

Fellowship With God

Justification and the Blood of Jesus Christ

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The world is perplexed by all its suffering and wars. It is confounded by what seem to be overwhelmingly unsolvable predicaments in the pollution of the environment, deformities in births, and criminal injustice. We live in a world that is plagued by terrorism, from religious and other ideological fanatics and rogue governments themselves.

Most people in the world view these things merely on a superficial level, even though they impact each and every one of us in a great way. Some might be truly concerned asking, why is the world this way? But, that is where the world comes to an end in its thinking; it cannot understand. There are no answers, and there is no hope, for those who have no true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

The first epistle of John addresses those questions about which the world, as a whole, is bewildered. But, we have this information and we know the answers. What a wonderful blessing that is.

I John 1:3 . . . that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

I know that we quite often read over the word fellowship and think that it is just nice conversation with each other. But, it is so much more than that, and we will see that in this sermon.

This is where the first epistle of John comes in with its specific message. We are not surprised by the state of the world, because we know why it is this way. In fact, what is happening in the world is a confirmation of the world's attitude towards life, and towards all that they view that has happened during the history of the world. And that confirmation is, that 'the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.'

I John 5:18-20 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

So, unlike the world, we have protection from the wicked one.

I John 5:19-20 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

Three times the word "true" is used in this verse. We know that it is related to truth, and truth is so foundationally important, that it sanctifies us.

We know, not because we are smarter than anyone else, but because we have been given understanding. The condition of the world provides us with an illustration of what the psalmist meant in Psalm 76:10 when he said, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt." (ESV)

The wrath of man praises God in this way. A world such as we live in proves that the Word of God accurately depicts that the world is under the power of 'the god of this world,' 'the prince of the power of the air.' This damaging evil power has set itself in rebellion against God.

We are not surprised, because we have been given that understanding. We know, and understand, that there is a deep-seated evil in life as a result of sin. While it remains, there can be nothing in the world except what we continue to see and experience.

Thankfully, we are saved from all of that hopelessness and despair. Jesus Christ teaches us the satisfactory answer of why the world is as it is. Essentially, we are taught that all is due to man's rebellion against God. And, so we are delivered from the waste of time of trying to analyze the political, economic, and social philosophies of the world—to look for the answers as the world does.

Wars and aggression cannot be explained in those terms and so are inadequate, and with our God-inspired insight as members of God's church we see things as they really are. We know that the explanation is something much deeper. These worldly problems are manifestations of the deeper causes in which foolish human beings find themselves. Using a business term—this is the bottom line of the cause. Mankind is in a state of rebellion against its Creator.

This is the wrath of man mentioned in Psalm 76:10 that shows that God was right all along. Man and woman were placed in a state of physical paradise and physical perfection, but they felt that even paradise was an insult to them because they were required to be in subjection to God. One act of rebellion led to all their later troubles.

This initial defiant act by Adam and Eve put the wrong kind of fear in them. Once they knew that they had done something wrong, that caused them to look at each other with jealousy and envy. Then the children came and they also became jealous and envious of each other. And the cycle continues to this day. Sorrow follows sorrow.

It can all be traced back to the fact that human beings were designed to be content and happy, but *only* if we are in fellowship with God. Happiness, in a full and complete sense, is only actually possible when we submit to the will of God. As long as man refuses to do that, he can experience nothing but confusion and misery. He may have shallow moments of joy, but they do not last, and they do not give hope.

This is what the Bible says is the state of the world away from God. It rebels against God and therefore produces its own miseries. God's Word does not argue about that, it just tells it like it is. 'It is no use,' the Word of God says, you can do what you like, but while people are contentious toward God they can never be truly happy. And so, we are in a world like this because of sin and the sway of the wicked one.

