

THE PSALM OF A BROKEN HEART  
Psalm 51

Intro: This Psalm marks the darkest hour in the long and wonderful life of King David of Israel. None of the experiences he had with Saul could in any way compare with the agony of soul David felt when he experienced the results in his heart of the double-sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and then the murder of her husband, Uriah, the Hittite, who had been so devoted to David.

David wrote it, and gave it to "the chief Musician," or as in the NASB, "for the choir director."

It was for his people that he wrote -- and probably the hardest thing that David ever wrote.

It shows not only his deep repentance and sorrow, but it shows also how he found forgiveness and peace. It answers the question which must have haunted him at the beginning,

How could this happen to me?

The Psalm with all that it contains is certainly intended:

- 1) For the glory of God.
- 2) To help the people of God as a preventative against sin.
- 3) To show the awful effects of sin.
- 4) To reveal how a child of God can find peace if he has committed sin.

The particular sin is not mentioned in the Psalm because it is intended for other sins besides the sins of David.

It falls into certain stanzas (vv. 1-4,  
5-9,  
10-13,  
14-17,  
18, 19.

But tonight I want to go back and forth through the Psalm to deal with certain subjects which David touches on, but which he has not confined to any particular stanza. Certain truths were burning in his heart, and we have here the writing of a man who found peace although he had been in great agony.

The lessons which David learned are lessons which we can learn from Scripture without having to go through sin to learn them.

Starting with the thought, How could this happen to me?, we see, first of all, what David learned through this about:

I. THE NATURE OF SIN AND ITS REMOVAL.

- A. He was a sinner by nature (v. 5). Cf. Psa. 58:3.
- B. He was also a sinner by choice (vv. 3, 4a).

Note his, "I have sinned."

- C. His sin was primarily against God (v. 4). This applies to any and all sin, even to the sin of prayerlessness (1 Sam. 12:23).
- D. Sin is determined by that which is evil in the sight of God (v. 4).
- E. Sin can only be blotted out by God.

This is evident throughout the Psalm -- vv. 1, 2, 7, 9, 10a, 14a.

- F. God can only blot out sin by His grace (v. 1).

But there is another aspect to this Psalm which we need to see:

## II. THE EFFECTS OF SIN.

It is important to note these because sin always looks great and desirable before we get involved in it.

- A. Joy is gone (vv. 8, 12). Agony replaces it.
- B. Ministry must be discontinued (v. 13). We may go through the motions, and even deceive others for a time, but it is only an empty shell.
- C. Worship is impossible (v. 19).
- D. Others under us are affected -- blessing is withheld (v. 18).

But then the question comes up, Is there no hope? Is it possible for a guilty sinner to be restored? If so, how?

The answer is, Yes, there is hope! And please note that one thing that is very evident in this Psalm is that a true child of God will never be content to live in his sin. He may fall into sin, but he cannot stay there.

## III. THE WAY OF RESTORATION.

Obviously it is only in the Lord. David could do nothing to erase his sin. See v. 16. We know that it is only through Christ -- and David was looking ahead to that provision. But it is interesting to see what David did. And it goes without saying that the Lord brought him to this place!

- A. Brokenheartedness (v. 17).
- B. Confession (vv. 3, 4 -- and the whole Psalm).

C. Petition -- where we see David praying for himself.

1. Negatively -- two things David did not want the Lord to do (v. 11).

See Psa. 103:10. He never punishes us in accordance with what we deserve.

2. Positively:

- a. For cleansing and renewal (vv. 10, 14a).

- b. For joy to be restored (vv. 8, 12, 14b).

This indicates how dear David's joy in the Lord was to him.

- c. For ministry to be resumed (v. 13).

David could not be satisfied with a fruitless ministry.

- d. For praise to be declared (v. 15).

This which had been such a major part of David's life, the outflow of his joy in praise to God, could not come either from his heart nor could it delight the heart of God as long as the sin was there.

And now we come to what is one of the most important parts of all.

What does David tell us about the causes of his sins?

IV. THE CAUSES. There are three:

- A. Carelessness (v. 6).

- B. Disobedience (v. 10). He became disobedient to some parts of the Word of God. Thus, he prays for "a steadfast spirit" -- to be faithful. See the NASB.

- C. Rebellion (v. 12) -- "a willing spirit" (NASB).

Concl. and Appl.: The Lord has a way of showing us our need when we are exposed to the Word of God.

But we need to be careful about any hypocrisy, or any of the things David tolerated in his life. Such sins always lead to greater sins -- and they need to be forsaken.

What is your reading and hearing of the Word meaning to you?