

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT OFFENSES AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

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*“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-17).*

As strange as it may sound, even a sermon on offenses and how to deal with them can be offensive to some people. Some who are involved in wrongdoing don’t want to correct their problems; so, this teaching causes friction. Even so, it is the duty of those who preach to speak the truth will “all authority,” even though some will not endure sound doctrine (Titus 2:15). Paul preached the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), and so should we. If we neglect this duty, we shall stand accountable before our Creator (Ezekiel 3:17-21).



To offend means to sin against, and it is wrongdoing against others that often causes problems. Jesus teaches that offenses will occur from time to time: “Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (Matthew 18:7).

Jesus gives this warning in the context of sinning against “these little ones” or those in the kingdom. He may be referring to Judas who sinned against Him, but He certainly includes those who sin against brethren. A brother sinning against a brother is not the way God wants us to live our lives, but people sometimes offend anyway, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Sins against one another can arise because one may have a quick temper and lose control of his emotions. He may say or do something impulsively in the heat of disagreement and sin against his brother. Surely, the misuse of the tongue is one of the most frequent and prominent ways that brethren sin against one another. “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2).

Christians must be willing to forgive. When an offender does not think he has sinned, he will not seek forgiveness; but even so, the Christian must not hold a grudge and should always be ready and willing to forgive. Furthermore, offenses against our brethren prevent us from worshiping God acceptably.

*“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).*

Of course, this teaching assumes that our brother is willing to settle the matter. Sometimes, we may find those who are not willing to discuss those things they consider offensive. Even so, when the offender repents, we should forgive him. It is our duty and privilege to forgive those who sin against us. Our salvation depends upon our willingness to do so.

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15).* Jesus further teaches there is no limit to our forgiveness so long as the one who sins genuinely repents (Matthew 18:21-35).

It is possible that one brother sins against another, and the offended one is not yet aware of it. If the offender knows what he has done, he should not wait until he is brought to task over the matter. Recognizing

Sundays at 6:30 AM



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## DECEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

he has hurt his brother, he must do whatever he can to correct his wrongs quickly.

Brethren ought to seek peace, harmony, unity, love, and good relationships with each other. It is a sad situation when brethren will not resolve their offenses, and it is obvious that such people have a heart problem. In the end, God will judge each one. Let us be sure we are not of this begrudging sort. Regardless of what others may do, we can have confidence by abiding in what the Lord teaches in His Word.

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).*

### WASHED, JUSTIFIED, SANCTIFIED

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After the apostle Paul identifies many groups of sinful people who will not inherit the kingdom of God, he then writes, *“And such were some of you. But ye are washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 6:11).*

By necessity, we understand from verse 11 that, unlike the sinners listed in verse 10, those who are *washed, sanctified, and justified* WILL, in fact, inherit the kingdom of God. **Colossians 1:13-14** says that inheriting the kingdom of God means receiving forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ; therefore, clearly the condition of being washed, sanctified, and justified constitutes freedom from sin for the Corinthians—thus, they have salvation.



Among many believers in Jesus Christ today, however, there sometimes exists an obscurity about what Paul meant by these ideas of washing, justifying, and sanctifying. Although closely related, there are certain distinctions between these terms that all who profess to be followers of Christ should understand.

First of all, we see that these Corinthians who are saved from their sins are *washed*. Anyone familiar with the Bible recognizes this act of being washed as *baptism*. Baptism in water is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:3-6**), and it is for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). Its essence for salvation is the reason every sinner in the book of Acts who desires to become a

Christian is baptized in water. Ananias tells Paul, *“Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins” (Acts 22:16).*

Secondly, Paul also mentions that these Corinthian Christians have been *justified*. As used in the scriptures, the term justified simply means to be declared righteous, or innocent, in the sight of God. This term is mentioned second because the aforementioned *washing* away of sins (baptism) plays a vital role in one being justified (**1 Peter 3:21**).

We are justified freely by the grace of God when we have faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior (**Romans 3:24-26**). This saving faith in Christ, however, is not simply a belief in Him without action. Rather, this faith is accompanied by works of obedience to God’s word, including baptism (**Acts 2:38**).

According to James, *“a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:4)*. James is not teaching that justification comes through meritorious good works that we can brag about: these works can never justify us in God’s eyes (**Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:2**). James is simply saying that in order to be justified (declared innocent) in God’s sight, we must have obedient faith in Jesus Christ.

Finally, the same obedient faith in Jesus Christ that allows us to be justified in the sight of God will continue to *sanctify* us throughout our Christian walk. The term “sanctify” means to set apart or make holy.

