

Forgiveness of Sin

As Christians, we sometimes go through this life feeling dirty. Well, it happens in this life more often than not in our lives because we're in this world. The Bible says that we're in the world but we're not of the world. We shouldn't let the things of the world overtake us, and I've found that, in many of our lives, sin creeps in and sometimes we just feel like we're not saved. But the Bible says that we're saved eternally, but sin can separate us from the joy that we need to have in the Lord as Christians. We need to be serving Him in joy. And the only way we can do that is to have the forgiveness of sin. Not to forgive us again for salvation, because we're saved forever, but to forgive us that our joy might be full and we can serve God with a clean heart and do the things that He would have us to do.

I'm reminded in Psalm 51 about the forgiveness of sin. Now, this psalm is a psalm of David. It's commonly known as his psalm of repentance. David penned these words at a very low point in his life. He'd sinned with Bathsheba and had even ordered the murder of Uriah, her husband, in an attempt to cover his sin. David may have thought that he had gotten by, but the Lord had witnessed it all. After God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David regarding his sin, David's heart was pricked and he desired repentance.

I want to remind you that David was a man after God's own heart. Acts 13:22 says, *I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.* This is God speaking. David was a man who had been handpicked of the Lord to reign upon the throne of Israel. He was well favored of God, and yet, he was susceptible to sin.

This psalm in no way advocated that we can sin and get away with it. However, there is comfort found in these verses. David was a man who walked with God, and yet, he missed the mark. But his failure was not final. There is hope for forgiveness and restoration for those who seek it.

This passage in Psalm 51 reveals the process of restoration for those who are not where they need to be with God. Notice with me if you would the awareness of a backslidden person, David. In verse 1, it says, *¹Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ²Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

But before the backslidden person can ever be restored, there must be an awareness of their backslidden condition. Until we realize that we have fallen short of where God would have us, we will never seek restoration. And this awareness is twofold. Notice, first of all, the verse that I read, verse 1, David knew that he had sinned and he knew that God was aware of his sin. God alone had the power to forgive sin and provide restoration. David knew that he was literally at the mercy of God and his only hope was to receive that mercy. He pled with the Lord to offer mercy instead of the judgment he rightly deserved.

Those who are backslidden must come to this realization. We are already aware of our sin, but we must also realize that our only hope is found in the mercy of God. Would He not be just and right to condemn us and leave us in our sin? I'm glad that we serve a God of mercy.

Verse 2 of Psalm 51 says, *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.* Now that David's sin was out in the open, he truly desired to be forgiven and cleansed of that sin. He was tired of bearing the burden that his sin had caused. No doubt there had been many miserable days for a man who was after God's own heart. There's a great truth revealed in the text. Until we get tired of our sin and desire things to change, there will be no restoration. We must get to the place that we want to rid our lives of the burden of our sin. And sadly, for many like David, that time doesn't come until sin is made public.

Notice with me, if you would, the acknowledgment of the backslidden person. Simply being aware of sin isn't enough. We must acknowledge that sin and seek restoration. A genuine acknowledgment of sin is often difficult.

I want you to consider this with me if you would... the despair of sin. Verse 3 says, *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.* This verse reveals a miserable man. He confessed his sin before the Lord, as well as the fact that his sin was constantly on his mind. It made no difference what David did or where he went. His sin was always there. He never found any rest or peace because of his sin. Day after day, his misery and guilt remained.

Many today are in a miserable condition. Their sin may not have been discovered as of yet, but it's ever before them. The guilt and despair of sin never goes away. It's there as a constant reminder to the child of God that they are apart from the Lord and His fellowship. There may be pleasure in sin be it for a season, for a moment, but the Christian is never happy dwelling in sin. Well... the despair of sin.

In verse 4 we see the discernment of sin. In verse 4 it says, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightiest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

No doubt David felt the guilt of the consequences of his sin. He had committed adultery, devastated a home, and was even responsible for the death of an innocent man, but he knew that his sin went much deeper than the devastation to those who were directly involved. David came to the realization that he had sinned against God. He was so overwhelmed with this that he declared that he had sinned against God and God alone. He was devastated that he had sinned against the One who had shown such favor and mercy.

