

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

03.15.2026 | Confession and Repentance | Psalm 51 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning, I wanna invite you to turn with me to Psalm 51. Book of Psalms is usually kind of in the middle of your Bible. If you're using the Bible that's in the pew or the chair in front of you, I could tell you that Psalm 51 is on page 474. We're in a series called A Clean Heart. We're in the series pretty much throughout the season of Lent. Mentioned before it is a season of us reflecting, Lent is us reflecting on our sin, but also in God's mercy and grace. And that's what we're trying to do in the series as we look at David's life and his writings to consider our sin, but also to consider God's mercy and his grace. And I know the first few weeks of this series have really been probably focused more on sin. We've seen glimpses of God's grace, but we really wanted to consider the nature of our sin. We wanted to consider that the path of sin that we so often walk and the consequences of our sin that we experience and the pain that our sin causes. We've seen that in David's life.

When these last two weeks of this series, we're going to shift from looking at David's life to David's writings. We're gonna consider two of the Psalms that David writes. It really probably in response to what has happened here in his life. And I hope with the shift of looking from David's life to his writings, I hope it'll also bring a shift from looking just not at sin, but how we respond to sin. And how we respond to sin based on how God responds to our sin. That as we consider the mercy and the grace and the goodness of God, that it would lead us to confess and to repent and to walk in obedience to God. So this morning we're at Psalm 51. And if you're open there, you'll notice that even before you get to verse one, there's this heading at the Psalm. It says something like this, that this is the Psalm that was written by David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone into Bathsheba.

So not all of the Psalms do we get a lot of context on, but this one, we get a lot of context. That we read here that this was a Psalm that David wrote in response to Nathan confronting him in his sin. That for months, David had covered up his sin, but then Nathan, as we saw in second Samuel 12, confronted him in his sin. And there David gave an immediate response, I have sinned against the Lord. But here in Psalm 51, we get a fuller picture of his confession and his repentance. I just wanna walk through the Psalm together today because I believe it gives us a good example of what does it look like to truly confess and repent of our sins.

So Psalm 51, I'm gonna read the whole Psalm, which is verses one through 19. David writes, "Have mercy on me, O God, "according to your steadfast love, "according to your abundant mercy, "blot out my transgressions. "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity "and cleanse me from my sin. "For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. "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. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity "and sinned in my mother conceived me. "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being "and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. "Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. "Let me hear joy and gladness. "Let the bones that you have broken rejoice. "Hide your face for my sins and blot out my iniquities. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, "and renew a right spirit within me. "Cast me not away from your presence "and take not your Holy Spirit from me. "Restore to me the joy of your salvation "and uphold me with a willing spirit. "Then I will teach transgressors your ways "and sinners will return to you. "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, "of my salvation and my tongue will sing aloud "of your righteousness. "O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise. "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. "You'll not be pleased with a burnt offering. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, "a broken and contrite heart. "O God, you will not despise. "Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. "Build up the walls of Jerusalem. "Then you'll delight in right sacrifices, "in burnt offerings, and whole burnt offerings. "Then bulls will be offered on your altar."

There's a Puritan pastor named Thomas Watson who wrote a book called The Doctrine of Repentance. The way he begins the book is by talking about some of the false or counterfeit versions of repentance. He says there are certain things that people will do that seem like they are repenting. It seems like they are really changing, they're really turning from their sin, but actually that's not what they're doing. He calls them counterfeit versions of repentance, and the first one that he talks about is the fear of legal terror. What he means when he says is that there is a type of action that will look like repentance, but it's really just afraid of guilt. It's really just afraid of consequences, of what is going to come about of your actions, and while that might bring change of behavior, it might bring people saying they're sorry, it doesn't actually bring true repentance. And in that section about this false version of repentance that's really just based

on a fear of guilt or legal terror, he says this, it should be up on the screen for you, he says, "It's one thing to be a terrified sinner "and another to be a repenting sinner. "Sense of guilt is enough to breed terror. "Infusion of grace breeds repentance. "If pain and trouble were sufficient for repentance, "then the damned in hell would be the most pentanet, "for they are the most in anguish. "Repentance depends upon a change of heart. "There may be terror and yet no change of heart."