The world is incapable of righteous behavior because its foundation is still that of the old man drowning in sin. If the world cannot keep the basic morality of the Ten Commandments, how can they live according to Christ's

teachings of the New Covenant? The answer is they cannot. How can they follow Christ and have fellowship with Him and with the Father? Well, they cannot. It is absurd to think that they could without a call from God! In a world that is under the sway of the evil one we can expect nothing but contention, wars, lies, and confusion. Even the little bit of truth that comes out is still wrapped in lies.

The cause of man's troubles is that he has rebelled against God, and therefore is in a wrong relationship with Him. We did not know Him and did not fellowship with Him before we received the Holy Spirit. And, God has designed something in us that can never be at rest, until we willfully submit to that right relationship with Him. But, sin is a wall to that.

Ephesians 2:11-16 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

The ultimate central need of the world and of people as individuals is the true knowledge of God, genuine fellowship with Him, and real unity with Him. But, man rises against man, and nation against nation, because each one does not recognize God. The only way to reconcile man with man is that both must be reconciled with God first.

We read that the apostle John says, 'Because of the coming of Christ who is the Son of God and of what He has done, it is possible for us to be in fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.'

Paul also tells us that this fellowship had been kept secret by God, and is revealed through Jesus Christ and His church.

Ephesians 3:9-10 . . . and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

How has Jesus Christ made this fellowship with the Father possible? What has He done?

We read earlier that the apostle John said, 'we declare Him,' 'we remember Him.' The entirety of the New Testament is, in a sense, a reminder of Jesus Christ, how He lived and what He taught, and what He came to do. That is a major purpose of the Passover service. Jesus told His disciples to remember Him—to memorialize that event and His life.

What is the basic element of this fellowship? How can we become reconciled to God and have this fellowship with Him? How can we have similar fellowship with each other? In what sense is any peace possible among people in a world like this? According to John, it is all something that is based on Jesus Christ. It is He who has made it possible.

There are certain things that are essential before we can have fellowship.

First, there must be no obstacles or barriers. If there is anything like that between two people, then there is no true fellowship. If there is suspicion or distrust, if there is a question as to whether we can trust one another; if there is a grudge, if there is something that has been done that has hurt the other, fellowship is impossible.

Fellowship demands the removal of every barrier and every obstacle, anything that is doubtful or uncertain or that can come between us. This is essential before there can be true fellowship, and it is in the light of that that we begin to understand the work of Jesus Christ.

Remember, the reason man is outside the life of God is because of sin. Sin came in between God and man, and that obstacle can be regarded as a terrible cloud of darkness. Sin keeps a barrier between God and us, because God is holy and God cannot look lightly upon sin. When I say us, I am talking about humanity as a whole.

God had warned man that if he sinned he must die. With the ground rules set man sees a barrier between himself and God, and man's guilty conscience feels that God is unfair. A disobedient child always eventually dislikes his parents and often the bitterness turns into hate. Guilt always has that effect; it always attempts to excuse itself and to put the blame on the other person.

So, men and women, in sin and in a state of guilt, have unfair thoughts against God. Man disagrees with God's laws and he argues and puts up a barrier between himself and God. And so, man cannot see Him because his guilty thoughts have become a wall. There is no respect, friendship, or trust in a relationship like that. So, the person with that feeling of guilt has a distrust and looks at anything that the other person says as being a lie.

The exciting thing that the apostle John has to say, in his first epistle, is that the result of Jesus Christ coming into this world, the result of what He has done, is that we are able to have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. So, how has Christ done this?

He has dealt with the obstacle of sin. The justice and righteousness of the holy God demand that sin must be destroyed; God cannot say something and then withdraw it; He cannot speak, and then deny it, and He has said that sinners must be punished.

God's law and God's Word remain absolute and remain the same. They cannot be avoided. But, Christ has come into the world, and by His infinite act of sacrifice and love He has offered Himself to the Father and called on the Father to lay upon His holy body, His holy life, the sins of the world.

Isaiah 53:6 prophesied, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

And, the apostle John tells us,

I John 2:1-2 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.

