

Sermon: Psalm 51 -A Model for Daily Repentance

Preached on July 10th, 2022

Image Church, Atlanta

Open (Summer in the Psalms)

Introduction:

“Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, AND you're more loved than you ever dared hope.” -Jack Miller (mentor to Tim Keller)

This statement seems to be a bit of a contradiction when you think about what it means to serve a “Holy God.” But there is a beauty in this statement that the Psalm we are going to look at today will expose.

Today's Psalm will be all about how to deal with what the Bible calls “sin.”

Today's text: Psalms 51:1-12

“To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba”

Context Back Story (2 Samuel 11 - 12)

2 Samuel 11:2-15

“2 One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, 3 and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” 4 Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her... 5 The woman conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant.” 6 So David sent this word to Joab: “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent him to David. 7 When Uriah came to him, David asked him how Joab was, how the soldiers were and how the war was going. 8 Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah left the palace, and a gift from the king was sent after him. 9 But Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace with all his master's servants and did not go down to his house. 10 David was told, “Uriah did not go home.” So he asked Uriah, “Haven't you just come from a military campaign? Why didn't you go home?” 11 Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!” 12 Then David said to him, “Stay here one more day,

and tomorrow I will send you back.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 At David’s invitation, he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. But in the evening Uriah went out to sleep on his mat among his master’s servants; he did not go home. 14 In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. 15 In it he wrote, “Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”

A few highlights Re: 2 Samuel 11

- Explain The gravity of the situation
 - David committed 3 sins, all with the penalty of death
 - Adultery
 - Taking another man’s wife
 - Murder (by order)
- After He does these things he’s living with her (in secret sin) as if no one will find out.
- Enter Nathan, the Prophet

2 Samuel 12:1-10, 12-13

*“1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, “There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds, 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.” 5 Then David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, 6 and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.” **7 Nathan said to David, “You are the man!** Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.*

- What does David say/How does David respond?

Drop down to verse 13... *“David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.”*

Nathan is sent by God to confront David. David thought he could hide his sin from God (just as Adam and Eve in the Garden -thought they could hide themselves from God when they sinned). But God knew, God knows.

So David’s sin is exposed and David goes to the Lord... And we have Psalm 51

Introduction to the Psalm:

Psalm 51 is one of “Penitential Psalms” -fancy word for a Psalm of repentance. It’s a prayer, it offers a model for repentance. I would say it’s the model for everyday Christian living.

And so, what I want to do today is to break down this prayer into 3 parts and learn from it as we attempt to live our lives as sinners in the hands of a Just and Holy God.

Let’s dive into Psalm 51

PART 1: (verses 1, 2) David’s prayer teaches us to live in a posture of accountability and dependence upon the promises of God.

“1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!”

- David wastes no time asking God for mercy.
- David gets accused (busted), He admits his sin, He begs for mercy.
- Although David knows he’s guilty and deserves death and separation from God, he leans on something he knows to be true about God...
- David says, “Have mercy on me... according to your ***Steadfast love***”
- David goes straight for a truth about God that he remembers from Exodus 34:6, 7 *“The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.*
- This word “steadfast” is not something we use very much in our modern vocabulary in 2022. But it means “unchanging, firm, unwavering, never ending.”
- The “Steadfast Love of God” means that He is faithful even when we are NOT.

- Last week we heard Pastor Chris Gaynor tell us about remembering the steadfast love of God.
- To remember the times when you've seen God do something in your life or the lives of others that would remind you of the nature of God.
- And here David does that.
- David had forgotten the steadfast love of God
- He had forgotten what Nathan reminded him of: *"I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. 8 And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more."*
- This is why David sinned.
- That's why we all sin. We forget the steadfast love of God.
- A question to ponder this morning...
 - What things in your life have caused you to FORGET the steadfast love of God?

But let's continue... look at David's accountability to his sin, His confession.

- David understands, after Nathan's *"You are the man"* confrontation that he stands condemned (by his own admission).
- But he doesn't blame anyone else... notice *"My" transgressions, My iniquity, My sin.*
- David takes FULL responsibility
- And notice the 3 different words he uses that all denote, rebellion against God
- IDK about you but this doesn't come natural for me. It's not easy for me to admit my wrongs... (Fellas... You with me?)
- There's a little attorney that lives in my heart that always wants to justify my actions. (Especially with my wife)
- Ladies, let me get an MMHMM if you've ever heard this one:
 - "Yeah, I'm speeding, but if you wouldn't have taken that long to get dressed I wouldn't have to speed!" -Breaking the Law
 - "I wouldn't be looking at other women if you would just pay a little more attention to me" -Lust
- Or guys maybe you've heard this one:
 - "I mean, I wasn't talking "about her" I was just telling you so that we can "pray" for her. -Gossip
- I think if we're honest, we don't want to like admitting our wrongs because we don't want others to know how bad we really are (or maybe) we don't want to believe that we're as bad as we are.