I really appreciated this quote from Watson because one, it distinguishes true repentance from at least one version of false repentance. He says there can be a sense of guilt, there can be a sense of terror, of consequences of what's going to come, and yet that's not true repentance. And he says it's because true repentance brings a change of heart. This is helpful for us to consider when we think about confession and repentance and actually turning from our sin, what does it mean? He says it means that our hearts have to be changed. I also really like that in this quote, he speaks of how that happens. He says a feeling of guilt or a sense of guilt is enough to bring terror or fear in a sinner. But it's actually an infusion of grace that brings true repentance.

If we want to truly repent, if we want to see people truly repent and turn from their sins, we cannot just focus on the guilt of our sins, which is important, we also must understand and grasp the mercy and grace of God. For there to be true repentance, there has to be an infusion of grace. There has to be a recognition of God's mercy. I think what we see in Psalm 51 is that when we really believe in God's mercy, we will come to him confessing our sin and our sinfulness. We will ask him to change our hearts, to restore us to how he has created us to be so that we can live for his glory. True confession and true repentance means you're trusting in God's mercy and his grace enough to come honestly before him and confess your sin and your sinfulness. But also ask him to not only forgive you of your sin, but to change you from the inside out that you might live for his glory.

That's what I think that we see in the Psalm and that's just what I wanna walk us through in really three parts of the Psalm. I want us just to kind of consider three steps of confession and repentance that we see from David here that follow just what I'm describing there. And it begins just in what I think Thomas Watson is speaking about, it begins with an infusion of grace or trusting in God's mercy and grace. So how do we begin to confess and repent? We begin by crying out for God's mercy. And we do this in two components or two ways. There are two things that would lead us to actually cry out for God's mercy.

And the first is that we would trust his character. So as you walk through this Psalm, I think one of the first things we see David doing is we see him crying out for God's mercy. One of the reasons that he does that is because he trusts in God's character. If we are going to come to God asking for mercy, mercy is not getting what we deserve. If we believe that we deserve punishment, we believe that we deserve judgment for our sin, and if we believe that that is all that God has for us, then we will never come to him. But if we believe that God is merciful, then we will come to God requesting mercy, crying out for his mercy. This is where we see David begin in verse one. Notice what David says. He says, "Have mercy on me, O God, "according to your steadfast love, "according to your abundant mercy, "blot out my transgressions."

Notice where David begins as he cries out to God for mercy. It's all a focus on God's character. David's plea for God's mercy has nothing to do with David. David doesn't say, "Well, remember, God, "all the good things that I've done for you. "Cut me some slack on this one." He doesn't say, "Well, remember how I stood up "before Goliath, how I fought for your name, "how I've led your people, good so many other ways. "I've done so many other good things for you, God." He doesn't appeal to God's mercy at all based on his own character, but all based on the character of God. And what he appeals to here, when he speaks about his steadfast love, he speaks about his abundant mercy, is what God has said about himself.

I mean, throughout the Old Testament, we see God speaking of himself this way. One of the places that we see this most clearly is Exodus chapter 34, when God is revealing his glory to Moses. One of the more famous verses of scripture that's quoted throughout the Bible is when God looks at Moses in Exodus 34 and he says, "Your God is slow to anger "and abounding in steadfast love. "He is merciful and gracious." David says, "I know what you've said about yourself "and I believe it. "That's why I come to you asking for mercy, "crying out for mercy." He says, "I know what God has said about himself "and I believe it and I trust it." Which is an important thing for us to consider. Do you know what God has said about himself? Do you know the character that God has revealed of himself in scripture?

So many times we think that one of the dangers of not reading our Bible is just that we're bad Christians or that God's going to judge us. But really one of the dangers of us not reading our Bible is that we don't know the God who has revealed himself to us in this word. So many times people have views of God that are not founded in what he has revealed to himself in his word. He has told us that he is merciful and gracious. He has invited us to come to him to receive mercy for all of our sins. Do you know what God says about himself? Do you believe it? David probably at some point in this whole process when he was covering up his sin, probably at some level didn't believe it. Probably in some level he felt like he couldn't come to God in his sin because he knew how terrible it was. But yet here he believes in God's mercy and grace and he says, "God according to you who you are, "not according to who I am, would you forgive me?" This is where we must begin. If we are going to cry out to God for mercy, we have to believe that God is merciful. We have to believe that he is far more gracious than we are, that his response to sin is far more forgiving than we've often experienced from other people, than we've often shown other people who have sinned against us.

