

No cover up

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Date: 26 August 2018

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[0:00] I'd like to invite you to look together with me at Psalm 51.!

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts. You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

Cleanse me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness.

[1:34] Let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you. Save me from blood guilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it.

You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

[2:41] In your good pleasure, make Zion prosper. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you.

Then bulls will be offered on your altar. Amen. All true born-again believers have the Holy Spirit. Because we read, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And since every believer has the Holy Spirit, there is no need of proof of the truth of the word of God.

Truth that this is the authentic word of the Creator. Because the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that this is the truth. Nonetheless, evidence from other sources can strengthen the believer's faith. And this in turn gives us courage and assurance in our Christian lives. One of the most significant proofs of the truth of the word of God is the way in which it never tries to hide the misdeeds, the failures in the characters that are presented.

[4:12] Not even the so-called fathers of the faith are spared. And probably the clearest example of this is that of Peter, the Apostle Peter.

This great apostle denies his master three times. Even much later, in the letter to the Galatians, we read how he was reprov'd, how he was told off by the Apostle Paul.

There was no cover-up, no fudging. Now the classic example of what I've just been saying in the Old Testament is that of David.

This is what the Lord says about David. I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

But then we read in 1 Kings 15 and verse 5, For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep any of the Lord's commands all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

[5:40] This sad episode reminds us that God is no respecter of persons.

It reminds us of the fact that on the last day, all of us, every single person in the world, every single person who has ever lived, will appear before God in the judgment.

And the books will be open and every detail of our lives will have been recorded. This is a judge who can't be bought.

No get-out clauses, no expedience, no amnesties. There will be no false witnesses who seek to deceive the court and the judge and no judicial errors.

We read that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. So here is David. David, the king of Judah, a man after the Lord's own heart.

[7:03] The Lord Jesus himself is called the son of David. He is the direct descendant of this illustrious person. Yet David was a sinner.

He committed one of the most heinous crimes recorded in scripture. Not only did he commit adultery with one of his most valiant soldiers, when he discovered that he had made this woman pregnant, in order to cover his tracks, he had the husband of this woman killed.

And he thought he had got away with it. Then we read these ominous words. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

God had seen. God had taken note. So God sent the prophet Nathan to reprimand David.

And David, as a result of that talk, as a result of that reprimand, realizing the gravity of what he had done, penned this psalm.

[8:35] So this psalm is a fruit of the repentance of King David. Now let us bear in mind that he had committed two crimes for which, under the law of Moses, there was no pardon.

No pardon. Both of these crimes had as their consequence capital punishment.

the death penalty. There was no hope under the law. Only in God.

In the 18th century, evangelists like John Wesley would accompany condemned criminals in the cart taking them to the gallows.

And on the way to the gallows, they would plead with these people who had been condemned to death to repent and to ask God to have mercy on them.

[9:54] And in a sense, this is what David did in this psalm that we have in front of us. At the same time, beg your pardon, at the same time, only once in the psalm is there a vague mention of the actual sins that David committed.

And I believe this was intentional. because you see, this psalm is suitable for any sinner. Even for a person who would never dream of committing crimes like the ones that David had committed.

I think it's probably true to say that each of us has known times of unfaithfulness in his or her life.

We have all known what it means to wander from the Good Shepherd, whether it be for short periods or for a longer period.

It makes no difference how we have sinned or how often we have sinned, how badly we have sinned. The way back to God is always the same.

You know, when a soul is seeking to come to God for the first time, when that person has understood that they are a sinner before God, when they're feeling the weight of their sin and their guilt, I've often advised them to pray through this psalm.

[11:44] There are three elements of the psalm which I'd like to emphasize this evening. The first is, what is the correct approach to repentance?

Secondly, the desire, the sincere desire to be purified. And thirdly, the desire to be renewed.

So let's have a look at the correct approach for the person who is seeking God's face in repentance.

David found his appeal, you notice, looking at the first verse of the psalm.

He found his appeal in the character of God alone. He realizes that his one hope lies in the fact that God is a God of goodness and mercy.

God Now David could have reminded God of his many mighty exploits. The way he had defeated Goliath, the giant.

[12:54] He could have spoken to God about his numerous victories over God's enemies. He could have spoken to God about his faithfulness and the great respect he had for Saul even when Saul was trying to kill him because he recognized that Saul was God's anointed.

But David realized that all these things counted for nothing. Notice David's frankness, his openness.

There's no attempt to conceal or play down what he's done. He doesn't try to make any excuses. Sin is sin and it has to be recognized as such.

notice how he says in verse three, my sin is ever before me. My sin is ever before me.

