

Being Clean Before God

by Andrew Strom

A true Christian is someone who has peace with God because they sense and feel a cleanness before God, and in reality God does see them as clean before Him.

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Scripture: Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 5:26, Colossians 3:10, Hebrews 4:10, James 4:8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Spiritual Cleansing"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing true repentance and faith in Christ to come into a place of cleanness before God, enabling believers to have close communion with Him. It highlights the need to trust in Jesus for righteousness, rather than striving in our own efforts, and to walk in the Spirit to maintain a clean conscience. The speaker urges for a transformation in the church by preaching and living out the reality of being clean before God through faith in Jesus.

Transcript

Alright, can you just turn with me to Romans 5? I want to look at some well-known scriptures here, but hopefully in a slightly different way. You know, one of the things that we are lacking, not just in the Western world, but all over the world, is this sound teaching of type that ordinarily used to be preached by your John Wesley's and your Charles Spurgeon's and those kind of guys, and we have completely lost the kind of preaching that can convict someone and cut them to the heart and bring them into a real faith where they feel clean before God. You know, a lot of Christianity, I was preaching about this this morning, a lot of our Christianity, people don't go deep with God, they don't actually ever feel clean.

You know, if you never feel clean before God, if you never actually break through into a place where you have truly repented and truly believed in Christ in the way that's supposed to happen, you never actually can come into real communion with Him because, you know what, Adam's break with God occurred because he suddenly was unclean, felt unclean, and God considered him unclean and therefore could not be in communion with Him like He had been and cast him out of the garden. So if you think, what is the solution to that, what has God's goal been all this time, is to reverse that. Put us into a place where we can know the cleanness that only God can give, put us in a place where through Jesus we can be washed on the inside, put us in a place where we come back in close communion with God again.

You say, that sounds like a pretty tall order, and of course it is, that's why His Son, His most precious and beloved Son had to come and die a horrific death to buy us that. 1 Corinthians 5, sorry, Romans chapter 5 verse 1, boy, what a well known scripture, Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I want to tell you, you don't have peace with God unless there is a righteousness inside of you.

No, you know, what did Adam lose? He lost his peace with God, he lost a right relationship with God, he doesn't have peace with God anymore, and in fact all of those Old Testament characters that are trying to obey the law as best they can and all those kind of things have no access to what this is talking about here. It's really an experience where we can come back into peace with God. What does that mean? It means that you can come before God not as an unclean thing, but as something made clean.

If only we could get through to the people around the world, even those who named the name of Christ, that you can have a complete sense of being clean on the inside and experience God and a closeness to God that Adam lost. Imagine if we could get that through to people. I believe, here's what I truly believe, is that once the church learns how to not just repent and get a one day experience where they feel right with God, but where they can by the blood of Jesus walk in white robes every day, this will revolutionize our Christianity.

Revolutionize it. Let me put this before you just as a statement. A true Christian in the New Testament sense is someone who has peace with God because they sense and feel a cleanness before God, and in reality God does see them as clean before Him.

Now, if you're not sensing that about yourself today, I want to ask, why would that be? You know, the things that we are responsible for before God is our conscience. We're also to come to Him for that white robe that is to be put upon us as a garment, you know, clothed with Christ. So therefore being justified by faith.

What is this faith? What am I believing? I'm actually supposed to be trusting in Jesus to be my righteousness. I've been part of circles where they made huge efforts and still to this day you can find people all over the world, who in the holiness circles that I basically move in, and I'm preaching repentance all the time, I'm preaching unholiness, I want to tell you there's still a lot of striving going on that's not this. Why in the holiness circles? Because we believe that we have a holy God, and that He has a holy standard, and we had better meet that standard, and by hook or by crook we're going to meet it, and we're going to strive until we get there, amen? That is part of holiness thinking.

So we think, and I want to put it to you, there is too much striving in the flesh going on in some of these circles, and too little of trusting in Jesus. Because here's what I know about myself, I can never be as perfect as Jesus is, and I can never in this body make it perfect enough to actually inherit the kingdom of God. I can't make this thing perfect enough to inherit the kingdom of God, amen? Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

Why does this thing need to be changed in an instant, in a flash of my eyeball? Why does this thing have to be changed into a new body, a resurrection body when Christ returns? Because this thing is not good enough to inherit the kingdom of God. Now what if I was to sit down every morning and say, if I can make myself be good today, good enough to please God perhaps, good enough to obey every law I know, I wonder if I can get through a day like that, if I absolutely just nail it, perfect. You think I'm going to go very many days like that? You think it's actually possible for human beings, even those, now I've been a

spiritual Christian for 25 years, I've had the Holy Spirit of God filling me for 25 years, and we know from 1 John it says, those who have a hope in Jesus purify themselves as He is pure.

