

Swimming Where the Cleansing Waters Are

by Tim Conway

We must participate in God's work of sanctification by cleansing ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and staying focused on God as the source of the cleansing waters.

Duration: 1:00:59

Scripture: Psalm 73:28, Isaiah 1:18, Hebrews 10:22, James 4:8, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of drawing near to God for cleansing, sanctification, and spiritual growth. It highlights the need to actively seek God's presence, confess sins, and maintain a constant mental awareness of God to experience His purifying grace and transformation. The message encourages believers to run back to God immediately after sin, not allowing guilt or hesitation to keep them away from His healing presence.

Transcript

2 Corinthians 7:1 Now, look, as I read this verse, you need to hear it for what it says. I know that when we come to Scripture, we find that our sanctification, our holiness is dependent, entirely dependent upon the Triune God. We find that the God of peace, Paul is asking concerning the Thessalonian church, may the God of peace Himself completely sanctify you.

May your whole spirit, soul, body be kept blameless. This is God's work. That's God the Father.

We know that the Son, we just sang that illustration of marriage. We sang based on Ephesians 5. But we know there, didn't Jesus Christ Himself give Himself for the sake of our sanctification, for our cleansing, washing by the water of the Word, that we might be presented to Him in splendor? No spot. No blemish.

Or the Spirit. By the Spirit, we are sanctified. By the Spirit, we put to death the deeds of the flesh.

You remember this from one of the messages. It's the law of the Spirit of life by which we're set free. Brethren, the Spirit of God.

The Son of God. God the Father. We have a Triune God that is involved in making us like Christ.

You see, reading this text is in no way a denial of those realities. But what this text does is it brings out to you and I the fact that this is no passive reality. You know what I mean by passive.

What's the opposite of passive? Active. Right. What clearly the Apostle is indicating to us in this verse is that you and I are called to action.

We are called to activity. That's the issue. Let's read the verse.

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness. You see what's on the table here. You see what's at stake.

Holiness being brought to completion. Now, it's true that Scripture often is talking about our holiness being brought to completion. Our splendor being brought to completion.

Our sanctification of all the spirit, soul, body being brought to completion of fullness at the day of Christ's coming. This is an activity of God. But what you see here is that God is calling us to participate.

And of course, as we've looked at in the past, we can go there to Philippians and we find that we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because precisely for the fact that it is God Who is at work in us. God is at work, and yet we're called to work.

It's a simultaneous reality. We don't do it in our own power. We don't do it in our own strength.

We don't do it separated from God. But we do it. And see, what this is a call to is our responsibility.

We have a responsibility. That's what we see here. We're not to be passive.

Let us cleanse ourselves. So, you know what you have? When you have a healthy church, you're going to find a lot of self-cleansing taking place. You're not going to have this hyper-Calvinistic mindset that well, God is sovereign, and if He's going to do this, He's going to have to visit me.

I'm going to have to have a baptism of the Spirit. I'm going to just have to wait until God comes to this because unless God does this... But you see, brethren, what we find is that it's kind of like Peter walking on the water. Peter didn't walk on the water until Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water.

That's really how our holiness is. That when we step out in faith, what we'll find is that the water actually supports our footstep. That's what this is like.

We have a responsibility. We're called to activity. Here's the thing, what sort of activity are we called to? If God sanctifies me, if it's His power, it's His purpose, His work, what do I do? Now, some of the previous messages, you might look at some of those and recall, we did set forth some things.

Maybe if you'll bear with my illustration here. Brethren, we might liken God's cleansing power. Because we know that's a reality.

Let's liken it. Listen, what is it that we are to cleanse ourselves from? It says every defilement of body and spirit or flesh and spirit. Every defilement.

You do just see what the assumption is. That as much as we are the new man, we know this well enough. We're not without our defilements.

And so, what do we do to eradicate a defilement? And what I would like us to imagine is this, imagine God's power in cleansing us. Imagine it like a cool, refreshing, mountain river that's flowing. And our objective is to be where those waters flow most abundantly.

I've got this defilement on me. See, the objective needs to be, this is one of the primary things with the Christian life. One of the primary things in cleansing myself is not to invent my own way.

It's not for me to come up with the power to do it. It is for me to be in the position where those waters flow most abundantly. That is really the fight of faith.

That is really the fight of Christianity. That is really the fight of holiness. Brethren, we don't invent the river.