Why is propitiation necessary? Propitiation expresses the idea that Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for sin that the holy God demands from the sinner. Christ's atoning death for the world's sins altered the whole position of the human race in its relationship to God. God recognizes what Christ accomplished on behalf of the whole world, whether a person enters into the blessings of it or not.

Christ's sacrifice has rendered God propitious (or, appeased) toward the unconverted as well as the erring saint. But, a person must repent and be baptized in order to receive benefit from that propitious state that God is in.

The three Greek words dealing with the doctrine of propitiation are: '*hilasmos*,' '*hilasterion*,' and '*hilaskomai*.'

Hilasmos signifies what Christ became for the sinner, as we just read in I John 2:2: "He Himself is the propitiation (*hilasmos*) for our sins . . ."

Hilasterion expresses the place of propitiation. It is the term for the "mercy seat."

Hilaskomai indicates that God has become gracious, or propitious, or appeased as in Luke 18:13, "The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful [*hilaskomai*, be propitious] to me a sinner!'"

We see humility in this tax collector—a very important attitude, especially for the Passover observance as well as for the whole of a Christian's life.

In this present age, since the death of Christ, God does not have to be asked to be propitious, because He has become so toward human beings through

the death of Christ. So, the Father is gracious, appeased, and merciful in His judgment of human beings who submit to Him.

In the Old Testament, the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies could be made a place of propitiation by sacrifice. Now, however, the blood-sprinkled body of Christ has become the Mercy Seat for humanity once and for all. This is why the Old Testament sacrifices are no longer required.

The Mercy Seat is a continual throne of grace. What would otherwise be an awful judgment throne from the sinner's perspective becomes an altar of infinite mercy for the faithful. God had all the while been merciful, passing over people's sins with no adequate legal ground for doing so.

Now, in the blood of Christ, sin is condemned and God is able to establish and maintain His character for righteousness. He continues and extends His dealing in gracious love with ex-sinners who exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

The propitiation originates with God, not to appease Himself, but to justify Himself in His consistent kindness to human beings who, in reality, deserve harshness and death.

Basically, propitiation signifies the removal of wrath by offering a gift. Propitiation is a reminder that God is relentlessly opposed to everything that is evil. His opposition can be described as 'wrath,' and that His wrath is put away only by the atoning work of Jesus Christ for those who submit to God.

God the Father has done this astonishing thing. The obstacle of sin no longer keeps us from fellowship with the Father because the veil has been removed. God is satisfied; His wrath was manifested upon the head of His innocent Son.

Once we truly understand God, and His innocent Son crucified for us, then we know that God is a God of love. In Christ, there is no obstacle any longer. Fellowship has been made possible and the enmity, as Paul puts it, has been removed. So, this first essential thing to fellowship and unity, that the obstacle of sin be removed, is part of what the Passover pictures.

The second thing that is essential before we can have true fellowship and unity, is that there must be likeness, a fundamental sameness. Christ opened up this opportunity for us by His selfless sacrifice following His perfect example while a physical human being. He showed us what God is like, and that His own oneness with the Father came through the faith, humility, sacrifice, and love seen in His life and horrible death.

Becoming like God is carried over into what the Days of Unleavened Bread picture. Part of how we become like God is to overcome sin, to rid it from our lives, and make sure it cannot come back.

Before there can be true fellowship and unity, there must be a likeness of nature, an identical character. Paul expressed this succinctly to the Corinthian congregation, in II Corinthians 6, where he tells them to be holy.

II Corinthians 6:11-18 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

There are certain things in the world that cannot mix because they have a different kind of spirit. There is no likeness between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

This applies to all of us, individually, in our relationship with God. Before we can really know God and have fellowship with Him we must be like Him. We can never really know God until we have God's own nature.

God has given us His Holy Spirit so that we can have His mind and overcome our weaknesses.

