

THE GOOD MAN'S COMFORT

Psalm 37:23-24

Intro: Most of you have heard me say that interpreting Scripture “a text without a context is a pretext.” A **text** is any part of the Bible. It can be just one verse, or a group of verses. It can even be a chapter. **The context** has to do with the book in which it is found, or the chapter, or simply the verses which precede it, and follow it. I think that most of us understand it. But what is a **pretext**? It means that if we just lift a verse out of its setting in Scripture, and seek to interpret it by itself, most likely what we are doing is simply *assuming* what it means instead of arriving at the true meaning of the text. That is a good rule to follow in seeking to understand the Bible. There undoubtedly are verses that stand by themselves, but, as a general rule, a book always means more to us if we can see its place in the whole of Scripture, chapters mean more if we look at them in the light of the message of the book in which it is found, and individual verses take on a special richness and depth of meaning when they are examined in relation to the verses which precede it, or them, and also when we see how they fit in with the verses that follow. This is an important rule to follow in the interpretation of Scripture.

I have heard people who are not Christians say, “Oh, you can make the Bible say anything that you want it to say.” That may be true if you pick out verses here and there, and then bring them together when actually they may have little or no connection with each other. But you can't make the Bible say anything that you want it to say if you always interpret individual verses in the environment of verses where they are found. And so I want to practice what I am preaching this morning because my text, the first two verses in our memory work for this year are found right in the heart of Psalm 37. This Psalm has forty verses, and the verses we are to consider are verses 23 and 24. So what do these verses have to do with Psalm 37 as a whole? And so let us look, first, at the context.

I. THE CONTEXT.

The message of the Psalm is not hard to see. King David, who wrote this Psalm, was seeking to help the people of God to understand why the wicked often are seen to prosper, while the people of God who are seeking to please the Lord, often experience adversity. We can see this very clearly in the opening verses of the Psalm. Those of you who did the memory

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work probably will remember verses 1 through 7. They were our last assignment. (Read.)

— We are often inclined to “fret” when we see the prosperity of the wicked. They usually live like there is no God, and do what we know is displeasing to God, *and get away with it – or that is what it looks like*. But verse 1 tells us not to “fret” against them, nor to be “envious” of them, because of what we are told in verse 2.

But what are we to do? That is one of the good parts of the Psalm. (Read verses 3-7.)

Then look at verses 8 and 9.

It goes on like this throughout the whole Psalm. I won't re-read the whole Psalm, but for a final illustration of what David said, look at verses 34 through 36.

Verses 39 and 40 give us the conclusion.

— Psalm 37 is not the only Psalm which deals with the seeming prosperity of the wicked, but it is certainly one of the most important.

This gives us **the context** of **our text**. And so right in the midst of these we have the two verses which I want to consider with you today. (Read verses 23 and 24.)

I am going to consider these verses under two points, and I would like to use a word for the first of these two verses which was popular among the Puritans. Those of you who have read their messages will be familiar with their use of the word *doctrine*, a word they used to point out the teaching of the passage. That is what we have in verse 23, the doctrine.

But along with that, in verse 24, we have a most wonderful promise for the strengthening of our faith.

So let us look at now at

— **II. THE TEXT Psa. 37:23-24).**

And we will consider first

A. The doctrine, or teaching of the text (v. 23).

Who did David have in mind when he spoke of “the good man”? Well, it must be the man, the person, that he has referred to all through the Psalm who belongs to Him. It is the one whom the Lord shows to be righteous, according to verse 6. He is among “those that wait upon the Lord” in verse 9. They are called “the meek” in verse 11. They are “such as be upright in their conduct in verse 14.. Again in verse 16 he calls him “a righteous man.” And he does it again in verse 17. We see again that he is “upright” in verse 18. Again in verse 21 he is called “righteous. And the same again in verse 25. They are called “saints” in verse 28, “righteous” again in verse 29, and in verse 30, and verse 32. In verse 37 he is called “perfect” and “upright.” And for a last time in verse 39, he is called “the righteous.”

So David was clearly speaking of people like himself, who knew the Lord, and who were seeking to please the Lord in their daily lives. The Lord has many adjectives by which He describes His people.

However, the “good man” is an expression which goes beyond what we mean when we say “good.” This is a man who is somewhat of a national hero. He is strong and known for his ability to fight. He is the kind of a man we might look upon as not having to trust the Lord as much as others do who are not as strong as he is. It probably means that if a man like this needs the Lord, and is liable to fall, then it is apparent that everyone else needs him.

We are told that it is just as true of him as it is of anyone else, *that his very steps are ordered by the Lord.* And this means that down to the smallest details of his life, they have all been established by the Lord. “Ordered” is a word that was used in setting up a monument. It was firm, unchanging and unchangeable. The Lord knows the way that we take. Job said that, and then he added, and “when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). And four verses later he said,

For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him (Job 23:14).

Cf. Prov. 16:9 A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

George Muller of Bristol, England, the man God used so greatly in taking

care of hundreds of orphans, used to say that “the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord,’ *and the stops are too.*” This does not mean that we always do His will, because verse 24 talks about our falling. But it does mean that the hand of the Lord is to be seen in all of the circumstances of our lives. The Lord planned when you and I would be born, who our parents would be, the abilities and gifts we would have, how He wanted to use us. He has ordered our relationship, and He continually works in our hearts “to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). I know that we have a lot of questions about a statement like this, but those of us who are older can look back over our lives and see how God has led us, and blessed us, and restrained us when we needed to be held back. This is a special joy and blessing that we as the people of God have. Is it any wonder that David said what he did in verse 37? (Read.)

How our hearts should be moved at this truth. He has ordered our steps. James Small understood this truth when he wrote that wonderful hymn, “I’ve found a Friend.” Do you remember the words?

I’ve found a Friend, O such a Friend!
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him;
And round my heart still closely twine
Those ties which nought can sever,
For I am His, and He is mine,
For ever and for ever.