So anybody that's a true Christian is always seeking further and more and more purity, correct? That's one of the basics of being a real Christian. You hate sin, you love righteousness, you're filled with the Spirit of God and therefore you want to be holy, and you should be able to look back at the previous year and say, you know what, God has purified me during this year, and I can see that this year I've got more purity inside of me, basically, even in the fleshly realm than I did last year. But I want to tell you, even while that is going on, that process of sanctification, absolutely essential, even while that is going on, I want to tell you, even if I reach 85 years old, I will not be perfect.

I will not be perfect. Who am I going to be holding up to God as being my salvation, and I'm going to hide behind on the Day of Judgment from the wrath of a holy God? Who am I going to be hiding behind? I'll be putting up here the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and I'll be hiding behind that. I'm not going to be coming up to God and saying, here I am God, Andrew Strong, you know that perfect guy, I know full well, not only am I not perfect in this body, I never will be, much as I hate sin.

Because what is this scripture saying? What am I supposed to be trusting in? According to this scripture, it says, therefore being justified, not by being made more and more perfect, even though that is a biblical process. I'm not justified by that. How am I justified by faith? What am I supposed to be putting my faith in? Who and what am I supposed to be trusting? Christ who lives in me, isn't it? It's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me.

What am I trusting in here? The righteousness of Jesus living in me. A white robe given to me, and I cannot work for it, and nothing I could pay would ever pay for it, because it's beyond price. This righteousness, that's impossible to buy.

All I can do is literally go through the process of being converted, and then have faith in Jesus Christ to be my righteousness. What does a lot of holiness teaching end up leading us to? Some of it leads us into legalism. I've been in these circles.

I lived in the United States for four years recently. I preached at some of the sermon index conferences. The holiness circles I'm familiar with, and I want to tell you, this is a problem in our circles.

If you guys count yourself as holiness people, I put it to you, the greatest danger for holiness people is almost always legalism. What is legalism? It's trying to do, by making this thing do perfect things, trying to be my own righteousness, instead of allowing Christ to be it. Relying on me to strive enough to please God today, instead of simply being able to trust in Christ to be the only righteousness I'll ever need.

It's why a thief can come into the kingdom of God and be instantly righteous as a person that's been walking with God for 25 years. Why? Because both of them are having to rely on the same thing. Not themselves, but Christ.

We forget this in the holiness circles, and there's always this urgency to make ourselves better. And if we wake up in the morning and strive enough, then maybe we'll make God happy. There is this tendency, and it's a dangerous tendency, because where does it lead us? It leads us into pharisaism.

It leads us into legalism. Does God want us to repent? Yes. Does God want us to lead lives of holiness? Yes.

Does God want us to begin subtly relying on our own works to make God happy? No. And that's the subtle difference, isn't it? Because so many good, good people... In fact, this is a problem not with the evil-doers, and not with the law-breakers. This particular problem is one that we're talking about amongst the people that love to do good, isn't it? Isn't it a problem amongst those who really seek God for purity? That the only one's liable to fall into this.

Such a desire to be clean that we end up striving in the flesh to make ourselves better for God. And I say, we cannot. There is nothing I can do today to make myself more pleasing to God.

If I have Christ living in me, and I truly trust in His righteousness living in me, I can't actually do anything else to make myself better before God, can I? I already, in His eyes, because I'm wearing a white robe, my conscience is clean. Aren't I already perfect? Not Andrew Strong is perfect, but Jesus living in me is. I can't make Him any more perfect than He is.

People say, you know what though, if I can just do like 30 minutes of Bible study and exactly 25 minutes of prayer every day, this, that, the other, and the other, then I will be good enough and I'll truly be a holiness person. I say, you're a holiness person before you did all of that if Christ is in you, the hope of glory. You already, before you did any of that, were clean before Him.

If you're trying to please God with your works, I want to put it to you, how much can you add to Jesus to make Him cleaner? You can't add anything. Do you know what Hebrews chapter 4 and all those kind of scriptures that a lot of the old revivalists would preach on and talking about, what are they talking about? The rest, the place of rest that you come to when you finish your own works and you rely on God to be everything. If I can finish my own works and rely on God to be everything, what does it end up meaning? It ends up meaning this, that I don't have to do anything except trust in Jesus.

