



“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1).

Man’s Sin

Central Truth: Forgiveness is possible through the mercy of God.

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Topic: Sin: Of Men; Forgiveness.

Behold the grace of God! It is best seen against the background of man's sin. So the greatest example of forgiveness by grace is set against the occasion when the worst of sins have been committed. Read the record in II Samuel 11 and 12. Read the confession in Psalm 51. Read the joy of forgiveness in Psalm 32. Read it and rejoice in the wonderful grace that God has extended to sinners.

Psalm 51 records the confession of a man who had committed a twofold sin. First, King David was guilty of the sin of adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah. That sin carried the death penalty in ancient Israel (Leviticus 20:10). Second, King David had ordered the death of the woman's husband so that he might hide the sin of adultery. That sin carried the death penalty also (Genesis 9:6). So David was under two death sentences because of his sins.

Nathan, a prophet of God, spoke God's words of condemnation to the king. David's heart was broken and he poured out the confession recorded in Psalm 51. The superscription of the psalm reads, “To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.” David was an unforgiven and guilty sinner at the time he prayed the prayer of Psalm 51. But God heard him and forgave him. What a lesson that is to you and me!

I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

Sin is serious. Any sin is serious. There are no “little sins” before God. There are four words for sin found in Psalm 51.

A. Transgression is serious before God (Psalm 51:1, 3, 13). The word means “rebellion, revolt, trespass.” It is an open and daring defection from the will of God. God warns, “*The transgressors shall be destroyed*” (Psalm 37:38). “*The way of transgressors is hard*” (Proverbs 13:15). Because Jesus was “*numbered with the transgressors,*” and “*bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*” (Isaiah 53:12), the repentant sinners have hope. David confessed himself a transgressor, and God forgave his sin. So you can confess.

B. Iniquity is serious before God (Psalm 53:2, 5, 9). That word means “vanity, crookedness, a warped and twisted disposition.” David's act of transgression was produced by a spirit of iniquity. A penitent psalmist asked, “*If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?*” (Psalm 130:3). Iniquity is serious because it separates a person from God and closes off his prayers from God (Isaiah 59:2). Yet, it can be forgiven. David confessed his iniquity to God with the request, “*Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity. . . . Blot out all mine iniquities*” (Psalm 51:2,9). And God did. Amazing grace!

C. Sin is serious before God (Psalm 51:2,3,4,5,9,13). We use the term “*sin*” to cover all wrongdoing. But a term is used in the Old Testament to mean “missing the mark.” Included in this term is the element of a willful failure; one does not measure up because he does not want to; instead, he prefers sin. The Bible says, “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Iniquity is so serious that it takes a person away from God (Isaiah 64:6). Its only remedy is in repentance, confession, and divine forgiveness.

D. Bloodguiltiness is serious before God. That sin involves being responsible for the death of another person (Psalm 51:14). As the first three terms David used described the nature of his fault, this term identifies the act itself. He had moved in revolt against God (transgression) because of a depraved nature (iniquity) to do wrong (miss the mark). What he did resulted in the death of an innocent man (bloodguiltiness).

There was no basis for God to forgive David except on the basis of grace. But because He is full of grace, God forgave David just as He will forgive you and me if we sin. Do not look lightly on sin, however. It is deadly serious.

II. THE EFFECT OF SIN

A. Sin is written before God on one's record. So the request was made, *“Blot out my transgressions”* (Psalm 51:1). To blot out pictures the erasing of writing. It is by the application of the blood that sins can be blotted out (Leviticus 17:11). David sought forgiveness the same way as you and I receive it. But the record of one's sin remains until judgment if he does not seek forgiveness. Be warned.

B. Sin defiles one's conscience. That is why David prayed, *“Wash me; . . . cleanse me; . . . purge me”* (Psalm 51:2, 7). Remember how Felix trembled when he heard Paul reason *“of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come”* (Acts 24:25)? He did so because his conscience was defiled and he was convicted. One may hide the prick of conscience, but it will have to be faced sooner or later (Genesis 42:21; John 8:9). Only forgiveness can cleanse the defiled conscience. Receive it.

C. Sin destroys peace of mind. *“My sin is ever before me,”* David lamented (Psalm 51:3). In another place he said, *“When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me”* (Psalm 32:3, 4). There is peace only in fellowship with God; so, there can be no fellowship with God when one has unconfessed and unforgiven sin. Jesus gives peace because He provides forgiveness. Enjoy it.