Do you trust the character of God? You come to God in confession because you trust who he is but also because you recognize who you are. So yes, we come to God crying out for mercy because we trust in his character, but we also come to God crying out for mercy by confessing our sin and our sinfulness. So this is the second part of this first step. The first part of confessing and repenting is to come to God and asking for mercy, recognizing that we deserve punishment, judgment, and asking God to be merciful to us. And we do so on the basis of that we believe he is merciful, but we also have to do so on the basis of understanding that we need mercy. You'll never come to God confessing your sin or confessing your need for mercy if you don't first recognize your sin. You can't really come to God asking for mercy as long as you try to downplay or minimize your sin.

It's only when we recognize how our sin has been committed but also how sinful we are that we will really come to God and cry out to him for mercy. Notice what David goes on to say after he says, God, would you show mercy to me according to who you are? He says, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin. Verse three, for I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. David uses all these different words that we find in scripture of iniquity and sin and transgression, all of them speaking to a way that we live that departs from what God has called us to do. What David says is for so long, I tried to cover up my sin from other people and I probably tried to turn my own face from it but now I can't look away from it. My sin is ever before me. It looks me in the face. David is coming face to face with his sin and this is something we have to do.

We're really going to confess if we're really going to repent. We have to confess our sin, what we've done wrong. David does it in verse four. "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." You notice David calls his sin what it is. He calls it evil. He doesn't say, well you gotta understand I'm a product of my environment. He doesn't say, well you don't understand the circumstances. He says, I have done evil against what God has called me to do. God has designed this world and my life to be a certain way and I have left it. I have rebelled against you, God. He says, God you would be right in judging me because I have done what is evil in your sight. He is confessing his sin here. He is owning it.

So many times probably in our lives we don't want to fully own our sin in this way and say we've really done something evil. Many times we might minimize our sin. We might say, well you know I know it was wrong but aren't they just being kind of sensitive? Like they shouldn't, they should know how to take a joke, right? Or they should just kind of get over it. We can minimize the wrong things that we do. We can shift blame. We can say we don't understand the stress I was under, the pressure I was under. You don't understand what they did to me first. Instead of just owning our sin we can blame other people or our circumstances. So many times we can relativize our sin. Well have you looked at what the other people in the church are doing Pastor Ben? Why are you talking to me about this? Do you see what other things are happening in our city or in our world? I think I'm actually doing all right. So many times we minimize, we relativize, we shift blame. David here is finally coming to a place where he says I see my sin face to face and I bring my sin before God saying you are right to judge me. I've done what is evil in your sight.

And this is why he begins that verse in the way that he does when he says against you, you only have I sinned. To double something in the Hebrew language was to give it a lot of emphasis. So this doesn't just say against you have I sinned. When he says against you, you only have I sinned he recognizes what an offense this is to God. I know what you're

probably thinking as you read that. You think really? Only against God have you sinned? What about Bathsheba? Didn't you sin against her? What about Uriah? You had him killed? Didn't you sin against him? And all these other people? How could David say he's only sinned against God? You have to recognize here what David is doing. He is coming before God, confessing to God, saying that he is guilty in deserving of judgment before God. David is not trying to minimize his sin and saying it hasn't hurt other people.

And ever take this verse to say well we only have to confess to God and not to others is to misread the whole Bible. The Bible says that we do hurt and sin against other people when we sin against God. Bible says it is good for us to go to people we have hurt and confess to them, seek to repair that relationship, seek to bring healing to people we've hurt. David here is not minimizing his sin. He is actually saying I am guilty before God of my sin. Meaning as a king who could get away with a lot, who has power to make it where other people can't judge him, he recognizes he stands guilty before God. What leads him to actually plead to God for mercy is to recognize the depth of his guilt to God. But it's not just that he is speaking about this one action I think. I think he is confessing not just his sin but his sinfulness. This is why I say we must do the same. That David is not just saying I've done something wrong but he recognizes how pervasive this is. He speaks about his sin, his iniquity, his transgressions. Look at what he says in verse five. Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

This is a confusing verse that have led people to all sorts of interpretations. Some people wonder about David's parents or those kind of things but I think what David is actually saying is he recognizes that even from a childhood this proclivity to sin was within him. That what happened here in this whole situation, sin against Bathsheba and Uri and others wasn't just a one off. Yeah maybe it was the most extreme thing that had happened in David's life but he recognizes that this has been his struggle ever since he could remember. That we don't just sin, we are sinful. We don't just make mistakes or do wrong things. We have desires within us that go against God's design.

