

Continual Cleansing as a False Doctrine

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Continual cleansing might mean to some that we are cleansed of sin as long as we are in Christ. This may not be untrue as we might mean that we have the ability to be cleansed while in Christ. However, in recent years some have begun teaching a doctrine with this name that states: *We commit sins from day to day, possibly in ignorance that we may not need to repent from, so long as we generally abide in Christ.* Some examples of the doctrine expressed: “a Christian with the proper attitude of heart is forgiven—even as he sins”; “a Christian need not know the sins he is guilty of in order to be forgiven”; “a Christian still sins and is still a sinner”. The point of the doctrine is to create a “Security of the Believer” ideology similar to “Once Saved, Always Saved”. Effectively, it teaches that some sins are worse than others (sins that we commit in ignorance, or nominal and sins that remove us from fellowship in Christ). It is a doctrine contrary to the doctrine of Christ.

Problems Created by a Doctrine of Continual Cleansing

1. It creates an unstated distinction in types of sin - Matthew 23:23
2. It creates a purpose in NOT studying the Truth - 2 Timothy 2:15
3. It nullifies the need for confession and repentance - 2 Corinthians 7:10
4. It renders our salvation apart from knowledge - 2 Peter 1:3

We need to know the doctrine of Christ in regards to our pardon. The purpose of 1 John 1 was to establish that our salvation requires spiritual conduct and repentance. This included the idea that we must confess our sins – 1 John 1:7-10 – and the idea that we must repent of our sins – Romans 6:2-6. Whether the law of Christ or preceding laws, ignorance has never excused sin (Leviticus 5:17)

However, there IS security for a believer. IN 2 Peter 1:10 Peter speaks to a certainty that we will never fail. It is identified as practicing the steps for spiritual growth described in 2 Peter 1:5-11. This may lead to the question “what about sins about which we have forgotten?” As David remarked in Psalm 25:7, it is not so much the specific confession of sin as the confession of sinfulness that God desired. However, it is specific in our repentance that we are not committing sin. That is the confidence that we have that He will cleanse us of ALL unrighteousness. We must study to learn the truth (as Josiah did).

Some see this as preaching “perfectionism” After all, nobody is or can be perfect, right? But that is NOT what the Bible tells us. It preaches an idea about perfectionism that we can obtain. Jesus did in Matthew 5:48 and 19:21; Paul did in Ephesians 4:13 and Colossians 1:28; James did in James 1:4 and 3:2; Peter did in 1 Peter 5:10; John did in 1 John 4:18. How can we be perfect? Understand that the concept of forgiveness renders sin as though it had never happened. Therefore, at the moment you are baptized, you are perfect. It is the same way with repentance; at the moment you confess your sins, you are perfect. God sees us in the moment, and we can be perfect at any moment. We ought to no see ourselves by the failings of the past or potential for failing in the future. As Paul said, we are to make no provision for sin; this includes even the considering the possibility of sinning.

The mindful Christian will ask “but what about our spiritual weaknesses?” Now we realize why the church is SO IMPORTANT; it is God’s instrument to public encouragement into this perfection (Galatians 6:1 etc). Finally, all of this does not deny that God may choose to overlook sins we cannot repent. Jesus suggested that when God judges us it may be to the ability we could act or learn in Luke 18:13-14. However, we need to confirm that if He does it is ONLY because we strive for perfection (such as Josiah’s position). But the only confidence God wants us to have in perfection is in repentance and confession.