Do you know what I'll end up doing? I'll end up doing all kinds of stuff because I love God so much. Where is the motivation coming from? It's not coming from me imposing it, it's coming from inside. It's coming from the love of Christ that compels us to go and reach people, doesn't it? But what if I'm making myself do it legalistically, laurishly? I'll do things like this.

You know, a legalistic person will say something like this. They'll say, you know, I've got to witness to five people a day. I have to witness to five people a day.

It's a little law I've got running. Now, I've lived this way. I'm not speaking to you as somebody who hasn't done this kind of stuff.

I've got to. I have to. I'm going to impose upon myself little laws that will make me a better person.

If I can witness to five people a day, if I can pray for exactly half an hour a day, if I can... And on and on it goes. Then I'll be good enough. Then I'll be a good Christian.

Then I'll be a holy person. I say, if you have Christ, Christ in you, the hope of glory, if it's no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me, what on earth do I need on top of that? Who's the one that needs to be clean? Well, Christ is clean, and all I have to do is keep my conscience clean and walk in Him. Isn't that true? What were all the Jews trying to do all the time? If only you can do this work and this work and this work, they would even come to the Gentile believers and they would say, listen, we need to circumcise you.

We need to make you start to obey all of the laws, you know, the Sabbath law and the ceremonial laws. Now, if you can start doing that, then you'll please God. And Paul said, you're losing the faith.

You're losing the faith. You're trying to make yourself clean when Jesus already did it. Therefore, being justified by faith, justified by faith, we have peace with God.

Turn with me to Romans chapter 8. You know, one of the hardest jobs in the world is actually not getting people to repent. That's hard enough. One of the hardest jobs in the world is getting people to trust in Christ such that they don't feel condemnation every day.

They actually feel clean before God. They actually feel clean before God. This is one of the hardest jobs on earth.

Okay. Romans 8 verse 1 says this. Boy, this is an abused scripture, isn't it? There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

If there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus You know what condemnation is? Condemnation is that little voice inside you all day saying, oh, you did this wrong. Oh, man, you're a sinner. You just did that wrong.

Oh, boy. Oh, what kind of Christian are you? Didn't you see the cat there? You know, you just kicked the cat. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

Never ending, isn't it? Condemnation. What is condemnation? That little voice that wants to turn you into a sinner all day, every day and remind you of it again and again and again and again. But I want to put it to you that is the opposite of trusting Christ to be my righteousness.

Those two things are opposites. I can choose to live here. And a lot of Christians do.

They say, you know, I'll feel a lot safer if I'm condemned all day and always feeling like I have to repent every 15 minutes. There's a safety factor in there. They say, I would quite like to live that way where I'm reminded of my sins continuously and I'm always repenting.

I spend all day repenting. I've heard people preach that this is a good thing to do. I want to put it to you.

I would rather trust Christ to be my righteousness and stop trusting me. Because you've got the choice, you know. I'd rather start trusting Christ to be my righteousness and stop trusting the perfection that Andrew Strong cannot deliver.

Cannot. You know, a lot of repentance, we are quite rightly, when I preach repentance, I'm quite rightly pointing out in a lot of ways the things people are doing that are wrong. I have to start there.

That's what repentance is. Repentance preaching is really a very basic and foundational thing. I'll tell you why.

It's because we're basically just getting people to be convicted of what they're doing wrong. Once I've established that, I don't keep people endlessly in repentance. I put them in water so they can experience the death of Christ in their own life.

Romans chapter 6. And then I want them walking in this, the life of the Spirit where you trust Jesus to be your righteousness and you experience it as a real thing. Many Christians I speak to, they don't feel clean any day. They don't actually feel clean before God.

Every day. Condemnation. Always they are kicking themselves and saying, I wish I could be better.

Kick, kick, kick. I wish, I wish I was a holier person. I say, can you trust in Christ to be every bit of holiness for you? Can you trust in Christ to be clean inside of you? Can you put on Christ like a garment, like it says to do in the Bible? Can you put on Christ like a garment and hide behind Him? Can you trust in His righteousness and the fact that He is utterly clean? Can you take it on as being yours and actually experience it? Can you walk before God every day not conscious of sin but consciousness of Christ in you, or can you go there? And I put it to you, by faith you can.