Many Christians become offensive and bitter when they are engaged in a life of sin. They know that their sin is wrong, but they are adamant that it is their life to live, and the real misery is not the physical or emotional effects, but the awareness that they have sinned against the Lord.

When we consider all that Jesus endured for us on the cross and the love that was shown by the Godhead for undeserving sinners, it brings grief to our hearts. The believer has no right to live as he pleases. We are no longer our own, according to the Word of God. We've been bought with a price. We never sin in a vacuum. Our sin is always committed against our Lord regardless of what it is. Can you imagine the heartbreak that the sin of believers brings to our Lord?

Notice next the appeal of the backslidden person. Here we find David's earnest appeal unto the Lord concerning his sin. Once we become aware of our sin and acknowledge it, then we must deal with it. Verse 7 says, *Purge*

me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Verse 9 goes on to say, *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.* David desired that his sin be removed and that his life be cleansed of iniquity. He was tired of the filth and despair of sin and desired for it to be removed from his life. He knew that God was able to forgive his sin and blot it out.

I'm sure that we've all been there at some point in our life. We've allowed sin to come in and we feel dirty before the Lord because of it. God won't use a dirty vessel, and we need to confess our sin so that we can be cleansed.

Isn't it good to know that we serve a merciful Savior who is willing to forgive and forget our sins? They are removed as far as the east is from the west and buried in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

Notice now the restoration of joy that David had. David, no doubt, was filled with misery because of this season in his life, of what was going on. He no longer experienced the joy of the Lord within his heart. He lacked fellowship with the Lord. He couldn't pray. He couldn't worship. He couldn't enjoy life at all because of his sin. As his sin was revealed, it appears that it brought a sense of relief to David's heart. He wanted the sin removed so that his joy might be restored.

The believer cannot experience joy apart from the Lord. When sin is allowed to remain in our lives, fellowship with the Lord is broken. Like David, we won't be able to worship, pray, or enjoy life. The Christian is never happy when sin is in his life. We may pretend that all is well, but deep down we are miserable because we lack joy.

Notice the renewal now of the spirit. Verse 10 says, ¹⁰*Create in me a clean heart, O God;*

and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹*Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.* David longed for the day when he would once again experience the presence of God in his life. He longed for the fellowship they had prior to his sin. He wanted to have a heart filled with the presence and power of God rather than one filled with the guilt and despair of sin.

If you've ever been there, you know what I'm talking about and you know what David was going through. And if you're a human being, I know you've been there. If you've been saved very long, you've experienced this burden within your spirit. The believer is never happy and content when he is apart from God. We may seek to avoid the Lord and press on in our sin, but deep down we long to have our spirit renewed so that we might have fellowship with the Lord again.

Notice David now, the return to service. Apparently, it had been some time since David had a word for the Lord and his lips had been silent concerning God since his sin. He was no longer a testimony to others. He was no longer being used of God. He desired to return to the field of service.

Notice with me verses 13-15: ¹³*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.* ¹⁴*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.* ¹⁵*O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise*

Once a Christian experiences serving the Lord, nothing else will satisfy. There is something about being of service to the King that nothing else will satisfy. Sin hinders our service and our witness. Just as David said, "I will open my mouth, and when I'm cleansed,

Lord, I'll be able to tell others about You." And that's the way it is with a Christian today. If you have sin in your life, get rid of that so you can be telling others about Jesus Christ. Jesus deserves our faithful devotion and service and that is only possible through a clean life.

In closing, I want to say a word about the advancement of the backslidden. Notice verse 4 again. It says there, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*. God stands ready to forgive, but we must confess our sin and return to Him. First John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. If you are at a distance from the Lord, the Lord desires to restore you. Why not come as He leads you. You don't have to remain away from Him. Ask God to forgive you of that sin.

And if you've never taken time to come to Him, faith believing that He can save you, you need to come to Him now. He's waiting for you. Jesus said, *For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke 19:10. Won't you come to Him today and do as the man did in Luke 18:13 and say to the Lord, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." If you do that, He will have mercy and save you.

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