

Are Your Garments Spotless

by Andrew Strom

The sermon emphasizes the importance of hatred of sin, repentance, and trusting in Jesus to experience the New Covenant and walk in righteousness.

Duration: 37:15

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, Romans 8:1-2, Ephesians 5:26, Hebrews 10:22, 1 Peter 3:21, 1 John 3:3-9, Revelation 7:14

Topics: "Repentance", "Sanctification"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of developing a deep hatred of sin as essential to truly experiencing the New Covenant. It highlights the need for repentance, a total change of heart, and a constant purification process to maintain closeness with God. The speaker challenges believers to trust in Christ's righteousness, experience His cleanness as their own, and walk in constant communion with God without striving or self-righteousness.

Transcript

So, 1 John chapter 3, I want to put it to you that there's something very important that I don't think we preach in the modern church hardly at all. And that is, that hatred of sin is essential to even experience the New Covenant. A lot of us think that all we require to enter into the New Covenant is kind of, you know, faith in Christ, and so on.

We talk about those things all the time. But, you know, repentance, which always comes at the very front of the gospel in every case. Repentance, repent and be baptized.

It says that Jesus went everywhere preaching, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. All of the apostles, that was the first word out of their mouths when preaching the full gospel. And repentance is not just getting rid of things that you know is wrong in your life.

That's one aspect of it. But also, it has to be developed very immediately a hatred of sin. An inner hatred of sin that nothing can steal away from you, that it actually becomes part of you where, you know, if you would have fallen to sin, you would hate it so much, you would run out of it.

Because you don't want to offend God, you don't want to break that communion that is now part of your life, that close communion with Jesus that should be part of every Christian's life. When you take this hatred of sin away and you no longer speak about it, which the modern church pretty much doesn't, what

happens is that people trying to get close to God will experience a very brief honeymoon period, so to speak, in their Christian walk that lasts. You know, they feel quite euphoric and very close to Jesus for the first few weeks or the first couple of months.

And because they're not really staying clean or they feel that they're starting to lose their closeness and they don't really know what it is that they're lacking and they're never taught that, you know, repentance is supposed to involve a total change, not just of your lifestyle, but of what's deep inside of you, what you love and what you hate. What you love and what you hate should utterly change. And we don't make it clear.

People, therefore, when it comes to walking in the Holy Spirit, they find that is not working either. So the whole New Covenant starts before or over if the repentance at the beginning is not well-founded, is not utterly deep, okay? So look in 1 John chapter 3, verse 5, let's start with verse 3. Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as Jesus is pure. What does that say? It's saying if you're a true Christian and you have your hope in Him, what will be happening in your life is a purification process.

If the purification process is no longer happening, I put it to you, that you may very well be one of those, you know, the five foolish virgins that we spoke about last night. Why? Because this is an essential part of real Christianity. If you are standing still, if you're not getting any closer to God, years and years go by and you're pretty much just the same and you're not noticing this ongoing purification going on in your life, I tell you, you need to doubt some of the fundamental things that should be going on but aren't.

You need to go to God desperately and say, God, something's badly wrong. Something's badly wrong. So, he that has this hope in him purifies himself even as Jesus is pure.

Okay, now in verse 5, some extremely drastic statements. You know, John Wesley used to preach a sermon on this passage here that would just about kill you outright. You know, it was just so convicting.

So, here we go anyway. 1 John 3 verse 5, And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abides in him does not sin.

Whosoever sins has not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you. He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he, Jesus, is righteous.

He that commits sin is of the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. And listen to this verse, verse 9. Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, but his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.

I think these statements are astonishing. They're astounding statements. A lot of people would read them and say, this cannot be possible.

Whosoever is born of God cannot sin? You know, that word is in the present continuous tense, which means he cannot continue to sin. It's something that becomes foreign. In fact, we're supposed to experience the righteousness of Jesus living in us to such a degree that sin is no longer becomes a natural part of our lives at all.

Do you realize when we say things like this, it's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me. Do you know what we're actually saying? We're saying that the righteousness of Jesus lives in us so strongly that

we feel clean before God. That the righteousness of Jesus lives in us so strongly that we become, as it were, sons of God who walk before him clean, and we experience that cleanness as though it was ours.

This is so difficult for people to get a hold of, and I want to tell you what we're talking about is really faith. You know when I'm told to trust in Jesus, put my faith in Jesus, what actually is that? And we talk about this endlessly as though we absolutely have it nailed down what this is. I want to tell you what I'm supposed to be doing with real New Testament faith is this.