We don't make the water. Our objective is to be in the most conducive place to having the filth washed off. If you want the filth washed off, get in the water.

Right? I mean, the thing to do is not to turn and head in the opposite direction. It's to get where those waters most abundantly flow. That's the idea.

The channels of cleansing water. There are places where they flow most vigorously and most abundantly. That's where you and I want to get to.

That's how we cleanse ourselves. And I know there's other things that could be said, but this is a reality that we find in Scripture. Brethren, I want you to think.

Turn in your Bibles to Galatians. Just look at this. Because what I'm wanting to prove to you right now is there really are things you can do to be splashing in the water that cleanses.

And there are things that you can do that take you away from there. It is possible by your own actions to put yourself in the waters. It's possible by your own actions to take yourself out of the cleansing waters.

Now, the Galatians. One of the things that is often overlooked about the Galatian letter is this. The Galatians started well.

That's not often overlooked, because it's very plainly said. Paul says to the Galatians, you did run well. You know what that means? You were in a healthy position.

You were in a good position. You were in a safe place. You were where the waters flowed.

But you're not anymore. You came out. Now, here's the thing that I want you to see.

If you look at Galatians 3. And you look there. Galatians 3. Notice this. Verse 3. Are you so foolish? And I'll tell you this, if you come out of the waters, you're being a fool.

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being, what's the word? Perfected. You see, brethren, the Galatians were running well, and then what happened is, they got this idea, oh, the way to really advance as a Christian. The way to really advance towards perfection.

That's really the idea here. Bringing holiness to completion. It's the word perfection.

Bringing holiness to perfection in the fear of God. You see what happened? They began to run well, but then they stepped out of the streams. They came away from the cross.

They came away from God Himself. They stepped into the muddy waters of legalism. That's what happened to them.

Seeking perfection. They actually came out of the waters. And brethren, I'll acknowledge, they did it ignorantly.

But you see, this is what can happen. We can ignorantly come out. It took the Apostle to come along and set them straight.

Put them back on the right course. Let me tell you something. When you get towards the end of Galatians, you know what he says? He warns them about being conceited, envious of one another, biting and devouring.

You know why? They came out of the water. You come out of the water, and what happens is, it doesn't wash the filth off. You turn to other mechanisms, and it leaves the filth.

It just multiplies the filth. You get off into trouncing around. You turn away from Christ crucified.

That's what they did. You see, you can take yourself out of the cleansing waters. Let me give you another example.

Hebrews. You don't have to turn there, but listen. You know what's said to the Hebrews.

Don't drift. Warnings against drifting. Why? What is it to drift? It's to move away from something.

You see, they did the same thing. What were they moving away from? They were moving away from Christ. If you sum up the book of Hebrews, what's it all about? The superiority of Christ.

Superior to the prophets. Superior to the angels. Superior to Moses.

Superior to Abraham. Superior to Levi. Superior to Aaron.

Superior to all the high priests. He has a superior covenant. He's superior to Moses.

He has superior promises. He has superior blood. But they moved away.

And what happened? They were drooping. They were downcast. That's what happens when we take ourselves out of the water.

Or let me tell you about this. You know that this is true. Quenching the Spirit.

We're told not to grieve the Spirit. We're told not to quench the Spirit. What does it mean to quench? You put the Spirit's fire out.

Now listen, your sanctification, those waters flowing. But what happens when you quench the Spirit? You know what happens? The Spirit doesn't allow you access to the most vigorous cleansing waters anymore. The reason that you're warned against it is because it harms you.

It hinders you. Or how about this? Husbands, you're to live with your wives in an understanding way. You're supposed to give honor to them.

Tell me, men, what happens when you don't? Your prayers are hindered. Now see, if your prayer is, Lord, make me holy. Lord, purify me.

Lord, give me victory over sin. You see what you've done? This is an action you do. This is a sin you fall into.

This is a way you willingly go. And what does it do? It hinders. You want to be there? You want to be there in the most abundantly flowing, cool, refreshing, cleansing waters? There are things you can do that bring yourself out of those waters.

How about this? What does Paul say concerning a brother or sister in the church who's in sin and the church won't deal with it? What does he call that? Leaven that does what? Leaven's the whole lump. You see, again, that is a willing action of an entire church. And by the way, churches, like was said in the first hour, not the walls, not the building, it's the people.