But if you don't have faith you can't. What is faith? It's a supernatural gift from God. At least any man should boast.

Isn't it? It's a supernatural gift from God where God places inside of you the ability to trust Him to be your righteousness. You see, I've been a Christian 25 years and every year I can see there's progress and I can see even in this fleshly body of mine I should be able to see progress towards being more Christ-like every year, shouldn't I? But even given that I want to tell you there is no perfection in this body apart from Christ that lives in me and I will never rely on this to save me and when I get up in front of God I'm standing behind Christ and saying, please God, do not judge me by Andrew Strong. I shield myself wholly behind Him who is the only one.

The only perfect one. The only pure one. Isn't this the gospel we're talking about today? But how many Christians ever feel clean before God? Too much holiness preaching and I've preached this stuff sin, righteousness and judgment but too much of it is of the same ilk.

In other words, nobody ever feels clean we only ever make them feel convicted. Amen? That's what holiness preachers do. That's a lot of our job and the hope is that people will repent and come into a tremendous sense of cleansing in God.

That's what we hope. But all too often what we end up leaving people with is all I can do. All I can do is repent all day, every day, repent, repent, repent, and I say, I don't think that's faith.

I don't think you'll believe in anything. You're trying to impress God and not trying to impress God, I shouldn't say that. You're trying to make yourself right with God by repentance only, not faith.

You think if only you can cover all of your sins every day by repenting of them you'll have righteousness. You're trusting your own. You're trying to perfect yourself every day.

If only I could be more perfect, God will like me. God already likes you. He doesn't like you because of you, He likes you because of Jesus living in you.

He doesn't have to be convinced. He sent His Son to die for you. God loves you.

He doesn't have to be convinced. He would do it again if He had to. But He doesn't.

So, there is now, therefore, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. You see, you've got to walk after the Spirit. You've got to be trusting in Christ for

the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

How many people experience this? I'll tell you what happens typically in Christians' lives. For the first two months, they feel clean before God and they are just racing ahead. It's like what we call a honeymoon period with God and they just go, wow, I just feel so clean and I'm just so happy I became a Christian and they don't know very much and, in fact, that's a good thing because the more they know, the less happy they are.

And then they start learning all this stuff and they start learning how to feel bad but it never really seems to go away. We don't teach them faith to walk in. We don't teach them that a true Christian just by keeping your conscience clean and walking in the Spirit, just by keeping your conscience clean, you say, how do I keep my conscience clean? It's very simple.

Firstly, if there's any stain or spot on that conscience right now, you repent before God over it. That's number one. Second thing is, once you've done that, once your conscience is clean, you learn how to walk before God with a clean conscience and trusting in Jesus.

You say, how do I do that? Well, the Bible throws lustful images in front of men every day by the hundred if it can. It's one of the sickest cultures, especially media cultures, ever invented. I'm sure probably the sickest.

So what is it trying to do? It's trying to get you to give in and indulge lust every day. The advertisements are full of it, the magazines are full of it, you name it. You don't have to indulge that.

You can avert your eyes from that. You don't have to look and look at something, do you? If you have a spot that jumps on your conscience, if you're really clean before God and you really stumble over something, you straight away go, oh my goodness, I need to sort that out before God. You can feel it.

It affects your communion with Him. If you've got a clean conscience and suddenly a spot jumps on it, you notice it straight away. It would be like a white robe and suddenly there's a spot on it.

You would see it instantly. Amen? But many Christians, number one, they don't even bother having a clean robe. They don't even really care about sin.

The thing gets spotted up and ruined almost overnight. Those are the people I'm talking about today. I'm talking about the people who have a clean conscience.

if I'm walking with a clean conscience before God and a chance comes up to indulge sin, I won't take it. Simple. I just don't take it.

I won't go there. I won't indulge that sin. What happens then? My conscience, hopefully, remains clean before God.

And when something serious, when I really do do something and get something into so-and-so and it really hurt their feelings, I need to go and apologize to that person. I need to maybe pray about it. But no, I just need to ring them up and just say, I'm just so sorry that I said that.

So then, what's going on? Hopefully, I can basically live at most times with a clean conscience before God. I'm trusting in Christ to be my righteousness. Therefore, I should really be aware I should be almost all the time, shouldn't I? Isn't this a very, very simple concept? This is not rocket science here.