Experiencing God's cleanness filling my life, walking in it as though it was my own cleanness, experiencing that cleanness as though I never had, as though Adam never fell. Remember that Jesus is supposed to, and of course has, restored everything that Adam lost. What was the main thing Adam lost? He lost his purity, he lost his innocence, and his communion with God, which used to be like this.

It says that Adam walked with God in the cool of the evening. And I would like best friends, unless you have holiness, the Bible says, no man shall see the Lord. You see, you have to have holiness to get that close to God.

And of course, we look at humanity, and we even look at ourselves, and we look at the church as we know it, and we say, how can we ever get that close to God? And especially your average human being completely unredeemed. How does any human being so at fault, so dirty on the inside and the outside, how is any human to get back into that garden closeness with God? And I say, Christ paid every price in order for that to happen. So why is it not? Why do Christians still, if you really get talking to them, they still, many of them, feel unclean, or they have a yoga-like existence in their relationship with God, and they say, oh, I feel really close to God today, but yesterday I had a real bad day with my sense of communion with God, because I didn't feel quite right with God yesterday, but today I'm better.

And I say to that, listen, you surely must be trusting them and looking upon yourself to do your own righteousness, if that's the experience you're having. Do you know Jesus doesn't have any bad days? And Christ is in us the hope of glory. Christ is in us the hope of glory.

Do you realize what that means? It means that I'm not supposed to trust in Andrew Strong to be perfect every day. Such a thing I know for sure isn't possible. I'm not going to trust in Andrew Strong to be perfect every day.

Who am I going to put all of my trust in? Jesus Christ inside of me to be perfect every day. When I come before God, the holy God of all the universe, I won't be coming and saying, hi God, it's me, I come in my own righteousness because you've made me perfect inside and outside and now all as well. I'll be saying, listen God, I come only putting up front in front of me the shield I place in front of me is the righteousness of Christ.

But here's the thing, we should experience that righteousness as though it was ours. And this is where many Christians say, I don't know if I can go there with that. They say, yeah, I don't know if I can feel that cleanness.

That's a radical thought that not only would we be in theory made clean before God, but that we would experience it as though it was ours. Now that, that is an interesting thought. And I want to tell you, that is what the New Testament teaches.

That's what the book of Romans is about. If you ever pick up an interesting book by Watchman Meek called The Normal Christian Life, that's what that book is about. It's taken from the book of Romans saying we should walk in this as a normal state.

Jesus purchased this for us that we would walk as Adam walks, that we would have communion with God every day without any effort. Why? Because I cannot improve on the righteousness of Jesus no matter what I do. If I can walk in Him, if I can be clothed in Christ, which is what the New Testament teaches us, that I will be clothed in Christ.

What, you know, if it's true that it's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me, surely I should feel clean. Surely I should feel clean. Not because I'm Superman.

Not because I'm Mr. Perfect Sherman. This shell of mine, I want to tell you, will still be being perfected until the day I die. It will never be utterly perfect even though I might, let's say, live into my 80s.

This old shell that I'm dragging around with me, it came out in here, it became a God. We realize that our body is so corrupted that even after we become Christians and it will be spiritual for years, this old thing still will be discarded and thrown away. We will inherit the Kingdom of God with a new body.

Do you understand that? This old thing will not do. And so, a lot of us have a theory going on and we say, yes, I believe and I trust in Christ. And they say, I put my faith in Christ.

But they say, no, I never experienced Christ's righteousness as though it was mine. I never feel that utterly clean. And I say, you're missing out.

You're missing out on one of the most wonderful aspects of the New Covenant, right there. Because if you don't feel clean before God, do you know what? You can never get as close to Him as Adam and Eve. The entirety of the New Testament is about restoring us to that state where we do not any longer feel unclean before God and we can actually approach Him by the blood of the Lamb.

It becomes real, not theory. Real. Someone who's clean, do you know that someone who's been made clean here there's no barrier between them and God? The one thing that pushed us away from God was uncleanness.

And also, the sense of uncleanness. Our view of it. Remember what Adam did.

As soon as he felt unclean, he ran and stitched together some makeshift garments to cover himself because he felt the uncleanness. So it's not just the sin itself, it's the fact that you're always aware. Human beings are aware that I'm sinful, I'm dirty, I cannot get close to God.