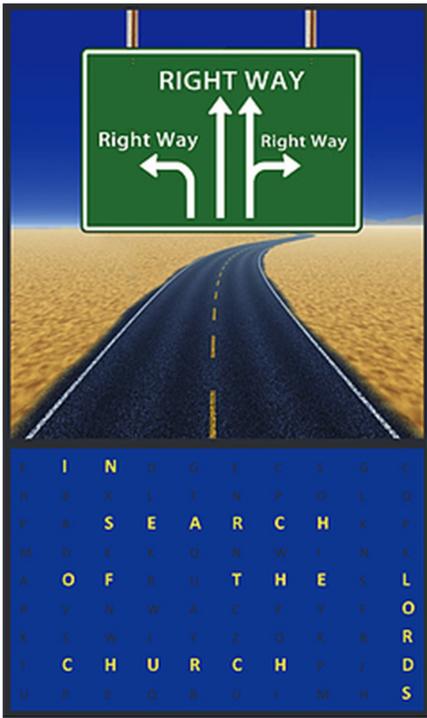
While it’s true that we are “set apart” from the world when the Lord adds us to His church (**Acts 2:47**), sanctification is more than a declaration of innocence that justification speaks of. Rather, sanctification is accomplished continuously (**Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 10:14**). It is a process of continued spiritual growth and renewal of our minds that sets us apart from the world (**Romans 12:2**) and is accomplished through daily adherence to the truth of God’s word (**John 17:17**).

Perhaps we have been justified in the sight of God through obedient faith, having our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus in baptism (**Mark 16:16**); however, in order to ensure that we do not fall from this grace that God has freely given us (**Galatians 5:4**), we must continue to let the word of God *sanctify* us daily, setting us apart from the world. May we all bow before our Almighty God in the Day of Judgment and hear Him say, *“But ye are washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified...”*

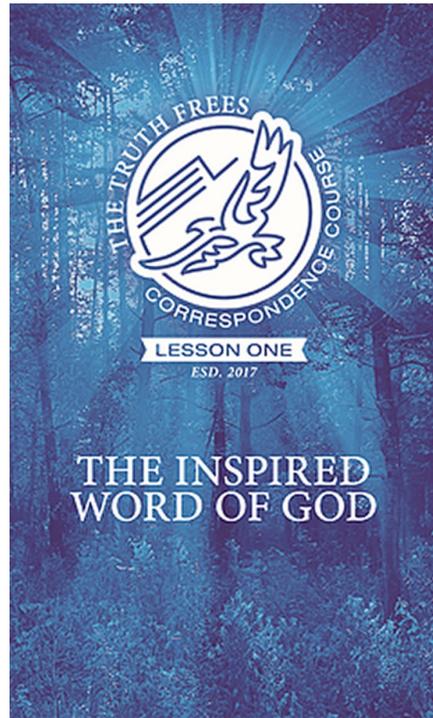


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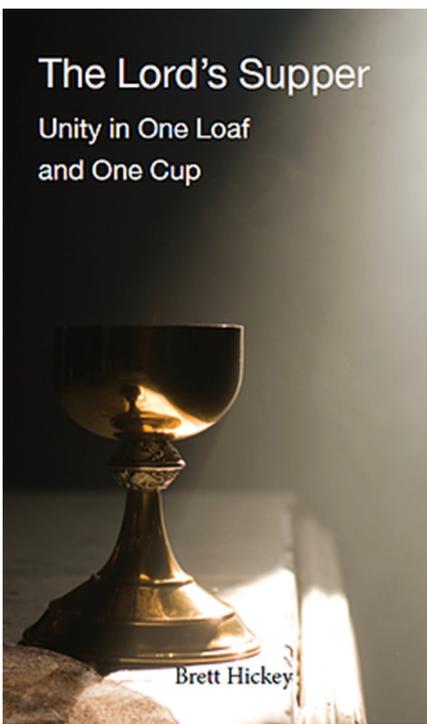
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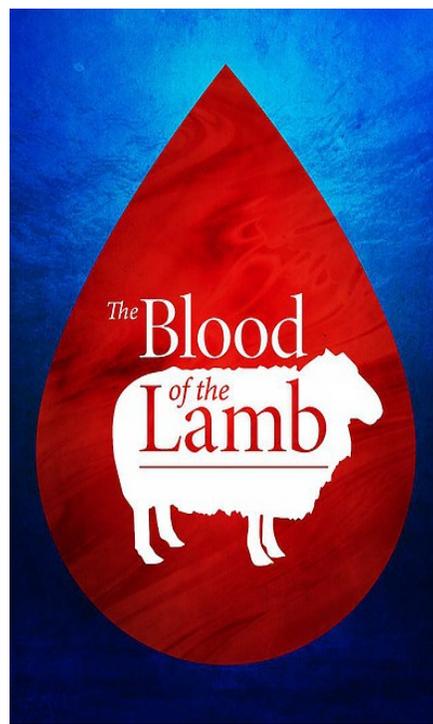
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