Do you know the only people who can live this way are people who have been born in the Spirit of God. People who have the Spirit of God filling their life can live this way. People who do not and will not, they can never experience this.

Jesus gives it to us for free. And he says, have faith. Doesn't he? Isn't it simple? What is having faith? Trust in me to be your righteousness.

You can't do it. You cannot do it. And all the people who are striving every day to make themselves cleaner by just works, I put it to you, are they trusting in Christ rather than themselves? Isn't that the difference between the law and grace? It is, isn't it? You know, if we could only get Christians into a place where their conscience is clean and get them walking with an awareness of cleanness before God, the whole church would be revolutionized.

I'll tell you why. It's because when you're clean and you feel it and sense it before God, and you go, you know, I don't have any controversy between me and God right now. I don't feel there's anything right now that I, you know, I'm trusting Jesus.

Jesus is out the front there. My conscience is clean before God right now. I feel like I'm in communion with God.

Do you know, communion with God is what revolutionizes somebody's life. If we can only take the Christian church into a place of cleanness and walk in it, everything gets revolutionized because people come, bam, close to God again. And the whole church gets transformed by literally being close to Jesus.

That's all it takes. Most times, we're not even preaching repentance. Most times, we're not preaching about getting a clean conscience.

And most times, we're not teaching people to walk in the Spirit of Jesus. And I tell you, we have a bankrupt church. There's not repentance.

There's not faith. There's not really walking in the Spirit of God. We're missing some of the most basic fundamentals of the gospel.

I had this experience when I was a very young Christian and didn't really know it, but I felt it must be a precious thing to be protected. I was 17 years old. I had this experience.

You get converted, and you suddenly feel clean before God. Suddenly, you're in communion with God. You go to pray, and you're instantly in the presence of God.

That's the way it should be. So many people just slowly lose it, and they don't know why it's going. They try and grab it, and they can't get it back.

And they go, oh, well, we'll just go along to church and be a good church person as best we can. They settle for a life in the conscious cleanness of Jesus. It's all their own effort.

It's all church going, attending meetings, and trying to be good. Listen, that's not Christianity. Christianity is not trying to be good.

It's trusting in Christ and being the hope of God. No longer I that live. What else does it say? Those who have been truly converted, they're a new creation.

Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are to come. A new creature, a new being is what you are.

Amen? We have to preach this. We have to get people into this. And we have to start giving them faith to walk in it, because how does faith come? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

So unless we have preachers going out there and saying you can walk in this, you can be aware of this, this can be your experience, you can pass it by faith today. Unless we're going out there preaching that, I tell you, people are not just going to come into it, because faith is supposed to come by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. That's why Paul said we need preachers.

We need preachers. And I think we need to be those preachers that preach this kind of stuff and bring people into it by the power of the Spirit of God. That's what I think.

And there's nothing I've been preaching to you today that Wesley and his friends didn't preach pretty much every day of their lives. This is basic stuff, isn't it? But it's experiencing the basic stuff that I'm really talking about today. Amen? Alright.

Please stand with me. I just want to pray for all of us. Please just raise your hands to heaven if you really want to come into this experience as an everyday reality.

If you've kind of grasped it or you've had it in the past and you know that there's a place of cleanness by trusting in Christ, but you're not quite there, you've still got condemnation every day just rolling through you. Or even if you have sin that you want to confess to God today and say, God, let my conscience be utterly clean. Please just raise your hands to heaven right now, because I'm going to pray for all of us.

Father God, I pray in Jesus' name that we would experience a cleanness before you like we've never known God. Father, we reach out right now and we say, Father, we repent of every unclean thing that might be dotting our conscience before you, God, that might be staining that white robe, God. We just throw it and cast it away from ourselves, Father.

We say, wash us white as snow. Let the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us from all sin, God. We confess everything to you.

We hide nothing from you, God. And, Father, we pray for this faith. We pray for it to be a reality every day where we experience real righteousness, real peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, where we don't have up and down days, but every day we feel clean by the blood of Jesus.

We feel clean because Christ is in us, fully formed in us, God. Let us take Jesus as our righteousness. Let it be a reality.

Let us always feel clean before you and have close communion with you, God. Let us walk before you clean of heart, Father God, clean of conscience, Father God. By the blood of Jesus, we pray, let us know and we pray all these things as a present reality in our lives that your Spirit pour down upon us today and make it real and let us never walk outside of us ever again, God.

We pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

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