I’ve found a Friend, O such a Friend!
So kind and true and tender,
So wise a Counselor and Guide,
So might a Defender!
From Him Who knows me now so well
What pow’r my soul can sever?
Shall life of death, shall earth or hell?
No, I am His for ever.

What does the rest of the verse say? “And He delighteth in His way.” Some say that this refers to the way that we delight in the Lord’s way for us; others say that it means that the Lord delights in the way He has planned for us. Both can be true, but I am inclined to think that David

meant the latter, that the Lord delights in the way He has planned for us. He has done the very best for each one of us. His way includes trials and testings, many of them. It is not that the Lord enjoys seeing us suffer, but He has designed our lives in such a way that we will learn how much we need to trust Him, and thus learn to love Him more as we experience the sufficiency of His grace and power.

Think of David's life. It was God's plan for Him to be in the Messianic line, an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. Saul was the one who unwittingly did everything he could to stand in the way of God's plan for David. But it was God's plan for David to become King. And he became the King. In spite of all that men did to stand in the way, the Lord was, as He always is, the Victor! And think of the precious Psalms David was able to write because of the many times and many ways that he saw the faithfulness of God in his life.

But now let us go on to verse 24. This is where we have one of the wonderful promises of the Lord.

B. The Lord's precious promise (v. 24).

The verse does not begin on a very good note, but this is the kind of thing that we have to look for, and guard ourselves against, because of the weakness of the flesh.

"Though he fall," this man whose steps have been ordered by the Lord. Did the Lord order his fall? Certainly not! One writer said that this "fall" has nothing to do with sin. I don't know why he would say that because it is hard to think of a fall which does not involve sin in some way. We fall when we don't trust the Lord as we should. We fall when we get so discouraged that we want to quit. We fail the Lord in many, many ways.

David had two very serious falls in his life. But by God's marvelous grace he was "not utterly cast down." God did not throw him away. He did not refuse to have anything more to do with David. And David himself was not overcome with despair. Why not? He should have been. The reason: Because the Lord was upholding him with His hand.

Solomon said,

15 Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righ-

teous; spoil not his resting place:

16 For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again (Prov. 24:15-16a).

— And Micah the prophet said,

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me (Micah 7:8).

And the words of the Apostle Paul apply here also when he wrote in 2 Cor. 4:7-10,

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Illustrated by the Lord saving Peter as he was walking on water. Cf. Mt. 14:22-33.

We fall when we fail to trust the Lord as we should. And we fall when we fail to do what we know from God's Word we ought to do. A cold heart is a fallen heart. And like the children of Israel, our falls often are a repetition of what has gone on before.

— But why aren't we cast away?

Because the same Lord Whom we have failed "upholdeth us with His hand." And our Lord is so great that He can uphold all of us if we should all fall at the same time, and He does it with just one hand! This means that He sustains us, refreshes and revives us. He puts us back where we belong.

In verse 17 of this chapter David wrote,

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

And in Psalm 145:14 we read,

The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

The Lord Jesus spoke about His hand in John 10:27-30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,

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neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

Concl: In that wonderful 23rd Psalm David spoke of the Lord restoring his soul. That is what David had in mind here. But what it takes is the same dependence that a sheep shows toward the shepherd. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). The more we grow in the Lord, the more we sense our dependence upon Him. Self-sufficiency is evidence of spiritual immaturity, but as we grow in the Lord, the greater will be our trust in the Lord. And this is what the Lord wants. This is where we experience the peace of God, and this is where we become useful instruments in the hands of the Lord.

All of us need to remember what we learned in 2 Peter about adding what Peter called “these things” to our faith. Let us remember what they were: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. And then Peter told us in 2 Peter 1:10 and 11,

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Closing verses: Jude 24, 25.

THE LORD'S COUNTLESS BLESSINGS

Psalm 40:1-5

Intro: Last week when we considered together Psalm 37:23-24, I spent a some time seeking to show the importance having some understanding of the whole Psalm in seeking to interpret any part of it. Today I want us to look at all of Psalm 40 before we concentrate on the first five verses which is the last part of Assignment 1 in our memory work. I realize that many of you are not involved in the memory work, but I trust that these messages will be helpful to you nevertheless. That is one reason I am taking part of the time to look at the whole Psalm.

First, I want you to notice from the heading of the Psalm, that this is a Psalm of David, King David. We don't know when he wrote it, or under what circumstances, but it is apparent that he had experienced a great deliverance for which he was praising the Lord. And this is what he was talking about in the first five verses.

The second thing that I want you to notice is that those of you who are familiar with the Bible will recognize something very familiar about verses 6 through 8. Your marginal references may tell you that these three verses are quoted in Hebrews 10:5-7. When we turn to Hebrews and read those verses we see that the writer of Hebrews was speaking of Christ and applying those verses to Christ in connection with His first coming to the earth. If you want to turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 10 you can follow as I read the last verse of chapter 9 to pick up the thought that the writer was speaking of Christ, and then reading on through verse 10. This is what we find in those verses:

28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 10

1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

- 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
- 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
- 5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:
- 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.
- 7 Then said I, **Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.**
- 8 **Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;**
- 9 **Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.** He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.
- 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 9:28-10:10).

The wording in Hebrews varies a little from what we have in the Psalms, but the Holy Spirit certainly has the right to adapt the quotation to serve the purposes that He had in using it in Hebrews. The point in both passages is that it was because the sacrifices and offerings of the Old Testament were not sufficient for our salvation, that Christ came to do the will of God in offering Himself for our sins.

So David was acting as a prophet here in Psalm 40.

From what He said about our Lord Jesus Christ, he went on to tell the Lord that he had not kept silent about the righteousness of God, but had declared it faithfully to the people of God in Israel. And so he pled with the Lord in the latter part of the Psalm not to withhold His tender mercies from him because he was facing a new assault from his enemies. He acknowledged that his sins were so great that his heart failed him, but he wanted to magnify the Lord and prayed that the Lord would not tarry, but immediately to help him and deliver him.

Notice in verse 16 that he prayed for others who were seeking the Lord for His help, that they, too, would be able to rejoice in the Lord because they had received blessing from Him.