- But here's the thing... GOD KNOWS! (Remember HE sent Nathan)
- So like David, we MUST remember (even in our deepest, darkest sin) that we are guilty, yet we must be willing to confess our sins.
- Here is some good news for you today:
 - *1 John 1:8, 9 "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*
- The Gospel allows us to confess our sins without the need of feeling convicted, condemned.
- Jesus not only died for the sins we committed in the PAST, but for the ones we will commit in the future.
 - I don't know who needs to hear that today, but THAT is some GOOD NEWS!
- He knows...
- David's prayer teaches us accountability
- David's prayer reminds us of the Gospel
- David's prayer teaches us to remember God's "steadfast" love.

Part 2: David's prayer exposes the dark reality and the condition of fallen man's hearts.

"3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

- Although in the first 2 verses David acknowledged the "act" of sinning (i.e. "THAT" he sinned), here he acknowledges WHY he sins. (his sinful condition...)
 - (v. 3) *"My sin is EVER before me"*
 - He can't escape it!
 - When he closes his eyes, it's there, when he lays down, it's there. (sin is everywhere)
 - For him... And for us.
 - Can we just talk for a second?
 - Sin, is like a disease, that we're born with
 - In many cases it's like being addicted to a drug that you can't STOP doing...
 - You might be able to stop for a little while, but the removal of sin requires a new heart, new affections (we'll get to that in a minute).

- But it will not go away with “behavior modification”
 - So telling someone to stop sinning or “do better” is like trying to get a heroin addict to stop doing heroin.
- That said, side note: Can I ask you all a favor?
- Let’s normalize being gracious (as Christians) to those (Christians) with deep sinful struggles.
 - Recovery from sin (just like recovering from addiction) takes time
 - And so we can’t/shouldn’t condemn a Christian for their sin.
 - Not saying you can’t **confront** someone (Nathan confronted David) but it has to be in love, not with smug condemnation
 - Romans 8 *“There is now NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”*
 - You see, we’ve created today as Christians, we’re not confronting people’s sins, we’re condemning them.
 - So an understanding of this passage (My sin is ever before me)...
 - Understanding the human condition after the fall is key to being able to relate to others, especially to non-believers.
 - “My sin is ever before me” is a plea for help
- Let’s put this into practice for a moment... (maybe even get a little controversial)
 - Over the summer our community group has been going through a “difficult” questions series
 - As you would imagine one of the main questions is “How do I deal with my homosexual friend/co-worker/etc.” (especially during pride month)
 - So let’s answer this question first...
 - **Is Homosexuality a sin? Yes! The Bible says so.**
 - But... Can a person be BORN same-sex attracted and be a Christian?
 - Also, Yes!
 - You see, “same-sex attraction” itself isn’t a sin.
 - However, it wasn’t God’s “original” intent... (He created Adam and Eve -Male and Female)
 - But the fall of Genesis 3 changed EVERYTHING!
 - This is what David is saying, because of Genesis 3, His sin is ever before him.
 - So just as God didn’t “originally intend” for babies to be still born, or conjoined twins, or people to born with extra limbs or birth defects, he also did NOT originally intend for same-sex attraction.
 - That is the result of the fallen world we live in after Gen 3

- So WE (as humans) cannot condemn someone who claims to be a Christian and is “same-sex” attracted.
- Because, the “sin” of homosexuality is acting upon that attraction.
- The struggle of the same-sex attracted person is the same struggle I have as a heterosexual.
- I can’t go indulging in my lust that I would have over WOMEN...
- BECAUSE I’M MARRIED and the Bible says that adultery is a sin.
- This is what David did (6 wives)
- My restraint as a heterosexual married man, needs to be the same as that of the homosexual... and that is to DO what God says.
- God says Adultery is a sin. I have to fight my temptations to commit adultery (even in my heart).
- God says that having sex outside of marriage is a sin (fornication). So those who would be living with each other, you have to fight your temptations to not fornicate (even in your heart).
- God says Homosexuality is a sin... They need to fight their same-sex temptations (even in their hearts).
- So we have to be mindful, to confront, but not condemn.
- With the hope that confronting the Christian might, like David, realize sin for what it is and confess as he did in verse 4... *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight”*
- So let’s back to the text:
 - (v. 5) In sin did my mother conceive me
 - He was BORN a sinner.
 - Some would say “we’re sinners because we sin.”
 - Here David is saying “I sinned because I’m a sinner.”
 - And so this sounds grim, and hopeless.
 - And it would be without this next part

Part 3: David’s prayer teaches us what our ultimate need is: A new heart, a “right” spirit.