And, if we have God's own nature we have become 'sons of God.' or, as Peter puts it, in II Peter 1:4, we can become 'partakers of the divine nature.' It is Christ alone who makes that possible for us.

The apostle John says that in Christ eternal life was manifested, but he did not stop at that; he also says in John 10:10 Christ came to give us life. 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.' This is where it again relates to Passover.

John 6:51-54 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

We read that in the Passover service.

So, before we can have true fellowship with God we must have the nature of God; we must share His life. In Christ that is made possible to us. We cannot have fellowship with God before we are like Him, and in Christ we can receive a new life, a new nature. We can become 'a new man,' and we can say with Paul, 'I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me.'

So, this second essential thing to fellowship and unity is begun in us and pictured in the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. We become like God by following Christ's example of humility, sacrifice, love, and conquering sin.

The third and last thing, that is essential before we can have true fellowship and unity, is that we must love the same things. We must love the truth. Notice John's greeting to the elect lady.

II John 1-4 The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

How do we love truth? John goes on to say that we walk in the truth and love one another by keeping the commandments.

II John 1:6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

We must love the same things that God loves. God loves His children. We must love one another, there must be no suspicion. There must be a complete understanding, there must be complete confidence, and there must be complete trust among us.

People, apart from Christ, may believe in God as a great power, or as Creator; they may believe in Him as the One who controls everything. Human beings can have such beliefs and conceptions of God, but there is no fellowship without love, and it is only as we see Him in Jesus Christ that we truly come to love Him.

Romans 5:6-11 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having

now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

We know and have fellowship with the Father through Jesus Christ. Christ's death and life makes that possible.

The world as it is, is not in fellowship with God. A world that is unhappy and miserable is disfellowshipped and disunified from its Creator. Even in a world like that, we can be unified with God and have this fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

And having this fellowship, we can experience what Christ Himself experienced. Because, we are told by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews that He, 'for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.'

There may be problems for us, but because of the unity Christ has with the Father, He was able even to go to a cruel, shameful death with confidence and joy.

The ultimate question therefore is: do we have this confidence and joy of Christ in spite of what bad things may happen, in spite of grief and sorrow, in spite of uncertainty?

What must we do if our fellowship with God is to continue? We must walk in the light.

I John 1:6-10 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that 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 that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

It is interesting that, generally speaking, mainstream Christianity believes that 'once saved, always saved' and that they are not guilty of sin because all of their sin has been wiped out. It tells us right here that the truth is not in them. Truth is important.

We must walk in the light, and we must confess and acknowledge our sins. It does no good to talk about fellowship with God if we walk in darkness. What we must do is walk in the light and we must repent, believe that Jesus Christ not only speaks the truth but also lives by it, and we must follow His example.

Light is something that exposes the hidden things of darkness, light also reveals things of which we were unconscious. Light in a room will do that; it will reveal dust and various other things; light on a dark road in the country reveals all sorts of things. It is interesting that many times in a scary movie they have somebody driving down a dark road, with the lights only showing the shadows.

Let me illustrate this concept of not being able to see our sins with something that happened the other night regarding our youngest grandson, Logan, who is one and a half. It was late in the day, and the sun was low, but still very bright as it streamed in through our family room windows.

As the sunlight filled the room at that low angle every microscopic particle of dust floating in the air became part of a bright glistening galaxy. (By the time we are adults we have all observed this.)

Logan was fascinated and enthralled by the millions of particles floating around him. I am sure that you can picture this. They had been there all along, but it was not until light shined on them that he became aware of them. His curiosity made him want to grab as many as he could before they were gone. So he began to grab to the left and to the right trying to catch as many as possible. Of course, we know that he was not successful at all, but it was fun while it lasted for a one and a half year old.

That is what we must do with sin, once light shines on it. We must grab it and destroy it, completely removing it from our lives. It is the character of light to reveal hidden things of darkness, and this is absolutely true of walking with God. This is absolutely true with being in fellowship with God.