So the point seems to be that the Lord's help in the past encouraged David to seek the Lord for His help in the present, knowing that His hope for the Lord's blessing did not rest upon his faithfulness to the Lord, but upon the work of the One Who was yet to come.

Now let us go back to verse 1, and look together at the first five verses of the Psalm.

In the first four verses David was speaking *about* the Lord; in verse 5 he was speaking to the Lord.

I am going to suggest that we have here five divisions in these five verses, although the verses have to be divided up, as you will see, to give us the five divisions. Let me give you the divisions first, and then we will seek to understand them. These are the five points:

- 1) What David did in his trouble (v. 1a).
- 2) What the Lord did in response to David (vv. 1b-3a).
- 3) How it affected others (v. 3b).
- 4) A special truth which was confirmed (v. 4).
- 5) David's worship of the Lord (v. 5).

I. WHAT DAVID DID IN HIS TROUBLE (Psa. 40:1a).

There are two ways that people have been inclined to interpret these words. One is that David was speaking of his salvation. The other is that David was speaking of how the Lord had delivered him in a special time of trouble that he had. Salvation seems to carry the vote because we do have that passage which followed which speaks of Christ and His work of salvation, plus the fact that David said in verse 10 that he had not concealed what the Lord had done for the salvation of sinners. And in verse 12 he mentioned his many sins.

But in spite of all of that I am inclined to think that David was speaking about some terrible crisis that he had faced after he was saved. It seems that it was both dangerous and hopeless. He clearly could not handle it from what he said that the Lord did for him. But our first point is to notice what David did in this crisis. We don't know what it was, but what it was doesn't matter because the Lord can help us regardless of what the circumstances might be. If he had told us his problem, we might have been inclined to think that, because our problem was different, what David said

about his problem did not, and would not, apply to our problems.

— But what did David do? Notice his words: “I waited patiently for the Lord.” The word “patiently” also makes me think that David was not speaking about salvation. We don’t have to wait to be saved, but we often have to wait for the Lord to answer our prayers.

“Waited” and “patiently” are the translation of one Hebrew verb. Fausset, in the JFB commentary, said it could be translated, “Waiting I waited, implying continuous, patient, and unwearied waiting on and for the Lord” III, 187). It means that the Lord did not answer immediately, but that David prayed, and then waited in the certain hope, the real expectation, that the Lord heard him, and that the Lord in His own way and time would meet his need. We sometimes try to tell the Lord when He should work, and how, but that is not our business. But true praying trusts both of those details to the Lord. The point that David’s words make is that we must pray in faith, *and this is where we so often fail*. What an example David is as to the way in which we should pray and wait, and pray and wait, until the answer comes.

— In our praying we ought to think of the words of James in chapter 1 of his epistle. He was speaking about seeking wisdom from the Lord, but the same applies to whatever our request might be. Listen to what James said.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:5-8).

So in trouble David prayed. He prayed to the Lord. And he prayed with real expectation, leaving the details to the Lord.

Now let’s look at our second point:

II. WHAT THE LORD DID IN RESPONSE TO DAVID (Psa. 40: 1b-3a).

— David said that the Lord did six things for him:

- 1) "He inclined unto me."
- 2) "He heard my cry."
- 3) "He brought me up . . ."
- 4) "He set my feet upon a rock."
- 5) He "established my goings."
- 6) "And He hath put a new song in my mouth . . ."

To say that "He inclined to me" means that the Lord bent over and then stretched Himself out to hear what David had to say. What a precious picture this gives us of the Lord's concern for us.

"He heard my cry." He heard me crying for help.

"He brought me up." He did not tell me how to get out, but He came down where I was, and brought me up. It was a place where water was rushing through, and where the only place to stand was in mud, "miry clay."

"He set my feet upon a rock." A rock in Scripture is often a picture of our Lord because it is a stable place, and a place of security.

"And established my goings," meaning that *He secured my steps*. This means that there was a new stability in David's life, in his walk with the Lord.

"And He hath put a new song in my mouth . . ." This does not necessarily mean that David wrote a new song, although he could have, or even that it was a song which had never been sung before, but that David sang a song in a way in which he had never sung it before. The blessing of the Lord causes us to notice the words of the songs we sing, and to sing them with a meaning that is new and fresh and full of meaning to us. In David's case, it was "praise unto our God."

The language seems to indicate not that David was praying about some way in which his enemies had attacked him, but that he had gone away from the Lord in some way, and the Lord was restoring him to a place of fellowship with Himself, and of blessing.

Now we come to our third point:

III. HOW IT AFFECTED OTHERS (Psa. 40:3b).

“Fear” is the OT equivalent of *believing*, or *trusting*. And David could have meant one of two things, and very possibly both:

- 1) That some were saved when they saw what the Lord did for David.
- 2) That those who were saved were more inclined to trust the Lord to meet their needs when they saw what the Lord had done for David.

We never know who is watching us, nor do we know how the Lord may see fit to use us when we really turn to Him and are trusting Him to meet our needs whatever they may be, or however we have come into those needs.

IV. A SPECIAL TRUTH WHICH WAS CONFIRMED (Psa. 40:4).

Here is one of the beatitudes that we find in the Psalms. It could be an exclamation, “How happy . . .” True joy is the result of trusting in the Lord, and resting our case solely in His hands. The opposite of making the Lord our trust, is to turn to men, any person, saved or unsaved. To respect the proud is to turn to them. How utterly ridiculous even wise men can be when they seek to solve human problems without the Lord. They refuse to talk about sin, and when it comes to the weather we blame La Nina. But Who is in charge of La Nina?

Only the Lord can meet our needs. This is the truth which David’s experience confirmed.

Finally, we have:

V. DAVID’S WORSHIP OF THE LORD (Psa. 40:5).

Even if you are not doing the memory work, these five verses are verses which all of us should know, and especially verse 5! (Read it.)

There are two things about the Lord that caused David to marvel:

- 1) His works, the things that He does.
- 2) The thoughts that He has for us. And we could add, the times that He thinks about us.

