus is not referring to Peter losing his salvation, He is speaking of fellowship. The potential to have *no part* in what the Lord Jesus is doing should prompt us to give great care to our ongoing fellowship with Him.

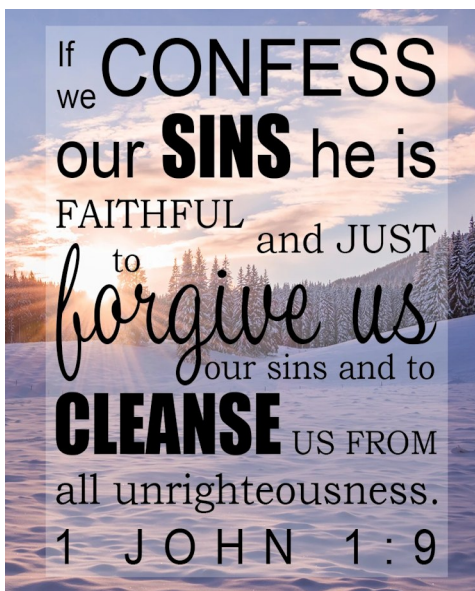
God Provides the Means of Recovery

Thank God, that He, in grace, has provided a means of recovery when we break fellowship! I John 1:9 lays it out so clearly:

**If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just
and will forgive us our
sins and purify us
from all unrighteous-
ness.** I John 1:9

Further, Jesus has recommended that we avail ourselves of His provision regularly:

**A person who has had
a bath needs only to
wash his feet. . .**
John 13:10

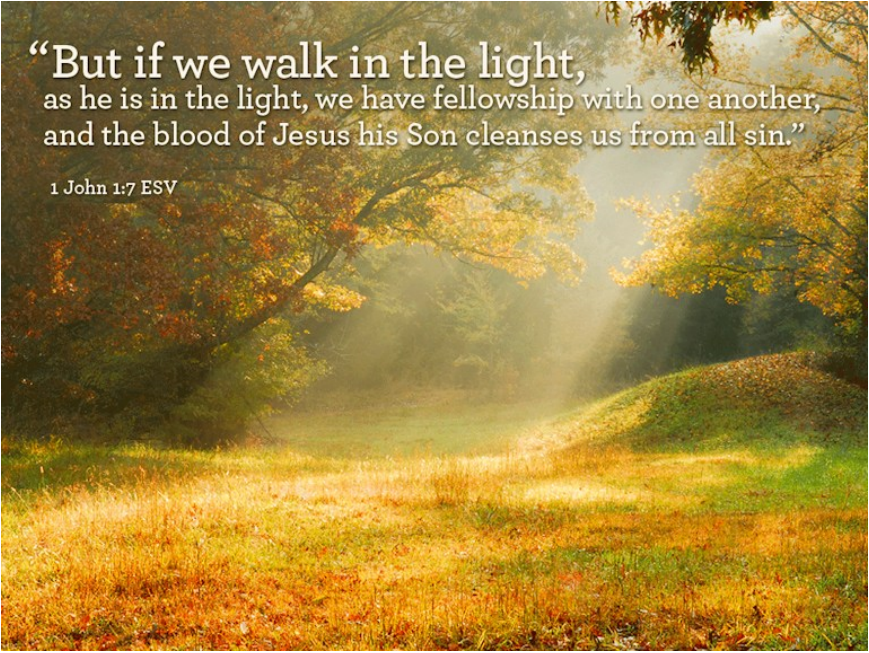


But how often? Well, how often did they pick up grime from walking the dusty roads of Israel? Daily! So how often do we need to examine ourselves that we might be in fellowship? How often do we pick up *spiritual grime* from this world (and of course I mean sin)? Let me suggest, daily or whenever you become aware of sin that might impact your fellowship. If we fail to do so, we disconnect ourselves from His ongoing plans and purposes.

How can we know that what God provided is enough to address our sin? Sometimes we get very discouraged and distraught over the sin we have committed. At other times we can be equally down about the repetitive way in which sin seems to keep rearing its ugly head. How can we know our confession is enough? The answer is simple: We trust in the authority of God's Word. Specifically, I take you back to a Scripture we looked at earlier:

But 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, purifies us from all sin. I John 1:7

Do you see the word *all* underlined in the text? I underlined the word to inform you of an ongoing argument among Greek grammarians. Some argue that word should be translated *every*, while others believe it should be *all*. I say, "Yes!" For the finished work of the cross is completely sufficient to provide cleansing from *every* and *all* sin in my life and yours.



“But 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.”

1 John 1:7 ESV

What happens if we get out of fellowship and stay out? In other words, what is the result if we fail to avail ourselves of God's provision of confession? There are consequences. First, we grieve and then, in time, we quench the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives. Since the Holy Spirit is intended to be the means by which we live the Christian Life, this means our Christian Life has been *short-circuited* and is at a standstill.

(By the way, the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is our next topic of investigation, the next book in this series on the Christian life.)

If we stay out of fellowship, it also means that we should have every expectation of discipline coming from the hand of our loving, heavenly Father. For, even though we may be out of fellowship, we are not out of the family of God. Every Father disciplines his children in order to provide instruction on what is best. When we are out of fellowship, what's best for each one of us is to be restored as fast as possible!