And what a church is, it's made up of individuals. What you have when you are allowing sin in the church, you have individuals which allow that. And you see what's being said.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. What is he saying? He's saying if you've got a sinful man and you allow him to keep professing, to be a Christian, living in your midst, walking in sin, you allow him to stay there, it will leaven the whole lump which means it contaminates. It takes you out of those waters.

My whole point is this. You and I can make decisions that take us out of the cleansing place. One of the things that is imperative in self-cleansing, if you are to cleanse yourself, is to continuously put yourself where the channels flow most abundantly for cleansing.

Look, there's no doubt about it. When you come across somebody who most fragrantly resembles Christ, it is because they have been in those waters more than you. I mean, unless that fragrance is just as strong or stronger on you.

But that's how they get there. It's not by accident. You see, we can't be passive.

If you sit back and you do nothing, it's not good. It's not in line with what Paul's teaching here. It takes purpose.

You have to be deliberate if you're going to dwell in those waters that flow most abundantly. So you see, we can do things that take us out of the flow. If that's true, certainly the reverse is true.

We can do things that put us right there in God's grace where they most abundantly spill over us for that most thorough, deep cleaning. That's what we need. Deep cleaning.

Because He's not just talking the body. The Spirit inside. Deep.

We need to go deep. The God of peace Himself. What is it? It's the whole spirit, soul, body.

It's deep cleaning that we want. Not just surface. Not just our actions.

Not just so that we look good on the outside. We want to be good. We want to be clean.

We want to be beautiful at the deepest levels. So, if you'll allow me to continue to spiritualize, I know sometimes people don't like spiritualizing, but you just ask yourself this, is this not what the Scriptures speak? If you'll allow me the liberty to spiritualize a bit, I want to put an image in your mind. Let's go back to the very beginning.

I want you to go back to Eden. Go back to Genesis 2. There's an image here. There was a reality back in the beginning.

I'm going to take it and make it an image or make it into some kind of symbolism for us. But there's a reality back in Eden that has often struck me. And as I was thinking about this sermon, my mind went back there.

And I want you to go back there with me. Genesis 2.10 Maybe you've read over this before. Maybe it's never jumped out at you before.

But listen to this. Very simple thought. A river flowed out of Eden.

Very interesting. It never says it flows into Eden. A river flowed out of Eden.

And there it divided and became four rivers. Now brethren, let me ask you something. Is that natural? Is that what we find? If you surveyed the mighty Mississippi River, is that what you would find? Would you go up to the very spring head of the Mississippi and find it 50 feet deep and a mile wide? And as it flowed towards the Gulf of Mexico, it splinters and becomes four rivers and they then break off and become smaller tributaries.

Is that what we find? Brethren, isn't it true that in nature, we actually find the reverse of this? If you go up to the very starting point of the Mississippi, there is a starting point. It flows out of a lake in Minnesota. You go there, it's probably no more than 20 feet wide.

But the picture we have here of Eden is like the mighty Mississippi turned on its head. It starts big and then it breaks up after this. The river is never said to flow into Eden.

It's like, think with me here. In Eden, you have a mighty river that flows. So great is the source that it's able to break up and become four smaller rivers after that.

The whole idea there is if you're looking for the greatest abundance of water, you go to the springhead. How do you even end up with something like that? The only way you end up with that is if you have a great spring of water. I mean, massive.

For a whole river that's able to break up and become four lesser rivers. My whole point is this. When we start thinking about where do we want to go to find the most abundance of waters for cleansing? Brethren, I would say this.

Don't be satisfied with a wet washcloth. Go to the springhead. Go where the river is mightiest.

And where is that? Well, is it any accident that it is actually where God walks with man? Is it any accident that it's where man is told to dwell? In the very place where he would walk with God in the cool of the day? Brethren, that's what Eden is all about. And the river is always most abundant right where God meets man. The further you go from Eden, the less water you find.

The more it's dispersed. The greatest amount, the greatest flow is there. Brethren, this is symbolism that shows up in Scripture.

You remember what was said. You remember what happened there in Jeremiah. One of the oft-quoted verses that comes out of Jeremiah says that God is a fountain of living waters.

Can anybody quote that? Anybody know the context? My people have done something. What did they do? What is it? They've committed two evils. What did they do? They were looking for broken cisterns.

And what is the thing about broken cisterns? No water. You see, that's what God's people can do. They can go away from the water.

No water. That's where you don't want to be. No water.

Broken cisterns where there's no water. Brethren, when it comes to the kingdom, we don't want to think of the way things are naturally. We want to think of the way the rivers flow in God's Word.