Neither can be counted. It is impossible for us to mention them all to the

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Lord so as to give Him the praise that He deserves for each good thing that He has done for each of us. The hymn writer who said, "Count your blessings, name them one by one," was asking us to do something which the Psalmist David *cannot be done!*

In my Psalm for yesterday, Psalm 68, I read again that wonderful nineteenth verse,

Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation (Psa. 68:19).

One of our problems is that we have many blessings which we receive from the Lord which we don't recognize as blessings. It is good to try to count them, but always remember that you overlook more than you can remember.

And, oh, how precious it is to realize that God doesn't just think about us when we pray, but He thinks about us all of the time. David wrote about this in Psalm 139:

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psa. 139:1-6).

And then after writing about the presence of the Lord, David said this:

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee (Psa. 139:17-18).

And then you will surely remember what the Lord told His people in the days of Jeremiah:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end (Jer. 29:11).

Concl: We can't God's works, nor can we count His thought toward us (because He is really thinking about us all of the time). But there is another thing that we can't count. Look at Psa. 40:12. And when you put our sins along side of God's works on our behalf and His thoughts toward us, the only way you can put them together is by the marvelous grace of God. And that grace was expressed in full when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to die for sinners like we are. Oh, how we should love the Lord, and how our lives each day should be filled with constant praise for Him for what He has done for us, and what He continues to do for us each day. We can never count all of our blessing, but we ought to continue trying to count them – and then to praise Him for all that we can remember.

GOD, OUR VERY PRESENT HELP

Psalm 46

Intro: This Psalm has long been a favorite of the people of God because of the encouragement which it gives to the Lord's people in any age. When and under what circumstances it was written, we do not know. Two ideas are prominent among expositors.

One is that it is a Psalm which commemorated the amazing deliverance of the people of Judah in the days of Hezekiah, when Judah was under attack from Sennacherib, the King of Assyria. He taunted Hezekiah and the people of Judah because of their faith in God, when other nations who trusted in their gods had fallen one by one under attack from the Assyrians. It was at that time that an angel of the Lord was sent to help Judah, and he killed 185,000 Assyrians. Following that, Sennacherib went home, and some time later he was worshipping his god when two of his sons killed him. The story is found in 2 Kings 18 and 19, as well as in Isaiah 36 and 37.

The other is that Psalm 46 was in celebration of the victory of Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat when Judah was threatened by the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Edomites. The account of that time of trial is found in 2 Chronicles 20. You may remember that at that time the singers went out ahead of the army, but the song they sang is given in part in 2 Chronicles 20:21, but it is different from the content of Psalm 46.

So we can't say for sure. It may have been at another time besides the two that most expositors have accepted, as I have explained. Derek Kidner was very wise when he said, "There is little to be gained by historical speculation" (p. 174).

One thing is certain. It was written to remember some great deliverance that God had given to His people. And it was to encourage the Lord's people in whatever day it was, to trust the Lord, and, of course, it would have had the same effect on all future generations of the Lord's people. God cares for His people, and it makes no difference how great the opposition might be, *the Lord is always sufficient for the needs of His people.*

The Psalm is divided for us into three parts by the use of what is believed to be a musical marking, the word *Selah*. You find it at the end of verse 3,

and again at the end of verse 7. Finally, it comes at the end of verse 11, the last verse in the Psalm.

— Verse 1 gives us the theme of the Psalm, and it is truly a glorious theme. The rest of that first section tells the effect that the truth of verse 1 had upon the people.

The second section of the Psalm (vv. 4-7) focuses attention on Jerusalem which ultimately was the objective of all of Judah's enemies. This section ends with what we can call *the refrain of the Psalm*, much like the chorus which follows the singing of the verses of many of our hymns. The refrain is, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

The third part of the Psalm is an invitation for all the people of God in whatever times they might live and face similar problems, to see what God has done in the past, and to know that He is the same God in the present. You will notice that in verse 10 God is speaking to His people, calling upon them to "know that He is God, and what His purposes are as far as the nations and the earth are concerned. The Psalm closes with the refrain.

— Notice that "God" is mentioned six times in the Psalm, and two of these are as "the God of Jacob." Twice the Psalmist refers to God as "the Lord of hosts." Also in verse 4 notice that God is called "the most High."

— This was Luther's favorite Psalm, and it was on this Psalm that he based his famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." We all should commit to memory the verses of his hymn while we are memorizing Psalm 46.

But now let us turn to the Psalm itself.

I. THE THEME OF THE PSALM (Psa. 46:1-3).

— Clearly it is "God" Who is the theme of this Psalm. This is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, the name by which we are introduced to Deity in the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God . . ." This is a name which emphasizes the power of God. He is the one supreme God, the God not only Who created the heavens and the earth, but the God Who controls it and sustains it. The -im ending suggests that there is more than One Person in the Godhead. We know from verse 2 of Genesis 1 that the Holy Spirit was active in creation. And from such a passage as we have at the beginning

Psalm 46 (3)

of John's Gospel, we know that nothing was made that the Lord Jesus Christ was not involved in it. And so it indicates that there is what we know from the rest of Scripture, a triune God – Three Persons yet one in nature. *It is this God Who is our refuge and strength, and it is not God plus anyone else, or anything else. God alone "is our refuge and strength." God alone is sufficient for His people. The emphasis here is probably on God the Father, but the same can be said of God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit.*

He is our place of refuge, our shelter from storms of every kind, our place of safety and protection. He is our defense.

But He is also our "strength." He is not only the mighty God Himself, but He is the One Who gives us strength. It is better to leave it like the Psalmist said it, that He is our strength. That is even more wonderful than just to be able to say that He gives us strength.

And the blessing of these statements is multiplied many times over when the Psalmist added, "a very present help in trouble." It wouldn't make any difference how great the Lord is if we couldn't find Him when we need Him. But He is "very present." What an unusual statement! It suggests not only that the Lord is with us, but that He is ready, He is eager, to meet our needs whatever they might be.