“7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

- David knows, as we said earlier, that his sin is ever before him. So he's not gonna able to get HIMSELF right.
- He's gonna need some external help.
- And so he, once again, "remembers" the word.
- He remembers the role of the priestly cleansing in the tabernacle.
- He remembers what it took to be in the presence of God.
- So He appeals to God
 - He says:
 - "Purge me with Hyssop" -Hyssop was an herb on a branch that was used for sprinkling blood on lepers to cleanse them from leprosy.
 - In other words, he's saying... "I'm as DIRTY as a leper on the inside and I need purification from my uncleanness"
 - Hyssop was also used to spread the blood of the lamb on the doorposts on the day of passover.
 - In other words, He's saying, "I need my sins passed over."
 - "Wash me... and I'll be white as snow" -He appeals to the ceremonial washing that priests would perform so that they could be in the presence of God
 - He's saying, "I NEED to be in the presence of God, because ONLY HE can clean me.
- But then he realizes that besides all of this, he gets to the root of what he needs.
 - David says, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*"
 - This is the ONLY thing that can truly "change" David.
 - A "**NEW**" heart.
- Interesting that the word David uses here is, "**create**" in me a clean heart
 - As one commentator says: "*The word is used [here is of] the creative operation of God, bringing into being what did not exist before: ...It is not the restoration of what was there before that he desires. but a [NEWLY created] radical change of heart and spirit.*"
- This was David's biggest need and it is OUR biggest need today.
- You see, the great and terrible event that happened in the Garden in Genesis 3 was the death of the heart of man, towards His Creator.
- This is what David is dealing with (in sin did my mother conceive me).
- But here is where the beauty of the Gospel enters this prayer
- Years after the life of David another great and terrible act happened
 - This one would take place, not in a garden but on a cross...
 - This act would wash away not only David's sin, but your sin and mine
 - This act would cleans all God's people of unrighteousness

- This act would CREATE a NEW heart for all those would call upon His name
- Why would God do this?
- Why would God even save David? The penalty for His sin was death. Yet Nathan says *“The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”*
- The ONLY explanation we have for why God would do this for David or anyone is explained verse 1? *“...According to [His] steadfast love; according to [His] abundant mercy”*
- He does it because He is a LOVING and MERCIFUL God.
- And because he’s faithful to His word
- But, like David we forget this
- David forgot “the joy of God’s salvation”
- So he cries out, *“12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation...”*
- This is an interesting verse.
- Some would say that this verse indicates that *“David had forgotten the joy of God’s salvation because he sinned...”*
- But I love what Tim Keller says, *“David hadn’t forgotten the joy of God’s salvation because he sinned... “He sinned because he had forgotten the joy of His salvation.”*
- So where are you today?
- Have you, like David, forgotten the joy of your salvation?
- Or maybe you’ve never tasted and seen the joy of God’s Salvation.
- Let me share a bit of news that is as radical as it is amazing.

You see there was one last thing that happened to David that we haven’t talked about yet, and that is what happened to the baby (Remember Bathsheba was pregnant)

2 Samuel 12:13-14

“And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.”

Sadly, David’s son, the prince of Israel... had to die because of David’s sin.

Does that sound familiar?

It should...

You see, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, The King of the Universe (the God through whom, according to Scripture all things were made), came to earth to be born into a sin infested world, to live a sinless life that neither David, nor you, nor me could not live.

And then was sent to die. Taking upon Himself (at the cross) the guilt and the shame and the punishment not only of David's sins but for yours, and mine.

And then, he was raised from the dead conquering once and for all sin and death.

And do you know what we get because of this?

The Scriptures declare that *2 Corinthians 5:17* "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

We get exactly what David prayed for in Psalm 51:

- God *cleanses you... you are washed whiter than snow.*"
- God *"Hides His face from your sins, and blot out all your iniquities."*
- God *"Creates in you a clean heart, and renews a right spirit within you."*
- God does not *"Cast you away from His presence, and will never take His Holy Spirit from you."*
- God *"Restores to you and to me the joy of His salvation, and upholds us with a willing spirit."*

So the prayer of David in Psalm 51 is one that we should memorize so that as often as we forget the joy of His salvation... We would be reminded of God's Steadfast love and mercy.

So as you leave this place today, remember these things:

1. Be quick to run to God, especially in your darkest moments.
 - a. Be comforted by the fact that God knows your heart (and loves you anyway)
2. Be quick to take accountability for your sin.
 - a. You don't have to make excuses for your sin (God knows and doesn't condemn you)
 - b. Remember, you're not a sinner because you sin, you sin because you're a sinner.
3. Get yourself a "Nathan" that will remind you of God's goodness
 - a. Someone that will confront you, but not condemn you
 - i. Discipleship, Community

- b. Someone that will remind you: **“Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, AND you're more loved than you ever dared hope.”** -Jack Miller