When we walk with God and when His Word dwells in us, we are convicted of sin; everything that is wrong, unworthy, and sinful in us is immediately exposed. In a physical sense, how many of us look much better under low light than in a spotlight. But, when we look in a mirror and we have bright light we want to look away or put the sunglasses on. That is the way the presence of God is if we were to be near Him in our physical condition.

The presence of God immediately convicts us of sin.

As we have fellowship with God, and as we walk with Him in the light, we all experience what the apostle Peter experienced during one of the first contacts that he had with Jesus when He worked a miracle.

They had been unable to catch any fish; they had tried, but they had failed, and Jesus sent them back again to the same place and there they miraculously had a great haul of fish. Do you remember the effect that that had on Peter? He saw, and realized, this aspect of Christ's Godhead and glory. Luke 5:8 tells us that he fell to his knees and said, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

That is the effect of realizing something of the glory of the Son of God—'Depart from me, O Lord, I am not fit to be in Your presence because I am so conscious of my sin.' That is what happens when we are truly in the presence of God.

What has God provided for us in this matter of fellowship with Him as we become conscious of our sin? The answer is: 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' and 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' The assurance is that God does it for us if we submit to Him.

The apostle John does not use the terms justification and sanctification; they are terms Paul used, but, of course, John teaches exactly the same doctrine.

John, in his own pictorial way, is teaching precisely the same truth as the apostle Paul teaches in his more logical and legal manner by means of his terms justification and sanctification.

So, what has God provided for us in this matter of fellowship with Him as we become conscious of our sin? In order to answer this it is helpful to define these two terms.

Justify is a legal term meaning to acquit or declare righteous. It is the opposite of condemn. Justifying is the judge's act. 'To be justified' means to receive the verdict. In New Testament language, justification is a declaration that God has made a judgment. It is a legal act on God's part to impute the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us once we have accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. It puts us in alignment with God and His law.

God is the judge of all the earth. And His dealings with human beings are constantly described in terms of a legal argument. Righteousness, which is conformity to law, is what He requires of people, and He shows His own righteousness as Judge in taking vengeance on those who fall short of it. There is no hope for anyone if God's verdict goes against him.

Because God is King, the thought of Him as justifying may have an executive as well as a judicial aspect. Like the ideal royal judge in Israel, He will not only pass a verdict in favor of the accused, but will actively implement it by showing favor towards him and publicly reinstating him.

Justification represents our 'status' in the presence of God. Justification includes not only the forgiveness of sins, but also that our sins have been dealt with and are removed from us through faith in Jesus Christ. We benefit from this justification when we repent of our sins.

The justification of sinners that the apostle Paul expounds is simply the passing of a favorable verdict. Paul taught that God shows favor to those whom He has acquitted.

What God does for us in justification is to remove the guilt altogether, to remove the sin. It is not only that He does not require punishment of us for it, but that He regards us as righteous, as if we had not sinned; that sin has been removed. It is a stronger term than forgiveness; we may be forgiven yet our sins remain upon us.

Justification is a judgment passed on a human being, not a work produced within him. It is an act of remitting the sins of guilty people, and accounting them righteous, freely, by His grace, through faith in Christ, not of their own works, but of the law-keeping of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood on their behalf.

Romans 4:5-8 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."

Paul's explanation of justification is his characteristic way of saying that God more than forgives people who are faithful and repentant.

Though justification has much in common with forgiveness, the two terms should not be regarded as interchangeable, because forgiveness of sins can be stated related to confession and repentance setting it somewhat apart from justification, which is a declaration by God on behalf of the faithful ex-sinner.

To be justified includes the truth that God sees the sinner in terms of his faithful relationship to His Son, with whom He is well pleased.

Paul says that faith in Christ is the means whereby righteousness is received and justification bestowed. Sinners are justified by and through faith. Paul does not regard faith as the foundation of justification.