You know what that is called? That is called condemnation. And in many cases conviction, you could say, because it's absolutely right. They are filthy, dirty, and they can't get close to God.

But what about the true Christians? The Christian who's really repented. The Christian who's been filled with the Holy Spirit. The Christian for whom it should be true that it's no longer them that live.

That they have been crucified with Christ and raised into a new life. That person surely should be able to feel that righteousness of Jesus living there. Surely.

And I say, yes. That's the New Covenant right there. That's the Book of Romans right there.

You know, I often preach sermons on this topic and I'll call them Walking in Romans 8. Walking in Romans 8. Let's just flip over to Romans 8 for a second. And most of you use Scripture as used by the modern church to say something that it does not say. It's still very very important.

Romans 8 verse 1 and 2 It says, There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are what? To them that are in Christ Jesus. Who walk not unto the flesh, but unto the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

That's what we don't experience right there. That's not a theory. Paul's not writing about a theory.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are what? In Christ Jesus. That's the key right there.

Who walk not unto the flesh, but after the Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God living in us. That's an experience right there.

That's not a theory. That's an experience. You know, in the model church they say, oh you can get away with sinning and knowing it.

You can be as kind of unclean as you like. Just pray the little prayer and grace will come along and then you challenge them on this and they say, oh no there's no condemnation to them in Christ Jesus. That's a total abuse of the Scripture.

What is the Scripture saying? It's saying that for the true Christian that loves righteousness that is filled with the Spirit of God, that is really repented, that really hates sin and loves righteousness, loves cleanness, loves holiness of hearts. That person, that's the real Christian, that that person should experience no condemnation. Why? Because they're so aware of Christ's cleanness living in them.

If you have trust, what are you trusting? Do you trust yourself? You know, when I get up in the morning, I often use this illustration, when I get up in the morning, do I have to tell myself to start breathing? I assume that you don't either. I hope not. Because when I wake up in the morning, I don't go, boy I need to start breathing right now.

I've got to keep myself breathing all day. It's going to be hard. It's going to be tough.

I'm going to have to strive a lot to keep myself breathing, but I might be okay. I think I'll make it through. I don't do that.

Now, the new creation man that's inside of you, the real righteous one, the one, the new creation that's clothed with the righteousness of Christ, do you realize that guy inside of you, it's just as natural as breathing for that guy to walk clean before Jesus. In fact, he's made to do that. When you were born again, when you were born from above, when God's spirit was placed in you, when God breathed a massive fresh breath of air into you that is, you know, the Holy Spirit of God into you and brought you to new life, do you realize that new life inside of you, it's nature to walk clean before God.

It doesn't have to try hard. It doesn't have to strive. It doesn't have to start out the day going, boy, if I really try and really be good today, maybe I'll have a good day with God.

Oh, but if I have a bad day, you know, oh, heck. Oh, I already yelled at somebody. I don't know.

You know. You know, Christ doesn't have any unrighteous days. If only I can put my trust in Him and actually trust in the righteousness of Jesus, I will experience the close communion with God that's supposed to be there every minute, every hour, every day and I won't have to strive and strive to be good in myself and my flesh to create that.

Because what can I do? Can I improve on the righteousness of Jesus? I can't. I can only put my trust in Him. I can only put my trust in Him.

What am I trusting? I'm not going to trust me. I'm not going to say Andrew Strong is going to be perfect enough for God now. Andrew Strong is going to be absolutely perfect enough for God.

I'm not idiot enough to ever say such a thing. I'll be arriving on judgment day saying, God, please do not judge me by Andrew Strong. Please, I hold up this shield of the righteousness of Christ in front of me.

God, I trust entirely in that, not in myself to say more. You realize, of course, what the white garment is worth. I often make the comment that Bill Gates finds himself in need of one of these robes on the day of judgment.

That even if he offers to pay \$50 billion for one white robe, the robe is simply too expensive for him to buy. And if we could have a trillionaire up there who offers \$1 trillion for one white robe, because they know we must have the robe to get into the kingdom of God, and suddenly they're up before a holy God on the day of judgment, and they suddenly realize their life has been an absolute waste, and the very thing they need, they do not have. What a terrible realization that would be.

How much is that thing worth? I tell you, it is so priceless that there isn't any billionaire or trillionaire that can ever afford one. So God has to give that white robe away for free. What did it cost him to get it? It cost him everything.

God risked everything to make the way for us to be righteous before him, to get Adam back. God risked everything. He risked his son and took the most extreme, extraordinary risks to send him down to this old place, this hellhole down here.