This is important for us to recognize because if Thomas Watson is right and repentance, true repentance is a change of heart, then we've gotta recognize how deep the sinfulness runs even to our heart. So many times we don't just need to own up to words or actions or things that we did wrong. We need to recognize that so often there were sins beneath the sins. There was idolatry that led us to turn to certain things rather than God. There was a not trusting of God of what he has given to us. There was a pride, there was all these things that go on deeper in our hearts that would lead us in these sinful actions. We don't just confess the wrong things we've done but we confess how deep it runs in our lives. How deep it goes into our hearts.

I don't know if you've ever read Confessions by St. Augustine. It's a really helpful work in just thinking about the nature of sin and what it means to confess our sins. Early on in Confessions, Augustine talks about a time when he was a young man and he stole pears from this pear tree. And as he reflects on it, he says, you know, I wasn't hungry and in fact, I don't even like pears. In fact, he stole the pears and he just threw them somewhere else. He said, thinking about that instance made me realize I don't always do wrong things just because I'm trying to fill this need. It's just that so many times I just desired to do the wrong thing. When we come to God in true confession, we can't just confess for a particular sin and think that that's just kind of the end of it. We really need to be honest and say, the sin runs so deep within me. Confess your sin and your sinfulness to God. Recognize not just something wrong that you've done but just how desirous your heart is for wrongdoing. This is how God begins to work in you to change you.

We're gonna see this more next week but when we come to God, as we read earlier in 1 John, and we confess our sins and our sinfulness, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us. Next week, we'll look at Psalm 32 in which David speaks about what a blessing it is to know that I am forgiven. As David comes, he trusts in God's character, he confesses his sin and his sinfulness but then he moves to the next step. This is what I want us to see. That we don't just come kind of admitting that we've done wrong but true repentance, it wants to see something new in our lives. And so we plead for God's restoration. When I use these words cry out and plea, I'm trying to capture what I hear from David here. That it's not just a matter of saying the right things, kind of going to the motions but it's a heart posture which David is crying out to God for mercy or he is pleading to God for restoration. We plead to God for restoration. A couple of ways that I think we see that here, we plead that God will restore us by cleansing our hearts. So we go to God and we say, "Cleanse my heart."

This is the first component of pleading to God for restoration, coming to him and saying, "Cleanse my heart." Again, if we've taken the time to really consider that we've not just messed up or done something wrong but how deep the sinfulness runs into our hearts, then we'll come to God and we'll say, "Don't just forgive me of my sins but cleanse me in the innermost part." David throughout the whole psalm is talking about being cleansed, being cleaned. We saw this already, verse two, it said, "Clean me, O God, wash me thoroughly for my iniquity." He's asking God to forgive him of his sins. But then he says in verse seven, he says, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

Hyssop was a plant that was used often in the cleansing ceremonies that was prescribed in Leviticus. But actually the beginning of it goes back to the first Passover in Exodus. The people were to take the blood of the lamb on a hyssop branch and they were to spread it over the doorposts of their house. This is what was going to have the angel of death pass over them. So God began to use the hyssop branch as a picture of being cleansed. There's something, a sacrifice covering our sins. And so David is saying, "I don't just need to go through the motions of having a hyssop branch. God, I need you to take a true hyssop branch and you need to cleanse me from within. Wash me thoroughly. Forgive me of all my sins." And he believes that whenever he comes to God asking for this, that God will take the deep stain that sin leaves and he will wash him to where he is whiter than snow. But he doesn't just pray that God would cleanse him, forgive him of his sins, but he actually prays that God would cleanse his heart or give him a clean heart. This is what he says in verse 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Notice that David isn't just saying, "Forgive me of all the wrong things that I've done. Cleanse me of that." But he's actually saying, "God, give me a new heart that would be clean, that would desire the things of you." So this is a mark of true repentance. Not just coming to God hoping that you'd be forgiven and you don't have to face the consequences of your sin. Like Thomas Watson said, sometimes we can come just in fear of guilt or of terror. But true repentance is marked by not just a wanting to be forgiven of our sins, but wanting to be changed from the inside out. David doesn't just say, "Cleanse me." He says, "Give me a clean heart. Put a right spirit back within me that I might be able to live for you."