We want to think of the way rivers flow when it has to do with Eden. We want to think of the way rivers flow when it has to do with God. And when it has to do with God, He is the springhead.

He is the spring. He is the fountain. A geyser of water.

Can you imagine a river that is coming out of Eden that is capable of watering and breaking up into four rivers? It's just gushing out. You want to be cleansed? Do you want to find a place where the waters of God are rich and abundant and deep? A place to swim in and to be cleansed in? You go to the riverhead. You go to the Source.

And God says, I'm the Source. As you move away from Him, what you find is the water is dispersed. You find that you're going in the wrong direction.

You find no water. What you find when you get to the end of Revelation is that there is a river of God. There is a river of life.

Brethren, where does it flow from? Where does it flow from? It says it flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. That's how the river flows. If we're looking for the cleansing waters, these mountain waters, fresh and clean and cleansing, brethren, where do you go? You go to the springhead.

You go to the throne. That's where the cleansing takes place. You see our problem? Our problem, brethren, our problem whether you're the Galatians, whether you're the Hebrews, whether you allow sin in the church, whether you grieve the Spirit, brethren, when we get into places like that, the problem is always singular.

The problem is moving away from God. And God tells us, you don't want to move away from Me. I am the source of the waters.

I am where they break forth. Brethren, what we have to recognize is that this is a kind of river that never gets added to after the source. There's no tributaries.

The cleansing flow comes from God. You don't want to go to other things. You don't want to turn to Moses.

You don't want to turn away. You don't want to turn to asceticism. We could go to the Colossian letter.

You don't want to go to asceticism. You don't want to go to philosophy. You don't want to go to other things.

You don't want to go to just things that concern the flesh. Things that concern rules and lists. Brethren, what happens is we often fall into the same thing that the Galatians fall into.

Which is what? We start well. We start with our eyes on Christ. We start with the Spirit being supplied by faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ publicly proclaimed, professed, put before us as crucified. And there we are. And the cleansing waters billow over us.

And what happens? We get going along and we think we get wise. Somebody comes along. Well, you know, the real secret to spirituality, the real secret to holiness is over here.

But what God tells us is it's all broken cisterns. And you turn your eyes off of that. You come away from God Himself.

You come away. Brethren, it's like walking out of Eden. It's walking where the waters are less and less and less.

And you know, have you ever seen pictures of the Colorado River? See, the Colorado River is actually, it's got all its tributaries that add to it in the beginning. But you know, once you leave the Grand Canyon and you start heading south and through all the desert and everything, it's much like this river. There's pictures.

You can find this. I've seen them before. Down in Mexico, where the water, because they're taking so much water out of the Colorado, there's a place in Mexico where it just becomes a little trickle and it disappears into the sand.

And see, you can go to some wet sand and try to wash yourself, but that's not where you want to be. You want to go back up there to the mighty Grand Canyon where the waters are deep and fast. The problem is we turn away.

The problem is we go to other things. The whole point is this. If you would be clean, the channels where the waters flow most abundantly are right at the Godhead Himself.

Right at the throne itself. Right at the cross itself. Right where Christ is.

Right where the manifest presence of God is. Right where God calls us to meet with Him. Remember, that's what Eden is all about.

It's a paradise. Not because of all the trees we heard about in the hour. The reason it's paradise is because Adam walked with God there.

That's the paradise. Our greatest cleansing is where we walk with God. It's always getting as close to the throne as we can get.

This is always found as close to Eden, as close to the springhead. It is nearness of God that will change you. It is nearness of God that will wash you the most and the most rapidly.

You know what? I have tried to read the Bible in all the major translations. It's like every translation seems like they have some sort of translation of certain verses that is unusually significant and unusually a blessing. And I think that the New American Standard, I've read that cover to cover once.

One of the most outstanding translations that it has that none of the other translations imitate exactly is Psalm 73:28. Many of you know that. The nearness of God is my good. And it translates in the ESV, but

for me it is good to be near God.

Both carry the same thing, but I think the NAS captures that. The nearness of God is my good. Do you want good in your life when it comes to holiness? When it comes to sanctification? When it comes to self-cleansing? Where do you position yourself? As near to God as possible.

It's forgetting God. It's committing these two evils. It's coming away.

Because everything else is a broken cistern. Everything else will fail you. Every other attempt at perfection, you know what you end up? You end up just like the Galatians.