Notice that the Psalmist is speaking here in the first person plural – "our refuge and strength." And in verse 2, "Therefore will not we fear . . ." This applies to all of us, the youngest and the oldest, the strongest and the weakest – "our refuge and strength." And so we call all say the same thing, "Therefore will not we fear . . ."

But what does the Psalmist cite in verse 2. He is speaking of the worst thing that can happen to this world in which we live. "The earth be removed" suggests *a complete change*. And many feel that for the mountains to be carried into the midst of the sea" suggests a return to what the world was like in the early days of creation: the whole earth was covered with water.

The earth as it is gives us a great deal of peace. Just earthquakes cause everybody to be fearful, and in terrible earthquakes some people never get over their fear. That is what this makes this verse so amazing. Let the

worst happen to our world, God can keep His people in complete peace and calm.

The same idea continues in verse 3. The Psalmist was describing utter chaos throughout all of creation. When you put God over against all of this, we can see the greatness of our God, completely able to care for His people should the worst possible catastrophe arise. It seems incredible to draw such a word picture, and then to say that those who know our God, and who trust Him, shall be kept in peace in such circumstances.

It is no wonder that we have the word “Selah” at the end of verse 3.

But let us go on to the second stanza – verses 4-7.

II. “THE CITY OF GOD” (Psa. 46:4-7).

“The city of God” is God’s city. It belongs to Him. It is where He chose to place His Name. It was where He chose to manifest His presence. The enemies of Judah did not take this into consideration when they planned their attack against this city, hoping to destroy it altogether.

Here, instead of the raging sea, we find a quiet, flowing river, life-giving to the people. This brings joy to the people who live in the city. And as you go on into verse 5 you and I can see that the river is a picture of God. What water does for a people in a physical way, God does for His people in every way. This is what the Lord Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman about, the kind of water which, if she drank of it, she would never thirst again. That is, she would find her soul satisfied by drinking of the living water of life. God’s help is promised, “and that right early,” which means the first thing in the morning, when the light of day begins to dawn. It ties in with verse 1, that God is “a very present help in trouble.”

In spite of this the nations continue to set themselves against God, His people, and His purposes. The word “raged” here in verse 6 is the same verb which is translated “roar” in verse 3. Here it speaks of war, war against the people of God. It speaks of everything being in commotion.

And when the Psalmist said that “the kingdoms were moved,” he used the same verb that he did in verse 5 when he said of the city, “she shall not be moved.” The idea here is of *change*. The Psalmist is not thinking of those

— times when Judah displeased the Lord with her idolatry and disobedience, but he was thinking of the ultimate outcome of things. Men and nations direct all of their attention to this world, its territories, its riches, its resources, not knowing that some day this earth will melt away. This means that it will be consumed. It will disappear. There is a new heaven and a new earth in the plan of God where only righteousness will dwell. Psalm 2 is a good Psalm to read in this connection.

But why do the people of God have so much, while the people of the world really have nothing. Our refrain inverse 7 gives us the answer. (Read.)

“The Lord of hosts” speaks again of God’s power, and those forces which are under His direction. This would mean angels as well as men. “With us” means more than His presence. It means that He is on the side of His people, to take their part against any and all opposition.

— “The God of Jacob” – Often Jacob and Israel are used in the same statement, particularly in the prophets. “Jacob” was the same of Isaac’s younger son, and God changed his name to Israel. Jacob speaks of what he was by birth; Israel speaks of what he became by the grace of God. So for God to be still known as “the God of Jacob,” emphasizes His grace. And applying it to the nation, it shows that all of the blessings that God gave to the nation, or promised that they would have, was all by His grace. They proved again and again how unworthy they were of God’s blessing, but God would not forsake them, but would perfect them and be true to His promises which He had given to them.

“Refuge” in verses 7 and 11 are the same word, but different from the word in verse 1. In verses 7 and 11 it means a place of safety in a height that is inaccessible to anyone but the Lord’s people. The people of the world know nothing of the security and future that the people of God have.

Now for the last stanza where the emphasis is upon

III. THE WORKS OF THE LORD (Psa. 46:8-11).

— What God does for His people is meant to bring about an awakening in the hearts of men everywhere. Whether we are thinking about OT saints, or NT saints, the evidence of God’s blessing is clear. And it is God’s work

Psalm 46 (6)

in behalf of His people that the people of the earth, the nations, are called upon to see. But this is just where unregenerate people fail. They don't see God even in the weather. They don't see God's hand even in their own lives. President Clinton took credit the other night for our prosperity, when God is the One Whom we should praise. God's hand is seen in all of creation, but people are so spiritually blinded that they cannot see. But when God tells them to see, and they act on His Word, then they see, and their lives can be forever changed.

God is continually speaking through His providences.. The word "desolations" has to do not only with the judgments of God, but those works of God which will cause men to be amazed. And the Psalmist went on in verse 9 to speak of what He will do.

Look at verse 9. That which men have been trying to do, only God can do, and He will do it! But it won't be in this earth, but in the new earth.

In verse 10 God is speaking. He not only means that they are to be quiet and reflect upon what is evident of God's working in the world, but He meant for them to stop doing what they were doing, opposing the people of God, thinking that they would be successful in what they were trying to do.

Adam Clarke expressed it this way:

Cease from your provocations of the divine justice; cease from murmuring against the dispensations of his providence; cease from your labour for a season, that ye may deeply reflect on the severity and goodness of God-severity to those who are brought down and destroyed; goodness to you who are raised up and exalted: cease from sin and rebellion against your God; let that disgrace you no more, that we may no more be brought into distress and desolation.

The words of Psalm 2:10-12 run along the same line:

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

And John Calvin reminded us of Psalm 4:4:

Psalm 46 (7)

Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah (Psa. 4:4).

What a difference it can make in the lives of people when they stop fighting against God, and recognize that He is God, and that according to His Word He will ultimately claim the glory that men have denied Him from the beginning of time. No man has ever fought against God and won!