What I want you to know this morning is what David is praying for in faith, what he is pleading to God for in faith, that God would do this. We actually get to pray in faith with assurance that this is already true in Jesus Christ. What David is praying for, hoping that God would cleanse him, hoping that God would give him a clean heart, this is already true for us if you are a believer in Jesus Christ. You know, when Jesus was on the cross, he said, "I thirst." And the Bible tells us, John tells us in his gospel account, that the soldiers took a hyssop branch and they put a sponge on it and they took wine and then using the hyssop branch, they brought the wine up to Jesus's mouth so that he could drink.

Why did God make it to where those Roman soldiers used a hyssop branch during that moment? Because he wanted us to see that Jesus is the true Passover lamb. That when his blood was being shed on the cross, it was to cleanse us from all of our sin and to make us whiter than snow. Because of what Jesus has done on the cross, the Bible actually says, you are not only cleansed from all of your sin, but he actually gives you a new heart. He says, "I will take out your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Bible describes us as believers in Jesus as new creations. We are not just forgiven of our sins, but we are made new that we can walk in obedience. We can walk in the life God has for us.

What David is pleading for in faith, we can plead for in assurance that Christ has already given this to us. When I say plead for God's restoration, I'm not saying you're gonna have to beg for it because God is slow to give it to you. He's already given it to you in Jesus Christ. I'm talking about a heart posture that says, this is what I want more than anything. I want to have a new heart that is turned towards God. I don't wanna just be forgiven of my sins that I can keep on living in sin, but I actually wanna be changed from the inside out because I believe that in God is true joy. This is the second component. When we come to God pleading for restoration, we're saying God cleans us, cleans us down in our innermost, cleanse our hearts and restore my joy.

Throughout the Psalm, David is speaking about wanting to rejoice again. He says, God, you've broken my bones as you've brought me conviction over my sin, but let the bones that you broke now rejoice. God, I've experienced this recognition of my sin. I see how sinful I am, but I don't just wanna walk in guilt. I wanna walk in the joy that is in you. I wanna walk in your presence. I wanna know what that is like again. Pastor Clark mentioned a couple of weeks ago that one of the

consequences of sin is that it blinds us spiritually. David seemed to probably have lost the sense of joy of salvation that he once had. And so he's praying that God would restore it to him. Says in verses 11 and 12, cast me not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me, restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. This plea, this fear that David has that God might take away his spirit from him probably comes from him observing Saul.

You know, when Saul fell into sin, he didn't confess. He didn't repent. The Bible says that God took his spirit from Saul. David says, God, I love you and your spirit more than I love my sin. Help me to be turning from my sin and not lose your spirit and your presence in my life. He says, don't abandon me in this moment because I believe that in you true joy is found. We know from what David writes in Psalm 16 that he truly believes that's in God's presence that true joy is found. True joy is not found in the power of being king. True joy is not found in having the victory over your enemies. True joy is not found in a woman. Joy is found in the presence of God. He's saying, I wanna know that joy again. Instead of turning to all these other things, I want you to restore the joy that I have in you.

This is what leads us to truly repent. Yes, we must come to despise our sin. We must come to see how hurtful our sin is to us and to others. But repentance isn't just about turning from something, it's about turning to something or someone. For us to turn to God, we have to trust that he is merciful and gracious, but we also have to believe that true joy is found in him. Don't just think repentance is about feeling guilty about your sin. Don't think repentance is just about having to leave the fun things that you were once doing and now walk in holiness with God. Yes, it's about turning from your sin, but so that you might experience the true joy of walking in the presence of God.