In Romans 4:3, Paul quoted the case of Abraham who "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," to prove that a man is justified through faith without works.

Romans 4:1-5 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,

Paul referred to the book of Genesis as teaching that Abraham's faith was accounted for righteousness. All he means is that Abraham's faith—that whole-hearted reliance on God's promise—was the occasion and means of his being justified. Of course, we know that faithfulness also means that there has to be action.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12-18 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification.

For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

The work of Christ does not benefit a person unless it is faithfully embraced.

Justification and reconciliation are the first and primary fruit of the death of Christ. We are justified by His blood and reconciled by His death. Sin is pardoned, the ex-sinner accepted as righteous, the enmity slain, an end made of iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness brought in.

Christ has done all that was required, on His part, in order that upon our repentance, acceptance of Christ's sacrifice, and baptism, we are actually put into a state of justification and reconciliation. Our justification is attributed to the blood of Christ because without blood there is no remission of sins. So, Passover represents our justification, as well as being a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, "our Passover," which made possible the forgiveness of our sins.

Now, we should define the other term related to fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and that is one that is not directly associated with Passover, but certainly follows that justification, and that is sanctification.

Sanctification is the condition in which our potential to sin is being dealt with. It means that we are impregnated with the Holy Spirit. In essence it stamps us with a seal that shows we have God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us the help we need to resist and overcome the sin that is in us. It is absolutely required for the process of salvation.

Justification does not deal with the potential to sin that is within us; it deals with the sins that we have committed already. But, after our sins have been forgiven and sin and guilt have been removed from us, the potential for sin still remains with us. What the New Testament means, by this doctrine of

sanctification, is the process whereby the potential for sin is being taken out of us. You might call it moving on to perfection.

We are assured that ultimately it will be completed, and we will therefore be finally delivered, not only from the guilt of sin, but also from the power of sin, and even from the pollution of sin. So, the point to bear in mind is that the difference between justification and sanctification is the difference between dealing with the sins that we have committed and their effect upon us, and dealing with the potential for sin that resides in us.

In all the passages referring to the blood you will find that it refers to death and not to life. The object of Jesus Christ upon the cross was not simply to release the potential for eternal life; it was rather to fulfill the law of God which has said that the punishment of sin is death—'the wages of sin is death'—not the releasing of life, but the taking of life, the shedding of the life blood. The apostle Paul says,

Romans 5:10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

The blood was shed in that death, and that is the effect—'much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.'

What does the death of Jesus Christ achieve? The function of the death of Jesus on the cross and the result of it has been to purchase our pardon. His death is concerned with reconciliation, justification, and remission of sins. The death of Christ deals with the guilt of sin, the pollution of sin, and its tarnishing effect.

On the other hand, sanctification is by the truth of God, and the work of the life of Christ.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

We know that the Protestant and Catholic churches do not put much value on truth. So, they are not sanctified.

John 17:18-19 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

Jesus' death justified us and His life sanctifies us by the truth of God which involves living God's way of life. It is a life based on truth. We are set apart from the world, and other religions, because we guard the truth and live our lives by it. Other religions are based on tradition and human reasoning. We see this subversion of the truth of God and the promoting of tradition extensively in mainstream Christianity. This includes the Catholic Church, as well as all of the Protestant churches, and all of the other non-denominational churches that are not churches of God.

Sanctification requires the help of the Holy Spirit to understand and live the truth of God. It requires the power of the mind of God to enable us. His death is concerned with the guilt of sin, propitiation, and justification; His life is concerned with the power of sin and our sanctification. A person certainly cannot flagrantly, or as a course of habit, or as a way of life, sin and remain in fellowship with God; that is 'walking in darkness.' We know that sin separates us from God.

But, if we confess our sins, that is, acknowledge we have sins, repent of them, and work to overcome them, God is faithful and just and will not only forgive us our sins but use the blood of Christ to wash away our guilt of the sin.