In this verse the Psalmist here is projecting himself to the final outcome of all things. Some day “every knee” will “bow” and “every tongue” will “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10 and 11).

(Read v. 10.)

The Psalm ends with the refrain we had in verse 7. (Read.)

Concl: What encouragement this Psalm should bring to all of us in these days when wrong seems to prevail, and God is set aside. No nation has ever done what we are doing, and survived. We take great pride in our economy, but the slide in the stock market the day after the President gave his state of the Union address, shows how quickly it can all change. And the President didn't tell the whole story the other night. He didn't say that we are a nation that has forgotten God, that we have set aside God's Word and are doing what we want to do. He did not point out that the problems we face today are largely because “God is not in all our thoughts.” We are riding high now, but woe to the nation that treats God and His Son Jesus Christ like we are treating them. And woe to the nation that refuses to go by the Word of God. It is “righteousness that exalts a nation,” and it is “sin that is a shame,” a disgrace, “to any people.” Our country needs Psa. 46:10, and we need it before it is too late.

But regardless of what our leaders do, by God's grace we can be different. And we must be different. Those of us who know the Lord need to be living to please Him. And if you do not know Him, know Him through faith in Jesus Christ, you can know Him today. You can know Him right now. Call upon Christ, repenting of your sins, and believe on Him for your salvation, and you will be saved. Then begin to live for Him, and that means to live in obedience to God's Word. May the Lord enable all of us to put Him first in our lives, that we may live for His glory.

THE REPENTANCE OF A KING

Psalm 51 – Part 1

Intro: The story behind this Psalm is well known. It is one of the saddest stories in Scripture. But it is in Scripture. Those of us who read our Bibles through each year, always come to this story, but it never is easy to read it. The story is found in 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

It is especially hard to read because of the way God Himself had characterized David. When Saul had sinned so foolishly in offering a burnt offering to the Lord, and therefore was to be removed as the King of Israel, this is what Samuel said to Saul. You will find these words in 1 Samuel 13:14,

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

This word was repeated by the Apostle Paul in Antioch of Pisidia when in the Jewish synagogue he preached Christ to them. This is what he said about David:

And when he had removed him [Saul], he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will (Acts 13:22)..

And for the greater part of his life David did the will of God.

But there was one place in David's life that he had not been obedient to the will of the Lord. He had six wives, and children were born to him from all six of his wives. But when the Lord had spoken to the children of Israel through Moses about the day in which He would give them a king, there were certain things that the king was not to do. One of these was that he was not to "multiply wives to himself." From creation on it was clear that God intended that a man should have only one wife. But David had disobeyed the Lord in this area of his life. And you will remember that his son Solomon did the same, and those wives led Solomon astray toward the end of his life. I have often wondered if the fact that David had all of those wives made him especially susceptible to the sin which he committed when he became involved with Uriah's wife. *It certainly is a lesson that all of us need to learn that we can't afford to be disobedient to the Lord in any area of our lives.*

Psalm 51 - Part 1 (2)

Another thing that we learn about David preceding the sin which he committed with the wife of Uriah was that it came at that time of the year when kings went out to battle. But instead of going himself, David sent Joab to lead the army, but he stayed in Jerusalem. It seems from this that David was not fulfilling his own responsibility toward his men at that time.

But another lesson for us to learn from that incident that it was while he was at home, walking on the roof of his house, that “he saw” Bathsheba, and that not only led to his sin with her, but in order to keep from being discovered, he had her husband placed in the most dangerous part of a battle so that he would be killed. And that is exactly what happened.

How careful we need to be about *what we see*. You will remember that what Eve saw was what led her to eat of the forbidden fruit. And it was what Achan *saw* that caused him to what God had told them to destroy in the battle against Jericho. The Apostle John tells us that we are not to love “the world, neither the things that are in the world.” And one of the things that he mentioned as a part of this evil world in which we live is “the lust of the eyes.” See 1 John 2:15-17.

There are pitfalls all along the way as we live in this world, and therefore how important it is that we be careful to have our hearts full of the Word, and that we do what the Lord wants us to do under all circumstances.

But this will be enough about the background of David’s sin. What we have in Psalm 51 is his confession. As we all can see, there are 19 verses in this Psalm. I personally like the way Franz Delitzsch divided the Psalm:

- 1) In verses 1-9 we have David’s prayer for forgiveness.
- 2) In verses 10-13 we have his plea for restoration.
- 3) In verses 14-17 his vows to the Lord.
- 4) In verses 18-19 his prayer for Jerusalem.

I am going to take the first nine verses today, and, the Lord willing, I will take the last ten verses next Lord’s Day.

Let us look then at verses 1 through 9.

When we get down to verse 16 next week we will see that there were no offerings that God had prescribed for those who intentionally committed

the sins which David had committed. If there had been, David would gladly have offered them to the Lord. But there were none. And so the only thing that David could do, he did! He cast himself upon:

I. THE MERCY OF GOD (Psa. 51:1-2).

All he could do was to cast himself upon God's mercy.

When he said (and it is significant that he said this at the beginning of his prayer), "Have mercy upon me, O God," he was humbling himself before his God, as many of David's subjects had humbled themselves before him. He was taking his rightful place as an inferior before One Who was infinitely superior to himself. He was setting aside his own glory as the king of Israel, which at this moment appeared to be nothing in the presence of his Lord and his God. His only hope was that God would extend mercy to him.

He was seeking God's favor when he rightly deserved God's judgment. David's prayer reveals how that temporary pleasure he had enjoyed with Bathsheba, had brought him to a place of the greatest misery because of what he had done. Actually he deserved to die, but his prayer was that somehow God would find it in His heart to extend mercy to him instead of what he really deserved.

This is the only way for any of us to look at sin, especially our sins. We deserve judgment, and nothing but judgment, but we have to cast ourselves upon the mercy of God. If it had not been for God's mercy, David would not have been saved, and neither would we be saved.

Paul, after describing our miserable condition because of our sin, as he wrote to the believers at Ephesus, went on to attribute our salvation to the mercy of God. I am sure you remember his words in Ephesians 2:4-5:

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).