And again, what David is pleading for here in faith, we have assurance of in Christ Jesus. If you are a believer in Jesus, hear me clearly, God has given you his spirit and his spirit will never leave you. You never have to worry saying, "God, please don't take your Holy Spirit from me." The Bible says you are sealed by the Spirit of God. You don't have to worry about losing your salvation. But the reality is we can grieve the Holy Spirit who indwells us. We can miss out on the joy of our salvation. And so we don't come in the same exact way David did, hoping that God would never take his spirit from us so that we would not lose the forgiveness.

We come with the assurance that God has given us his spirit, that our salvation is secure, and so we ask God, "Restore to me the joy that is in you. "Help me to find joy in you once again "and to walk in that joy rather than seeking for that joy "in other things in this world." This is a mark of true repentance, believing that true joy is found in God and in living for him. And if you come to God and you confess these things and you plead for these things, God will forgive you, he will restore you. He will do so because he is merciful and gracious and because he loves you. I mean, he loved David. And think about the terrible things that David did. He loves you, even in your sin.

But he not only cleanses us and restores us just because he loves us, but he does it to restore us to who he created us to be, which are people who live for his glory. Sometimes when we think about this whole process, we can kind of get this mindset that we're kind of the end of the matter, as if God is just coming and forgiving us simply out of love for us, as if the whole goal is that we are restored, but the whole goal is that we are restored to live for the glory of God. So the last part of this psalm speaks about David being restored to live for God's glory. He says, "God, I want to proclaim your praise." So to move to the last part of repentance, we live for God's glory by proclaiming his praise.

One of the things we see throughout scripture is that those who are truly forgiven of their sins and know the grace of God are those who praise God the loudest and tell of his goodness the most often. You think about the woman who was washing Jesus' feet. Jesus says she is loving much because she knows she's been forgiven much. Think about the apostle Paul who saw himself as the chief of sinners. He goes out and proclaims the goodness of God to other people because he knows he has experienced the goodness of God. This is what David says here, verse 13, "Then I will teach transgressors your ways "and sinners will return to you." He says, "I'll tell other people "of your graciousness and your goodness. "Deliver me from blood, guiltiness, oh God, "oh God of my salvation, "and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. "Oh Lord, open my lips and my mouth "will declare your praise." He says, "It's not just about me being forgiven "so I feel better about myself. "It's about me being cleansed and changed "that I might live for your glory."

If we find ourselves not praising God, if we find ourselves not proclaiming the goodness of God to those around us, there's a good chance we probably have lost sight of God's grace and mercy towards us. There's a good chance we probably have begun to think that maybe we've earned it or that we're living in it just in our own power. But when we really consider, as David is here, how merciful and gracious and good God is to us, it leads us to proclaim his praise, to tell of his goodness to others, and to truly worship him. This is the last part for you today. As we live for God's glory, we proclaim his praise and we worship him truly. God saves us, he cleanses us when we come to him. We don't have to bear our shame or our sin anymore. And he does so that we might live for his glory and truly worship him.

David closes by talking about this kind of false worship that can happen, but how God desires true worship. It says this at the end of the psalm, "For you will not delight in sacrifice or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion and your good pleasure. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight and write sacrifices in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will be offered on your altar." What's David saying? David is saying, "As long as I was living in my sin, not confessing it, not repenting of it, then all those actions I was taking, that God had told me to take, God tells us, or told his people back then, bring these sacrifices, do these things." But he says, "As long as my heart was far from you, you did not desire those actions." Why? Because those actions were empty.

So what you really desire is a heart that is convicted of my sin, a heart that is broken and contrite, and then you'll accept the worship of your people. So the whole point is not that the actions were wrong, it's that there was no heart behind him as long as David was walking in unconfessed, unrepentant sin. So many times in our lives, it's not our actions that we're doing. We're still serving maybe God, trying to be in service to others, but our worship is incomplete because we're doing it with unrepentant sin. So many times we're not worshiping him truly because our hearts are not broken and contrite. I can tell you this from my own life. There've been times when I've tried to just do more, try to go through the motions, try to do all the things that I think I'm supposed to do, hoping that will make up for it, rather than simply coming to God and confessing and repenting of my sin. God desires these actions, he desires us to do the things he has called us to do, but with a heart that is truly for him. David says, "I know that once my sin has been confessed and I'm repented, then for me," and not just me, but he says, "for your whole people, because sin has communal consequences, then this will be true worship to you."