Fellowship with God is not made impossible because we occasionally sin; if that were true no one who has ever lived would ever have fellowship with God. For, if to have fellowship with God, we must be absolutely perfect and the potential for sin must have been removed, then not one of us has had fellowship with God. We are well aware of sin within ourselves. As hard as we work to get rid of that sin we know that those secret sins are still there. We ask God to show them to us, much like we do not see the dust until the light shines on it.

We can still walk with God, though the potential to sin remains in us, though we have sinned, we can still have fellowship with God. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the guilt, pollution, and tarnishing effect and therefore we can continue in the fellowship with God.

Sanctification is of supreme importance, but where sanctification comes in is this: our effort to walk in the light—to walk in the truth—is part of our sanctification, and so is the confessing of our sins and recognizing them, repenting of them, and overcoming them.

We must love the brethren; we must be kind and loving; we must not live for the things of this world—this is all part of sanctification. But the blood of Jesus Christ is not directly related to sanctification; it is, rather, something that is directly related to our justification as far as the comparisons between the two terms go.

A true Christian is not the person who should be walking in the light, but who so often is walking in darkness. The true Christian is one who, by definition here, is always walking in the light even though he falls into sin occasionally. By falling into sin we do not return to walking in darkness. A Christian is not a Christian at all unless he is walking in the light.

True Christians do not spend their time physically and spiritually walking in and out of the church of God. We are all by nature in the realm of darkness, and by becoming Christians we are put into the church of God by God Himself.

If we are truly called, and have answered that call with faith, repentance, and baptism, and have followed all of that up with a life of overcoming sin and living God's way of life, and during this process of salvation we occasionally sin out of weakness, we are not walking in darkness. We are still in the realm of light and in the church of God even though we have sinned—the shed blood of Jesus Christ makes it possible for us to be here. That sin is not a way of life for us.

In this, we see why the observance of Passover is so important with regard to our membership in the church of God and our fellowship with God. It is this

shed blood of Christ that still delivers us from the guilt of our sins. If we sin we must confess: by acknowledging it before God, repenting of it, and asking God to forgive us.

It is the blood of Christ that cleanses us. It is God who applies the blood. He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from the guilt of sin. God has made the provision, and He is the one who applies it.

We are called upon to walk in the light and to confess our sins, and as we do so He will bring to bear upon our confessed sin the provision He made in the death of His only begotten Son. We are delivered from the guilt, pollution, and the tarnishing effect, and we are conscious that the fellowship is restored, and we can continue.

Even though we find ourselves occasionally sinning, we have fellowship with God and we walk with Him in light. This is our assurance, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us—it goes on doing so and will continue to do it—from all sin, for those who love and obey God.

The apostle Peter reminds us that we should understand completely that we have been delivered from our sinfulness and from our vain ways that we inherited by tradition from our ancestors, not with temporary things, such as silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ.

I Peter 1:18-19 . . . knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

We read earlier in I John 1:9 that we have another wonderful assurance that 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' This is one of the most comforting statements in the Bible. The apostle John was describing an aspect of the character of God Himself.

In addition to the aspect of the character of God Himself, that the apostle John was describing in verse 9, John tells us that God is just, and this is John's way of putting what Paul said about Christ here in Romans 3,

Romans 3:25 . . . whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

The legal requirement God had to resolve was, how He could forgive sin and still remain a holy and just God? The answer, of course, is that He has set Christ to be a propitiation for our sins, and the result of this is, as Paul continues,

Romans 3:26 . . . to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The shed blood of Christ justifies God; He remains holy because He has punished sin in the death—the shed blood—of His Son.

So, although we are aware of our potential and even sometimes the tendency to sin, we may look to the blood of Jesus Christ, and see there the forgiveness of God. We see the justice of God; we know that God has forgiven us and still forgives us and will forgive us as long as we walk in the light.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and that fellowship brings us peace by Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.