As you seek to be perfected by some other means, you end up biting, devouring. You end up coveting. You end up actually making yourself more filthy.

Moses. Think with me, brethren. That shine, that glory that manifested from his face, did he pick up that radiance of the glory of God by being as far away from God as he possibly could? It was when he was close.

Think of Isaiah. Look, I'm not saying it's always comfortable to get that close. Because when we get washed, what are the things we need to be washed of? There are often things deeply rooted in us.

There are things that as they're pulled up and washed away, they hurt. You get your pride destroyed. Pride is all about self, and if you're going to kill pride, you've got to kill self.

And self is you. I'm not saying it's always comfortable, but you think about Isaiah. Isaiah, in the year that King Uzziah died, he said he saw also the Lord on a throne high and lifted up.

See, He came into His presence. And what happened? Oh, you've got the seraphim. And they're crying out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of His glory. And what happens? Woe is me. I am undone or I am lost.

I am a man of unclean lips. Yes, you get close to God and what happens? Your sin is put under that glaring light of God. It's exposed.

You walk in the light. And what happens is the sin gets exposed. But, oh brethren, before He left that day, He went out as the very ambassador of the Lord.

Who will go for Me? You see, it's close. The seraphim with tongs took a glowing coal and set it on His lips. Brethren, you think about it.

Though our Lord could heal from afar, generally He did not do so. It was when people came close. It was when people touched Him.

The hem of His garment even. It's when He laid His hand on the leper. Most of His healing, most of His delivering, it was done in His presence.

You see, the healing is found close. Not far. Think of Peter walking with the Lord there on the beach that day.

He's restored. There's healing. Healing.

You want the healing, brethren? You go close. You don't allow yourself to not cleave to God. It's nearness to God that is your good.

It's nearness. And anything that takes you away, if you're going to cleanse yourselves, put yourself where the cleansing waters are. The cleansing waters are most abundant in Eden.

They're most abundant at the throne. They're most abundant when God meets man. When God walks with man.

That's where it happens. That's what we want to aim for. That's at the heart of this.

My point is simply this. Whatever our responsibility may be to cleanse ourselves, I'm afraid of this. You know what happens? We often become so absorbed with ourselves.

Oh, well, I've got this lust issue. I've got jealousy issues. Anger issues.

I've got pride issues. How do I get rid of it? Give me the scrub brush that's going to take this off. I want to be perfected.

And oftentimes, we go seek counsel from other people and they tell us this and they tell us that, and in the end, it can be pretty ineffective. But you want to give the right counsel? You want to give the good counsel? Brethren, so often we can become like the muckraker in part 2 of Pilgrim's Progress. And you remember it well.

But I would bring it over to the Christian life. That's being applied to the lost man undoubtedly. But you can bring it over to the saved man.

He's going along in his life and he's raking the muck. And you can look at that muck like the defilement that's on us. Maybe take the rake out and take a dry washcloth and we're trying to wash the defilement off.

And what is it that the man has to do to be set free? Simply look up. You see, that's the problem a lot of times. We look in the wrong places.

Like the Galatians, they were looking in the wrong place. If we would look up, we would look right into the face of God. And that's where our healing is.

You want to give people proper counsel when they're struggling with anything? Send them to closeness with God. Send them into the intimacy. Send them to draw near to God.

That's where the healing is. Didn't Jesus say that? Abide in Me. Abide in Me.

Without Me, you can do nothing. There's no cleansing aside from Me. You go from Me, you go to any other thing, and you're going to find that it doesn't work.

You'll bite and you'll devour one another. Really? I am purposely setting my mind to become perfect. Perfect! I'm seeking perfection.

And in the end, I'm going to bite and devour. You will if you try this with your back towards God. You try moving into any other way.

And it can be packaged very beautifully. It can seem like it's very good. Very religious.

Well, what you really have to do is you have to start keeping the festivals. You know, you really want righteousness in your life? You really want to reach the next level? Read John Owen. Now brethren, if we go to John Owen and you read the glory of Christ or communion with God, and He sends you to the foot of the cross, He sends you to the throne, He sends you to Eden, that's good.

But you see, the problem is, we can start to think, if I only have the right library. No, the right library is the library that sends you to nearness to God. That's the issue.

That's always the issue. The nearness of God is my good. So, if I'm going to cleanse myself, let me put myself there.

Near to God. Cleave to the Lord. For apart from Him, you're in the realm of failure, breakdown, decline, defeat.

