

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God - Psalms 51
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

We should have some of the Psalms on speed dial. You get the idea, much like you have a few people you call just by touching a picture on your phone, there should be Psalms that have deep meaning to you and that you can use to direct your vertical conversation with God in various situations. Psalm 42 is my go to when I am in a season of darkness, Psalm 34 when I need courage and faith. And when I fail in life I run to Psalm 51. I know exactly where it is, and end up there often. Our Psalm this week is a glorious prayer of confession and repentance from the lips and pen of King David. This Psalm is a model for us on the nature of authentic repentance. But it is more than just a model, it is a prayer, one that we should have on our lips often.

David has messed up royally (no pun intended). He committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba, and the text indicates that she may have been forced in to the relationship. But worse, Bathsheba is the wife of one of David's most loyal soldiers, a man who had stood by his side and operated as something like the Secret Service during David's most trying times. She gets pregnant, but David wants to conceal his sin, so he initiates a cover-up scheme that makes anything the Clinton's did child's play. Eventually, to keep his sin silent he has her husband murdered in the middle of a battle, then in what David wants the world to see as an act of heroism he takes Bathsheba to be his wife declaring he will raise the boy as if it is his own. Somehow he sleeps at night believing his own twisted heart that he has done a good thing. That is until his prophet (read personal pastor) Nathan confronts David with his sin, exposing both the evil deed and David's vile heart. David is exposed, not just with the potential for scandal that might end his rule and ruin his life. He is exposed by knowing that he is guilty before a holy God and deserving of God's wrath. Anything God does to David at this point is justified. So David goes to his room, and in secret writes a prayer that he puts to music expressing the depth of his woe and His need for God's grace. Yet, in the prayer David appeals to God's covenant love, faithfulness, and mercy.

Now, it is easy to read this Psalm and say to myself, "Man, I am no where near as bad as this idiot. He deserves God's justice, and gets God's mercy. So I am good." This shielding posture of my heart, though, exposes the true problem. We need to recognize David did not get to this point in a moment, rather David had secretly begun to believe in his own goodness and allow his heart to move away from a posture of trust and repentance to a posture of self-justification and self-righteousness. This is always the sin beneath the sin, we believe we are better, that God is somehow in our debt, and that I can pull myself up by the bootstraps and fix my own problems. This prideful self-dependence is what puts me on a trajectory to the rejection of Christ and to hardness of heart. Let me prove this to you. If you actually look at David's sin and think it is worse than your own it is a sign that your heart is being hardened to the Gospel, so you need to run to Jesus in confession and repentance seeking the mercy and grace of Christ.

There is so much beauty in this song, and most of it is fairly self-explanatory. David from His heart cries out to God and asks Him not only to forgive His sin but to cleanse him. The text repeats over and over again the three primary words used in Scripture to describe our sin, highlighting both the evil of our sin and effect. He asks God to, "Blot out my transgressions," a word that points out that our sinfulness is at the heart a rebellion against the glory of God and denial of His goodness. As a result we have committed betrayal in our vertical relationship with our Creator which has led to betrayal in our horizontal relationships. This leaves us both forensically guilty (deserving justice) and relationally guilty (our relationships are destroyed). David also asks God to wash him from his iniquities. This word basically means twisting and corruption, reminding us that we sin because we are born twisted and broken, but the sin in our lives is actually the act of bending in on the self causing that twisting and corruption to grow. Third, David asks for cleansing from his sin, a word that means missing the mark. But the idea is way more than just shooting an arrow and not hitting the target, this word speaks to our core purpose as humans, created in the image of God, and shows how our sin actually has made us less than human, and we are in a state where we are helpless to do anything to change this

problem.

So this Psalm shows us the posture of a heart that recognizes its guilt and need for forgiveness, and understands the filth and twisted nature of our sinfulness, and realizes our sin has ruined our very humanity. We can't fix this, never could. Yet God sent Jesus into the world, and He took on our transgressions, iniquities, and sin at the cross. The death of Jesus engages all of these words and the needs in our humanity they represent. His death paid the debt taking on the wrath we deserve and paving the way for reconciliation with God. He himself was not corrupted and twisted, and the shed blood of Jesus cleanses us from the stain of our guilt, making us actually clean. And Jesus is the fullness of the image of God, and through His death and resurrection He restores that life in us as we walk in repentance and faith. So the prayer in Psalm 51 is not just for those moments when we fail big time. This should be the daily posture of my heart as a person who realizes that my heart apart from the work of mercy and grace is bent in on self and will turn from God in a heartbeat. I cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy and continually walk in that repentance, seeking the transformed life available in the Gospel. This is why Martin Luther began the *95 Theses* with the simple statement, "Whereas, all of life is repentance." When the posture of prayer in this passage is not the posture of our heart, well, at that time we like David will be on the path to hardness of heart and even deep and ruining rebellion. But even then we will find the good and forgiving God of Scripture who will meet us where we are at, will forgive our sin, cleanse us of the filth, and restore us into right relationship with God and self.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Joel 1	Joel 2	Joel 3	Amos 1	Amos 2	Amos 3	Amos 4

Reading from this past week: Psalm 51

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Psalm 103

Family Worship

Song - *God My Rock*

<https://youtu.be/C0b2GFdxuVk>

Gospel Project

Story: Doers of the Word

Story Point: James said that faith without works is useless.

Big Picture Question: What is the church?

Answer: The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Scripture: James 1-2

New City Catechism

Question #5: What else did God create?

Answer: God created all things and all his creation was very good.

Verse: Genesis 1:31

Scripture

Psalm 51

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Prayer

*Pray for our new Elder, Kirk Mathews, his wife Jane, and their family as he serves and leads in Evangelism and Community Engagement for our church.

*Spend time this week repenting of sin and asking God to make your heart soft to the Holy Spirit when He brings conviction.