He risked everything. What? To gain for us the way of righteousness, to get Adam back, to get Adam back where he can walk with God in close communion again. Not striving, not trusting in himself, trusting in Jesus, experiencing that cleanness of Christ as though it was his.

You realize we're talking about the gospel here, people. We're talking about the gospel. The fullness of the gospel is supposed to end up with clean people that have holiness inside of them, and they walk in it.

They know what it is. They feel literally clean before God, and they don't have to make themselves do anything to get it. It's already inside of them.

Christ gave it to them. We have one aspect of this which is our responsibility. Do you know what it is? Keep your conscience unspotted.

Keep your conscience unspotted. In other words, God, Christ gives you a white robe. It's washed in the blood of Jesus when it is given to you.

It's utterly clean, but many people, because they're not taught or because their hearts still, and this is why I said hatred of sin is so important, they still love bits and pieces of their old life, and they go out and soil

that robe up. We get black spots on it, and we don't even teach people how to get before God and confess your sin and get right with Him and get clean. So we have hidden sin, secret sin all through the modern church, because we don't preach the basics to them.

Do you know what we're supposed to walk before God with? A clean conscience. That's our part of it. God is not going to just come down one day and clean your conscience for you.

It's the part of the deal that we are supposed to, if we are aware of these black spots on that white robe, we are the ones who should go to God and deal with it with absolute honesty before Him and say, God, this is what I have done. God, I turn from it today and let it be far from me. Amen? Repentance.

And because most of the church doesn't ever experience that, they then don't really know how to walk in that place. You realize this is not a one-time deal where we get clean at the start. It is a walking business.

Turn with me please to Hebrews chapter 10. Show you how important the conscience is. You know, in 1 Peter it says, talking about salvation, salvation itself, Peter says, it's the answer of a good conscience towards God.

Think of that for a minute. The answer of a good conscience towards God. It's almost like God would send out a query, you know, like you do when you're pinging a computer.

You can send out a ping on a computer and it'll ping back to you. You know, it's IP address or whatever. Ping, ping.

God sends out a query. If our conscience is clean, it says so to God. But what happens with all those thousands of people who just don't bother? Their conscience is sending back to God a little scream saying, I'm sorry, I'm clean, I'm clean, I'm clean.

Not the kind of opinion I want to be sending out. And none of us, obviously. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 22.

Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Notice how important the heart is to God. A lot of people say, oh, I can clean all the outward stuff.

But when they do repentance, they think, oh, I'll get rid of the obvious sins that are so obvious to everybody. The heart is so important to God. And those are the things that can remain hidden and often do.

Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. There it all is in my verse.

Now, if we experience this, do you realize we don't have any yo-yo days anymore? Why? Because I don't wake up one day trusting Christ to be my righteousness and wake up the next day not doing so. I wake up every day and Christ should be my righteousness every day. And not only that, I should experience His cleanness living in me.

It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me. We preach this and we say and we believe it. And I tell you, for most people it's a theory.

It's not a fact. It's not something they live in. And I put it to you again, this is just the new covenant that we're talking about.

It's nothing extraordinary. It's what the new creation wants to live in at all times. Cleanness before God.

What happens when you're in cleanness before God? You can go to the throne of grace by the blood of Jesus. You can literally walk in there and make your petitions to God. There is no barrier.

How close do you walk with God without any effort whatsoever? You walk this close to God just like Ellen did. Why? Christ pays everything to gain that for you. Everything to gain that for you.

What are you walking in? What is this called in the Bible? It's called by various names. It's called abiding in Christ. What does the word abiding suggest? It suggests a steady state or a steady walk.

Abiding. A constant. Amen? It's not a yo-yo walk.

It's not trusting in you. If you're trusting in you, you'll have a yo-yo walk because you'll have a bad day, a good day, a bad day, a good day. That's a yo-yo.

I don't want us to live there. I want us to walk in Christ, not in ourselves. If I walk in myself, yes, I'll have plenty of yo-yo days all the time.

If I can walk in Christ, if I can put my mind on things that are above, if I can put my mind on trusting in the righteousness of Jesus that lives in me, if I can do those things, I stop having yo-yo days because Christ is perfect every day and I can experience that even though I don't deserve to. I don't deserve any of this. I was just given it by God.