The prophet Hosea says this, Come. Where? Where, Hosea? Where? Let us return to the Lord. That's what he says.

Why? Yes, it's true, He's torn us. But what happens if we draw near Hosea? He'll heal us. That's where your healing is.

You know what it says? It says right in that same context in Hosea 6, that His coming forth is as the dawn. What coming forth? His coming forth when you draw near to Him. He comes forth to meet you.

And Hosea says this, He will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. See, it's the water symbolism again. Showers.

Spring rains. You want the cleansing? You want to stand out under the showers? The waterfall of God's healing, abundant grace. Where do we go, Hosea? Well, come.

Let us return. Whatever artificial cisterns, whatever substitutes that hold no water that you have been drawn away to, you come. Come.

Let's go there. You find James. James! If anybody would lead us away from a passive mindset, you remember what James says? Chapter 4, verse 8? Draw near to God and what? He will draw near to you.

Do you notice the inspired order? Draw near to God. Now look, I'm not here to say, well, wait, isn't God sovereign in everything? Don't we love Him because He first loved us? Won't we go to God if it's not Him first drawing us? Look, James isn't arguing that. I'm not arguing that.

But the whole point is to put this in verbiage that shows you have a responsibility. It's never to sit back passively. You draw near.

You approach Him. And what? He will meet you at your coming. That's the picture.

That's what we find. When a soul sets out to seek God, God sets out to meet that soul. And how does He come to us? He comes to us as a fountain of living water.

He comes to us as spring showers. Spring showers! You ever seen the landscape? You know, some of the years we'll have drought all through the winter. And I live across from these wide, vast fields.

I've seen them. The drought dries them out. They're all brown.

But you get one healthy spring shower. And it comes alive with green and flowers and life. That's what it is to return to the Lord.

Some of you may have strayed away. You may be floundering in your Christian life. You want the spring showers? Come, let us return to the Lord.

Draw near to the Lord. Oh, you will find that as you go to Him, He will meet you in your coming. But brethren, you know this, I know this.

We don't literally get nearer to God than we already are. This isn't a geographical thing. You understand that.

Scripture can speak about Cain when he went off to Nod. It says he departed from the presence of the Lord. Or the opposite of that, you have James saying draw near to God.

Hosea, come, let us draw near. Well, how do we do that? This isn't a physical thing. It's a spiritual thing.

It's a spiritual reality. The thing that we need to ask is how? How do we do this? How do we draw near? And you know, we would say this, we draw near by the blood. We sing that.

I come by the blood. I come by the cross. We do.

We draw near through the blood of Christ. You might say, we draw near by faith. Yep.

If you would draw near to God, you need to believe that He is and He's a rewarder of them that seek Him diligently. You may say, we draw near by prayer. Yes.

Yes. We are to draw near to the throne of grace. Bring our petitions.

Bring our needs. There is grace. There is mercy.

There is help. We might say, well, we come near as we find Him revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. I would say, yes, absolutely.

That's right. That's good. But brethren, let me say this to you.

You know this if you've been a Christian any amount of time. You can be a true believer. You can know that your entrance into the presence of God is allowed by the blood.

You know that you need to come believing. You need to have an idea about who God is and the God you're coming to. Unquestionably.

You can be living your life. You can be having your times of prayer. You can be having your times in the Word.

You can come to the services. You can serve. You can give.

But brethren, in that very state, you know that you can allow the near fellowship with God to languish. You know, there's a very interesting word. If we think about Moses, he drew near to the Lord.

Do you know what Scripture says? God spoke to him as a man speaks with his friend. We can get to the place where we're active. The church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 is a good example of that.

We can get to the place where we're still going through the motions and we're doing the things and it's not totally dry, but it's a lot more dry than it has been. Because we've allowed our near fellowship with God to languish. We've allowed something to not be right.

Brethren, you want to be in the place where those waters are most cleansing? It's in the place of fellowship. It's in the place of communion. It's in the place of friendship.

That's the nearness of God. Don't we see this kind of thing pictured in the Song of Solomon? Arise, my love. My beautiful one.

This is Christ to His church. Come away! Come away! What is that? A lover speaking to his wife when he says, come away! That doesn't mean sit over there coldly at that desk and read a letter that I wrote to you. That's not what that means.

Come away. Come away! Where? Not apart from Him. Come away with Him.

Walk with Him. Oh, my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the crannies of the cliff, let me see your face. Let me see your face.