D. Sin breaks one's fellowship with God (Psalm 51:4, 8, 12). David spoke of being judged, having broken bones, and losing the joy of salvation because of his sin. That was the result of losing fellowship with God. Be warned by the words of Isaiah 59:2, *“Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”* That is the result of broken fellowship. Repair it.

E. Sin endangers one's life (Psalm 51:14). Since murder brought the death penalty in ancient Israel, David was directly under sentence for his sin; however, it is not just the sin of murder that brings death. God said, *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die”* (Ezekiel 18:20). *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). *“Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:15). Flee from it.

III. THE REMEDY FOR SIN

Against the dark picture of David's sin shines the bright light of God's forgiveness. Read Psalm 51 and then Psalm 32. Look at God's remedy for sin and rejoice.

A. Confession is the remedy for sin. David said, *“I acknowledge my*

transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3). Notice how personal and specific he makes his confession. It is not, “If I have sinned”; but rather, “I have sinned; forgive me.” In response to such confession, God sent the message, “*The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die*” (II Samuel 12:13). David responded in joy, “*I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. . . . Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*” (Psalm 32:5). That is how you can receive forgiveness also (I John 1:9). Do it.

B. Cleansing is the remedy for sin (Psalm 51:2, 7-10). We rejoice in His washing (Revelation 1:5), His purifying (Isaiah 6:7), His forgiving (Colossians 2:13). All those who bring their sins to Jesus will receive the benediction, “*Ye are washed, . . . ye are sanctified, . . . ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:11). There is no removal of sin's guilt except by His cleansing. Seek it.

C. Atonement is the remedy for sin. God does not look lightly on sin and forgive it with a mere shrug of His shoulders. An atoning sacrifice must settle the sin issue or it will not be settled at all. Only those under the blood are safe (Exodus 12:22). “*Without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus Christ is our atoning sacrifice. He bore our sins in His own body when He went to the cross in our behalf. He made atonement for us. There is no other. Accept it.

D. Forgiveness is the end of sin. When God has forgiven, nothing remains. He “*forgiveth all thine iniquities*” (Psalm 103:3). No one is beyond the reach of His grace or the scope of His atonement. He forgives on the basis of His atonement because in Him “*we have redemption through his blood*” (Ephesians 1:7). His forgiveness is so complete that nothing is left behind to hinder our fellowship with God. “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (I John 1:9). That is too good to miss. Ask for it.

E. Repentance is turning from sin. God seeks to find in us “*a broken and a contrite heart*” (Psalm 51:17). “*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*” (Psalm 34:18). Here is how to be forgiven: “*Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously*” (Hosea 14:2). And He will!

IV. THE JOY OF FORGIVEN SIN

A. Forgiveness brings the joy of inward purity. With the “*clean heart*” and a “*right spirit*” there is a joy which nothing else can bring

(Psalm 51:10). When peace exists between man and God, purity is enjoyed. There can be no greater purity than when *“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (I John 1:7).

B. Forgiveness brings the joy of personal fellowship (Psalm 51:11). The forgiven sinner is never cast out of God’s presence. God delights in him instead. He walks in the light as God is in the light and shares fellowship with God and all the people of God (I John 1:6, 7). *“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (I John 1:3).

C. Forgiveness brings the joy of salvation (Psalm 51:12). That is the freshness of delight in knowing God personally in Jesus Christ. It enables one to say, *“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness”* (Isaiah 61:10). That is the *“joy unspeakable and full of glory”* which is our spiritual birthright in Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:8).

D. Forgiveness brings an effective witness. *“Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee”* (Psalm 51:13). There will be no witness of power from a convicted heart. But when there is nothing between your soul and your Savior, a vibrant witness will naturally flow out from you. Go to God for cleansing and go to others with testimony.

The Bible says, *“To obey is better than sacrifice”* (I Samuel 15:22). Why? Because where there is obedience there is no need for sacrifice. But if you fail, you can come to God with full assurance that He still loves you and will restore you (I John 2:1, 2). He delights in mercy. He is ready to forgive. Bring all your sins to Him and experience the joy of the Lord.

Questions

1. What is the historical background of Psalm 51?
2. How is Psalm 32 related to Psalm 51?
3. What is transgression against God?
4. In what way did God equate adultery and murder?
5. How does sin defile the conscience?
6. How is Psalm 51:1 related to Psalm 32:3, 4?
7. Why does sin break fellowship with God?
8. Why is confession of sin to God so important?
9. What does Psalm 51 teach you about how to confess sin?
10. What does forgiveness mean?