David had the same Savior that we do. And it took the mercy of God to save him as it takes the same mercy to save us. And when we sin as His people, we are cast again upon God's mercy.

Psalm 51 - Part 1 (4)

When the Apostle John wrote about the confession of our sins in 1 John 1:9, this is what he said:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let me ask all of you a question that I have asked some of you before. It is this: To whom is God being “faithful and just” when He forgives our sins? Is He being faithful and just to us? Yes, but only because of the One Who is our Savior. So basically He is being “faithful and just” to His own Son Who shed His blood that we might be forgiven of our sins, not just those sins we had committed *before* we were saved, but also for those sins which we have committed *since* we were saved.

How thankful you and I should be that God is merciful, and that He can be merciful to us, as He was to David, because of Christ.

But what else did David say to God?

He pled God’s lovingkindness and the multitude of His tender mercies.

Those of you ladies who have listened to Carolyn’s tapes, have heard her talk about the Hebrew word, *chesed*. This is the word that is translated, “lovingkindness.” It speaks of God’s goodness, His kindness, His favor. God is merciful because He is good, kind, and favorably disposed to those of us who belong to Him. And he has an inexhaustible supply of “tender mercies.” This speaks of His compassion. David’s heart must have been broken anew as he pled with God, reminding himself of the loving God he had so grievously sinned against. The knowledge of God is meant to be a safeguard against sin.

We see that David’s hope for forgiveness was rooted in the very nature of God, and in all of the promises of redemption that God had already given up to the time when David lived.

But then we have the first of several words which David used to describe what he wanted God to do about his sins: “Blot out my transgressions.” He wanted God to erase even the record of his sin. “Blot out” is a good translation. But how amazing that David should make such a request. David would never forget what he had done, but he called upon God to erase the record and to forget his sin. All of this would be the work of God in His mercy.

David spoke of his sins as “transgressions,” and as “iniquity,” and as “sin.” These words show how deeply conscious he was of the true nature of what he had done. He made no attempt to hide the awfulness of his sin. His “transgressions” spoke of his rebellion against God in what he had done. By “iniquity” he meant that he had been perverse, turning from what was right and good in God’s sight, to that for which he fully deserved to be punished. And by “sin” he meant that which was evil in God’s sight. By combining all of these words he was identifying the true nature of what he had done. He fully admitted his guilt, and knew that he did not deserve what he was asking God to do for him.

David continued on with the idea of mercy in verse 2.

In the words “wash me” and “cleanse me” he was repeating his petition in verse 1 that his sins be *blotted out*. He was calling upon God to remove the contamination which sin had caused, and to make him clean and holy in God’s sight.

Beginning with verse 3 and going down through verse 6 we see:

II. WHAT DAVID HAD COME TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT HIS SIN (Psa. 51:3-6).

I think it is clear from these verses that David had seen sin more clearly than he possibly had ever seen it before. He had been a godly man, and knew many of the dangers that sin presented even to the people of God. But he made no attempt to hide from God what he had done. But perhaps he asked himself over and over again, “How could I ever have done such things, and displeased the Lord as I have?”

A. He “acknowledged” his sin” (v. 3).

As I listened to the little children in our group as they struggled to say, “acknowledged,” I wondered what that meant to them. And then I thought, what did it mean to David, and what should it mean to me? It means that he knew that he had sinned, he realized the seriousness of what he had done, and that unfortunately he understood by his own experience the terrible consequences of displeasing God. He must have felt in his heart his grief for having displeased the Lord. “My sin is ever before me.” Regardless of what he did, he could not forget his sins. And he admitted to what he had done.

B. He realized who had felt the effect of his sin the most (v. 4).

— David had sinned against Bathsheba, against her husband Uriah, against his own family, and against his people, the Israelites. But when he saw how dreadful his sin was, he knew that the One against Whom he had sinned the most, was the Lord. And it pressed upon his heart to such a degree that it was just like he had not sinned against anyone else. He knew that he had not only sinned against the Lord, but even while the Lord was looking on, seeing what he was doing. He knew that he could not hide a single thing from the Lord, not even his thoughts.

How important it is for us to learn this simple lesson! And this truth about God is meant also to be a deterrent to keep us from sinning. When the children of Israel murmured against him, that is, Moses, Moses reminded the people that they were murmuring against the Lord, and that the Lord had heard their murmurings. Cf. Ex. 16:8. This is one of the most important lessons that every child of God needs to learn.

When Solomon was warning his son about getting involved with “a strange woman,” he added this:

— For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth [weighs carefully] all his goings (Prov. 5:21).

Solomon also wrote in Prov. 15:3, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.”

In the latter part of verse 4 David recognized that God was right in what He had revealed about the nature of sin, and that He was perfectly right in judging sin and the sinner. Unfortunately sometimes we have to learn these truths as a result of our own sinning against the Lord. David sought forgiveness and cleansing, but he knew that God would be justified in bringing judgment upon him.

C. He understood that he had been born a sinner (v. 5).

— This is a truth that none of us can afford to overlook. Regardless of what progress we may have made as the children of God, we all still have our sin nature, and are always capable of yielding to the temptation to sin. And this applies to what we do, what we say, and what we think. The word “behold” indicates that this had taken on new meaning for David. Perhaps he was relying on his knowledge of God and God’s Word, or

Psalm 51 - Part 1 (7)

upon past blessings that the Lord had given to him, and so his guard was down, and he fell when temptation came his way. We can thank God that we are not what we might have been, but we must always remember that we can never trust our flesh.

This is what Adam Clarke said in his commentary about verse 5:

I believe David to speak here of what is commonly called original sin; the propensity to evil which every man brings into the world with him, and which is the fruitful source whence all transgression proceeds.

And Matthew Henry said this:

Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness of evil and backwardness to good which is the burden of the regenerate and the ruin of the unregenerate; it is a bent to backslide from God.

A prayer that Luther used to pray before going to sleep at night was this:

When our eyes with sleep are girt,
Be our hearts to Thee alert;
Shield us, Lord, with Thy right arm,
Save us from sin's dreadful harm.