So because we're not teaching these things, you know, yesterday I mentioned what the foundations are. The six foundations and I was saying that's how they got people converted in the Bible. Why are they getting people converted in the Bible? Do you realize what those six foundations are? They are the foundations of laying, you could say, laying down Christ inside of a person.

That's why the gospel can only become truly manifest in somebody by the power of the Holy Spirit because it's really a supernatural thing. If you have that foundation laid in you, you realize nothing stops you being clean. Nothing.

Nothing stops you walking clean because all you've got to do is keep your conscience clean. People say, I don't know if I can keep my conscience clean like that, you know, sort of like won't it become, won't that be really, really hard? I say, well surely you'd be aware if any little spot, you did something and some little spot got on there if you're in real communion with God you're instantly aware that that's happened. Why? Because it starts to affect your communion with God.

So you instantly want to deal with it. Nobody has to tell you, oh you better go searching around for spots on that white road. Your conscience is kind of like an alarm system and your communion with God will start to be affected.

So what do you want to do? You immediately want to go and get that cleaned up. That's just the normal Christian life. And so the vast majority of the time you should be able to walk before God clean today because you've already been given everything you need to do that.

If it's no longer you that live, but Christ that lives in you. You've already been given everything you need. He is all.

You need nothing else but him. He is all the righteousness you need. He is the lawfulness you need.

He is everything. If you had Christ you don't need anything else. So why do so few walk in this faith? Because that's what it is.

We're talking about faith here. People think we're talking about some extraordinary thing. I tell you in the new covenant it is a deeper you could say, I guess a deeper expression of what we should understand.

But I tell you there's nothing extraordinary or out of the way about this. We are still talking about faith. It's just that in a deeper sense we don't just trust Christ for our salvation.

We trust Christ that he would be our cleanness for us and that we would experience that. And we would experience that. That I will not have to go out there and beat myself up every day to try and make myself better before God today.

I ain't going to do that. I'm going to trust in Jesus. I'm not going to go out there and live under the law today.

I'm going to go out there and experience Christ in me, the hope of glory. I'm not going to make a little list of rules of do's and don'ts for myself to try and make myself a better person. I want Christ to be living in me and me to experience that so greatly that I don't have to change myself because Christ is changing me.

This is the New Testament. The New Testament is not about the law. It's about the law of the spirit.

Victory over sin. Living a life clean before Jesus. Not by anything you can do but by the blood of Christ that washes us clean.

Amen? That's why you get the old hymns. Let me close with this. I'm sure many of you have heard it.

I quote it often when I preach it. You know, those old revival hymns about the blood of Jesus. Usually they're written by people that really, really know that something has happened to them and they have been made clean.

They know this experience. They want to write about it and they write a hymn about it. So, you know, have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are your garments spotless for songbirds? Are your garments spotless? Are they as white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? This is everything I'm talking about today.

We're still talking gospel truths here, you know. We're still talking trust and faith in Christ here. And experiencing it as being real.

That's the key. Okay. I think we should pray.

So please stand up with me because I would like to pray for us all that this becomes not just a momentary reality, not something we hear about, but something that's a daily experience for all of us and a deeply seated thing that does not go away as part of our lives. So if that's what you want to pray for and agree with me on, please just raise your hands to heaven right now because I'm going to pray for all of us that this would become absolutely integrated into us so deeply. Father God, I just pray for all of us, Father, that are raising our hands to heaven before you, God.

Father, we want to experience the cleansing and the deep cleanness of Jesus as though it was ours, God. We want to experience this as reality, God. We want to walk in Romans chapter 8 where there's no condemnation but there's a new law in operation in our lives, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

We want it to be no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me. Father, make it real to us that we would walk in real liberty, oh God, because we are walking in the spirit, the Holy Spirit of the living God, that we would know this cleanness even though it wasn't ours, it's yours, God. And all we have to do is receive that cleanness and walk in it, Father.

We know it's Christ. He's done everything for us. Help us, oh God, to experience this as a constant state of faith and to walk and to abide in this constant cleanness before you by the blood of Jesus.

Pour out upon us today, oh spirit, that the blood of Christ flow through and over our lives again. Let that garden be made clean and utterly white, Father. We confess any dark thing, any spot that has gone on that road, we confess it with the scar that we throw at it, that the black spots be gone in Jesus' name, that we walk before you today, righteous sons and daughters of the most high God, clean on the inside, Father.

Thank you, God. Let it be constant and may we always be in close communion with you, Father. Let us always be in close communion with you, we pray in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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