Oh, we can go through the motions. We can go through the motions and we lose the thrill. It's when we dance in His presence.

Do you remember David dancing? This is the kind of closeness that is so cleansing and so purifying. Because you know it as well as I do. You can sit down.

You can read your Bible for an extended time. Two hours. And you can come away.

It didn't cleanse you. It wasn't cleansing. It wasn't washing.

It wasn't refreshing. It wasn't sanctifying. You walk away.

He wants to see your face. He wants you to look up. He wants you to come into His presence.

Yes, you may be on your face like Isaiah. You may need cleansing. You may feel undone.

The coal may need to be put on your lips. But it's there. He says let me see your face.

Let me hear your voice. For your voice is sweet. Your face is lovely.

Brethren, the key for us is to grasp this. Turning my face to Christ. What's that? It's seeking.

I know lots of us like to use Andy Hamilton's terms. The sensible sense. The manifest presence.

You know what? You can find the testimonies of those men and women. They were determined to get in the Word and they were determined to pray until they found God. You see, it's finding Him.

It's finding Him. It's not going out and walking the gardens of Eden. Knowing that that's where God meets with men.

It's only when you find Him and you actually walk with Him. What I'm doing is I'm wanting to press you, brethren. We need to go into the holy place and we need to find God and we need to find His presence.

That's where the transforming presence is. And I want you to think, this thing is primarily in the mind. You know that's where we do it.

It's not where our feet take us typically. Though you may have a holy place, a closet of prayer, but it's in the mind. And how is it that we remain in the presence? How is it that we go there? How is it that we stay where the waters are? Is it not primarily done in the mind? And it's kept up.

I keep myself in those waters by a constant and an ongoing mental awareness of God. You see what happens? It's when we allow God to no longer be in our minds. It's when we lose sight of Him there.

How do you come before Him? Not by you coming to a church building or a holy place. It's when you go to Him in your mind. That's where it is.

The awareness is there. The presence is there. I bring myself into His presence.

Come, let us return to the Lord. Draw near to the Lord. It's happening here.

A guy can sit over there, and I hardly even know what's going on. But he's drawing near to the Lord. He's communing with the Lord.

Things are good. She sits on the sofa with the lamp shining on her and she's praying and she's in the Word. She may be in the seventh heaven.

She is taken up. She is in the presence of God. She is being purified and cleansed and the waters are washing over her.

I can't see it because it happens up here. And people that are most cleansed are most in the presence. There's an awareness.

There's this sense. Minute by minute reality. I'm not letting God go.

I'm not letting the things in my life that are going to take my mind off of Him. I'm consistently, even if I have to go into places that are secular, wicked, I'm surrounded by all manner of worldly influences, but I am going to keep God forefront in my mind. That's how we dwell in His presence.

And you can do that. But you see, the thing is, when we go away from there, it's because we willingly allow ourselves to be enticed away from God. And it's willing.

It's a neglect. When you turn and walk in another direction, when you go to the broken cisterns, when you allow your mind to be flooded with other things, when you allow your mind to go extended periods of time without thinking about the Lord, you do that. That is what you do.

That is your fault. That is something that you have a responsibility to fight for. When Scripture says we are to set our mind on certain things, there's a reason.

Because when your mind is there, it's cleansing. You memorize Scripture, what you do is you keep yourself washing by water of the Word. You keep your mind in that Word.

What happens is you keep yourself in the presence of God. It's not just, oh, I can recall Scripture now. You're memorizing it.

And as you go through it all the time, that is not an unprofitable activity because it's bringing you constantly back into His presence, back into His presence, back into His presence. It's when you come out of there that your holiness is stunted. Now I want to give you one last thought here.

One of the things that tends to keep us out of the presence of God is the very reason that we need to go into the presence of God. Why? We need to go into the presence of God for our cleansing, for our health, for our nurturing, for our beautifying, for our washing. But what happens? We fall into sin and we hesitate.

Because you know what comes into the mind? I can't go to Him. Not after the thing that I've just done. Not after the week I've just had.

Not after the way I just spoke with my wife. Not after the thing that I just thought. Not after where my eyes just went.

Not after the thing I was just thinking about and letting engulf me. And see, what happens is you feel unclean. And rightly so, because sin is defiling.

But you see, the thing is, we're to cleanse the defilements. And the thing is, you'll never cleanse those defilements by staying away from the Lord. And the thing that Scripture says... I just brought these texts up to the brethren down in Corpus Christi last weekend.