I can't get it out of my mind. How much time had passed between the time when David committed these sins and the visit of Nathan the prophet to expose him?

[14:07] About a year. about a year. A year of inner torment and guilt. How can we know peace in our hearts when we are pretending that all is well when it isn't?

I've always found verse four rather surprising and a bit difficult, I have to say. A man has virtually murdered a faithful soldier, a married woman has been violated and yet David says against thee, thee only have I sinned.

we must surely exclude the possibility that he felt that he had done nothing sinful towards Uriah. The only explanation that I can come to is that I can imagine is that his sense of guilt before God was so overwhelming that every other consideration was submerged by it.

In the same manner we need to arrive at the point, at precisely that point with our confessions before the Lord. Over and above any suffering we may have caused to others and certainly there is a place for asking forgiveness for our brothers and sisters and anybody whom we have sinned against but over and above any suffering caused to others we have sinned against God.

[16:05] Indeed as he says I have done this evil in your sight in your sight I have committed high treason oh Lord in the court of the king of kings which is the very height of provocation and when you think about it his action or our actions for that matter imply one of two things either a lack of belief in the omniscience of God or in the all knowing nature of God or blatant disregard for God's righteousness what do I mean a lack of belief in the fact that God knows all things because I am saying in effect God can't see me God can't see what

I'm doing or what I've said or else blatant disregard for his righteousness in other words I don't care what God sees or that God sees me but David recognizes that the situation is even more serious he recognizes that evil is present in his heart in his very nature he was already a sinner at birth verse five surely I was sinful at birth sinful from the time my mother conceived me if the spring if the source is polluted then everything coming from that spring from that source will be contaminated and that's why no amount of sacrifices or good works can help to remedy the situation not only had he committed the sins of adultery and murder but he had an adulterous and murderous heart and therefore the only acceptable sacrifice is a broken spirit and a broken and a contrite heart as we read in verse 17 after sinning

David had wanted to cover his tracks but now at last he comes to sincere repentance so we've looked at the correct approach when we want to return to God when we want to repent how should we approach God we've looked at that now let's look at this sincere desire to be cleansed now in the Hebrew I'm not a scholar so I don't know Hebrew but I'm told that the Hebrew verb which is translated wash wash me or cleanse me verse 7 is the one that was typically used for washing clothes why is that significant you see the hypocrite is satisfied with washing his clothes whereas the true person repenting of their sins the true penitent doesn't say wash my clothes but he says wash me did you notice that in the first three verses he repeats the possessive pronoun my five times look at these again have mercy on me oh god according to your unfailing love according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for

I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me what he's saying is this I am a filthy garment that needs to be washed needs to be cleansed he's not indulgent with himself he's not tolerant he speaks of transgressions which means acts of rebellion he speaks of iniquity which means deliberate acts he speaks of sin which means missing the mark stumbling wandering from the right path and then he says in verse 7 purge me with hyssop now the experts are unable to identify with any certainty what the hyssop plant was exactly but it doesn't really matter one thing which is very interesting is that it was used in the ceremony for cleansing lepers and

I'd just like to read you a few verses in the book of Leviticus chapter 14 in Leviticus chapter 14 by the way the word leprosy in those days referred to number of different skin diseases but in Leviticus chapter 14 and verse 4 we read these words the priest shall order that two live clean birds and

some cedar wood scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot he is then to take the live bird and dip it together with the cedar wood the scarlet yarn and the hyssop into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean then he is to release the live bird in the open fields now we don't need to worry about we are thinking about the hyssop plant notice that in

[22:47] Hebrews in the book of Hebrews we read this speaking of Christians we read you have come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling the blood of sprinkling so we have been cleansed if we are Christians we are cleansed by the blood of the Savior and what will be the outcome for those who are cleansed what does he say wash me and I will be whiter than snow in Isaiah 1 18 we read though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow wonderful cleansing power of God and here in Psalm 51 he doesn't say you shall be

I shall be as white as snow I shall be whiter than snow this shows the effectiveness of God's remedy for sin a supernatural purity and as I was preparing this sermon it reminded me of the description of the transfiguration you remember how Jesus went up the mount of transfiguration with three of his disciples and we read his raiment became shining exceeding white as snow so as no fuller on earth can white them and we know don't we that the blood of Jesus the lamb of God makes us as pure as Jesus himself and it's only in this way that we can appear before God who is holiness itself so we've looked at the correct approach when we're coming back to God we've thought about the sincere desire to be cleansed and now we're going to finally talk about the desire to be renewed you see for David it wasn't enough to know that he had been forgiven and perhaps we fail at this point we're just concerned to know that we're forgiven which is fair enough but it's not enough he wasn't satisfied with being pure before God why not because he knew that he was quite capable of repeating the same sins such was the corruption of his heart and therefore he writes surely you desire truth in the inner parts what does the Lord require from the repentant sinner he requires sincerity transparency true holiness and deep faithfulness you see