Fellowship with God Is Precious

There are few things more precious than being in fellowship with God! Our experience of the abundant life depends upon it:

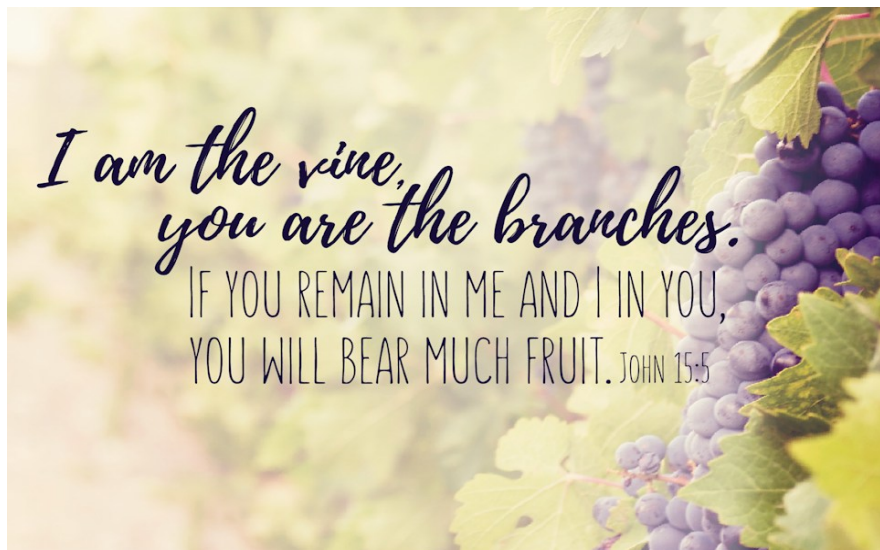
Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.

John 17:3

Further, producing anything of value in this life depends upon our fellowship with God.

If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:5



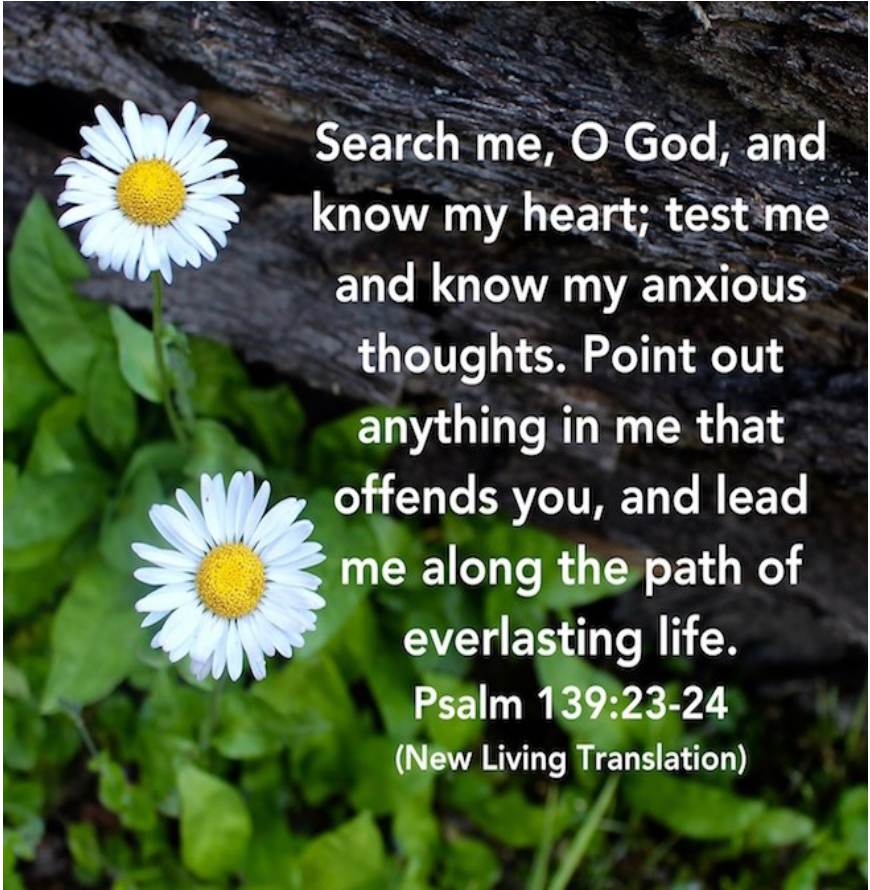
With the above being the case, allowing the Word of God and the Spirit of God to point out any sin in our lives, on an ongoing and regular basis, is a very healthy habit.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalms 139:24

As God always answers the above prayer, we now know what to do: Confess our sin that the blood of Jesus would purify us from all unrighteousness. Then we can continue forward as a son or daughter of God—in fellowship with Him!

May God bless you with a heart sensitive to the issue of ongoing fellowship, and the faith to avail yourself of what He, in grace, has provided!



Search me, O God, and
know my heart; test me
and know my anxious
thoughts. Point out
anything in me that
offends you, and lead
me along the path of
everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23-24
(New Living Translation)



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