But brethren, let me tell you something. When you have whoring, idolatrous Israel, God says to His people, come. Acknowledge your sin and come to Me.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, a lot of times, 1 John 1, you know the verse, verse 9. Many times, that text is applied evangelistically. And I'm not going to take away from its usefulness that way. But a careful study of 1 John 1, it's written to Christians.

It's all about our fellowship. If you carefully look, what you'll find is that what God is saying to His people is this, when you fall into sin, confess your sin to Me. I am faithful and just to forgive that sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Brethren, forgiveness with God. Don't let the doctrine of justification cause you to think there isn't a place for confession and forgiveness. Didn't our Lord teach us in the Lord's Prayer which by the way is a prayer not for the lost, but that He taught His disciples how children pray to their father? What's one of the things in that prayer? Forgive us as we forgive them who trespass against us.

Our fellowship. You know what 1 John 1 is all about? Little children, I'm writing to you that you don't sin. I want you to walk in the light.

I want you to walk as He walked. I want you to walk keeping His commandments. But if you sin, we have an advocate with the Father.

The whole point is this, don't let your own guilt keep you from the presence of God for one moment. Not one moment. When you sin, you run right back into His presence.

Because if you don't, if you hesitate, you are misreading the cross. The devil will be there and tell you you cannot go! He doesn't want anything to do with you after what you just did. But you remember He is a Savior and He came to die on that cross precisely so that you might come.

My God! My God! Why have you forsaken Me? I'll tell you why God forsook His Son so that you might never be left or forsaken. Not even the precise moment after you sin. Now look, if you're not willing to acknowledge your sin and to confess it, don't be surprised that your fellowship with Him is interrupted.

Because if you've got guilt there and you're not willing to admit it, yes, your fellowship will not be healed. But keep short accounts. Short accounts.

You want to cleanse yourself of the sin? The very sin that you just fell into? The thing is, don't stay away from God. And don't stay away for very long. Don't do it.

Don't hesitate. You go right back. But if you're going to run right back, you know what has to constantly be in your mind? The cross.

The cross. I can run back. See, because every time you sin, you're going to have to answer the devil.

Or your own heart, your own hesitation, your own sense of defilement that makes you feel like you can't just run into His presence. Now look, you may have to fall right on your face when you do and claim, I'm a man of unclean lips. And you may have to have the coal put to your lips.

But better to have the coal put to your lips and experience the pain and come forth purified than to stay away. I'm not saying coming to Him is always easy. It wasn't easy for Peter.

He was put to it by the Lord. Peter, do you love Me? You may get that from the Lord. But you know what? Better to be there.

Better to be there than be far away where Judas was. You be there because it's healing. He left like Isaiah.

Isaiah, who's going to go speak for me? Peter, you go shepherd My flock. Wow! After sin, after falling like that, yep, when you go into the presence of God, He makes you equipped for things. He makes you clean, pure.

He equips you. Without Him, you can do nothing. Brethren, my whole message is this.

You dwell in His presence. You fight for the friendship of God. You cleave to God.

His nearness is your good. Don't run away. It's all broken cisterns.

Don't let sin keep you away. Not for a second. You remember what that cross is all about.

That cross is to give you access to the Holy of Holies. You remember, you answer the devil. The veil is rent.

That means the way is open through His flesh, by His sacrifice. But you've got to keep that in your mind all the time. If you keep it there, don't hesitate.

Fall in sin, run back, confess it. Run back, run back, run back. Those who are most in His presence and confessing the defilements and asking for grace, those who will not allow themselves for a moment to stay away, minute by minute, they are living in His presence with a mental awareness of God.

Their life is conducive to that. They're doing things with their mind. They're not putting themselves in positions and filling their minds full of the things that keep them away and turn them away.

You're going to draw near up here. It's up here that it happens. It's up here that the battle takes place.

It's up here that you dwell in His presence. And as you dwell in His presence here, that is where the cleansing waters are. That is where the healing is.

Father, we pray that You would aid us, draw us. May we not be foolish like the Galatians. May we not be foolish like Your people who sought to find water where there was no water.

Lord, we plead to our shame how often we have allowed ourselves to be enticed away from fellowship with You. Lord, what have You done? Sending Your Son so that we might be reconciled to You and once again walk with You to be the friends of God. What a truth and what a glory.

What a privilege. We thank You in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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