God sees what motivates us he sees our motives not only our actions and our thoughts so a deep change is required create in me a pure heart verse 10 only God the creator can create what is a pure heart a heart that hates sin and loves righteousness and then he goes on to say renew a steadfast a right spirit within me that's to say that lively spirit which once I knew but which has become weakened because of sin when David writes in verse 11 do not cast me from your presence or take your holy spirit from me it's not as if the true believer can experience the removal of the spirit in an absolute sense the holy spirit will never be removed completely from the true believer's heart but what David realizes is that he has grieved the spirit and he's lost the sense of the spirit's presence in his life so he longs to rediscover the joy that's that joy which is the fruit of the spirit he wants to be upheld by a willing spirit not acting simply out of a sense of duty going through the motions he wants to have a willing spirit a real heartfelt deep desire to live according to the will of his

God and you know sin spoils our testimony doesn't it sin shuts our mouth but with this renewed spirit David is looking forward to be able to teach others verse 13 then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you who better to speak about forgiveness than one who has known forgiveness yes the Lord uses even our falls and our failures for glory for his glory because we can testify yes I was a lost sinner yes I have stumbled and I've fallen many times but God has restored me what a witness David could give to the grace and the mercy and the love of God and we're the same aren't we and so freed from the chains and weight of his guilt he was now able to praise

[29:31] God as he should verse 15 oh Lord open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise he would be able from now on to celebrate his righteousness verse 14 save me oh God from blood guilt oh God the God who saves me and my tongue will sing of your righteousness not only of his love that's important love of God yes but also the righteousness of God which that is also part of our testimony to a fallen world and this psalm this psalm can be applied universally can be applied to believers and to unbelievers David was undoubtedly a son of God a true son of God saved by

the grace of God God himself if you remember had said of David he is a man after my own heart that's the testimony of God about David the psalms themselves testify to how much he loved

God and his word aren't they aren't the psalms full of love for the Lord not only that but he wanted to build a temple if you remember he wanted to build a temple to the glory of God and to his honor and of course God said no because you have been a man of blood it will be your son Solomon who built the temple but it was right it was good he desired to build the temple and of course David is included in the heroes of the faith that we find in Hebrews chapter 11 yet David was a sinner we learn from this that no one is immune from falling the higher a person is the greater will be the fall the more well known and respected you are the greater will be the scandal when you fall and the more the news spreads of your fall the more

God will be dishonored David had tried to hide his sins but as it's written in scripture be sure that your sins will find you out so after a year of inner torment there was this relief this release the punishment was severe he lost the child but the greatest suffering that David went through was a suffering of being guilty before God but what a consolation for the child of God to know that there is a way back no matter how far down you've fallen there is a way back through humbling oneself through openness through confession you know what the word to confess means in the original language to confess means to say the same thing to say the same thing so in other words we are saying

I accept your verdict on my sin in other words we call sin what God calls sin where could David find mercy where could David find mercy in the blood of the covenant that was sealed by his great descendant the Messiah and what about us at the foot of the cross where Jesus shed his blood for us what a relief to know that that blood is sufficient to cover all our sins but we mustn't stop there with the desire to be pardoned perfectly natural and correct to desire true forgiveness but let us pray that God will create a clean heart within us that he will renew a right spirit within us may the Lord truly remove from us the love for sin that he may cause us to hate sin as he hates it let's not think so much of the consequences of our sins however bad they may be not the consequences for us but more how our guilt before God brings dishonor to the one who loved us and gave himself for us and then the cleansing will be complete so much so that God will set us to work for him again how can we help our non-Christian friends perhaps as there are non-Christians in our midst this evening it's not so much a question of individual sins the problem as we've seen is in the heart the heart we read is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked that's God's verdict on the human heart who can know it

[35:11] Jeremiah 17 verse 9 the spring my friend is polluted and so everything that comes from that everything that flows from that spring will be contaminated that is why David says thou desirest not sacrifice neither our works nor religious practices or rights can do any good what man needs is a new heart there's only one answer there's only one remedy and that's the Lord Jesus Christ he came specifically for those who are helpless those who can't help themselves do we need cleansing well the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins and remember a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise

Amen Amen Amen.