I have time for just one more point today.

D. David was made to realize his need of the Word in his heart (v. 6).

Do you think that David was here confessing that he had grown careless about getting the truth into his “inward parts.” Probably David was the one who wrote Psalm 119. If so, then he is the one who was directed by the Holy Spirit to tell what his habit was. It is found in verse 11 of that great Psalm:

Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.

Psalm 51 - Part 1 (8)

I referred a few minutes ago to what Moses said about what the King should not do. But Moses said also what the King was to do, and it had reference to the Word of God. This is what Moses told the people about their King and his relationship with the Word of God:

18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel (Deut. 17:18-20).

Did David mean by his words in Psa. 51:6 that of late he had become careless about reading the Word, and careless about what he needed to learn from the Word? Perhaps was there pride in his heart that he did not need the Word like his people did? Was he not paying attention to the commandments of Scripture the way he needed to? His sins were in violation of commandments #7 and #8 in the ten commandments – not to murder, and not to commit adultery.

Even the most mature among us must not neglect the Word for a single day, nor should we fail to read applying what we read to our own hearts, and then turning what we read into fervent prayer.

Concl: This Psalm is so full of truth for all of us that we must not hurry through it. Let us remember that the Lord did not have David write out his confession because he wanted to expose David, and bring even greater humiliation upon him. Paul said in Romans 15:4,
For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

So our objective in memorizing Psalm 51 should be to learn from David's sin that we might be kept from sinning against the Lord in our lives today. *So let us notice carefully every word that David wrote that we might be kept from making the mistakes which he seems to have made, so that by the grace of God we may be kept from sin today.* (Close by mentioning Dr. Ironside's prayer about getting to heaven.)

A PLEA FOR CLEANSING AND RESTORATION

Psalm 51 – Part 2

Intro: For those of you who were not here last Sunday morning, and who may not be familiar with the background of Psalm 51, let me repeat with real sorrow in my heart, that David was confessing two sins which he had committed. One was adultery; the other was murder.

It really seems inconceivable that a godly man like David could be guilty of such sins, but the sad fact is, that he was. The sad story is given to us in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. However, anyone reading Psalm 51 would have to be hardhearted not to think that David's confession was from his heart. He knew that the only claim that he had upon God was with God's loving kindness and tender mercies. He deserved the harshest judgment, but he sought the greatest of God's mercies. And he knew that only God could cleanse him from the stain that was upon his heart because of what he had done.

In the first six verses which we covered last Sunday, we saw that David had either learned some great truths for the first time, or, what is more likely, he was impressed with truths that he had known in a way that was greater than he had experienced before.

One was that he could not get away from what he had done. He told the Lord, "My sin is ever before me." It was several months after he had sinned that he finally confessed them. But every day they were right there before him. And it had been deeply impressed upon his heart that the One against Whom He had sinned the most was the Lord. He had sinned against others, and he knew it. But the fact that his sin was against his God, grieved him the most.

And when he must have asked himself a thousand times, "Why did I do it?", he was brought back to a truth which he surely had known, and that was that he had been born with a sin nature, and although he had been redeemed by the grace of God, he still had that nature and he was still very capable of the most grievous sins. You see that in verse 5.

And then moving on to verse 6 he declared another truth which he surely knew, and that was that the truth of God needed to be in his heart, guarding him from sin and strengthening him to do the will of God. David was

probably the one who had written, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psa. 119:11). If he didn’t write it, he surely knew it.

Verse 6 seems to be a confession that he had grown careless about possibly reading the Word, and surely about meditating upon the Word. David teaches us on this point how important it is for all of us to be, not just reading the Word each day, but *feeding upon the Word!*

We are inclined to think of some of the Lord’s people in Scripture as totally invincible, or almost beyond such sins. But we have the experiences of David in the OT and Peter in the NT to remind us that sin is always a possibility with any of us.

These were great truths, very great truths, which David recount in his prayer, and which we find in verse 3, 4, 5, and 6. As I said last Sunday, the account of David’s sins, and his confession, are not here because God wanted to expose him, but they are here to warn us! And it is not just to warn us against David’s sins, although they are that kind of a warning, but they are a warning to us against all sin. In the words of Hebrews 12:1, they warn us against “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” If the Lord were to take away His restraining hand from us for a moment, there is no way to tell what any of us might do. David’s prayer contain a message which all of us need to understand. All need the kind of wisdom which is found only in God’s Word.

Today we want to move on to verse 7, and I trust that the Lord will enable me to get down through verse 12.

Verse 7 and verse 9 continue the plea that David first mentioned in verse 2. So let us call these verses, including verse 8, as:

I. DAVID’S PLEA FOR CLEANSING (Psalm 51:7-9).

To be purged is to be cleansed. And when David said “purge me with hyssop, he had in mind the ceremony that was required when a leper had been healed of his leprosy. This was a small plant which was used for medicine as well as for ceremonial cleansing according to the Law. And we know that all of the OT sacrifices and ceremonial cleansings from sin looked ahead to the greatest of all sacrifices, the sacrifice of God’s Son,

Psalm 51 - Part 2 (3)

the Lord Jesus Christ, on Calvary's Cross. Without the shedding of blood we are told in Hebrews 9:22, "there is no remission." There is no forgiveness of sins. Robert Lowry wrote the words and music of that great Gospel song, "What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." And in the chorus of that song which he wrote, he must have had this seventh verse of Psalm 51 in mind because this is how the chorus reads:

O precious is the flow, That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

We can't get rid of the penalty of our sins by our remorse, nor by trying to do better in the future. It is not by going to church. Money cannot buy the forgiveness and cleansing that we all need because of our sins. It is only by the blood of Christ that was shed on the Cross, by the death He died taking the penalty that we should have had, that God can righteously forgive us of your sins. But when He cleanses us, then in His presence we are "whiter than snow." That is grace, isn't it? The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son," God's eternal Son, "cleanseth us from all sin." And there is no other way that our sins can be forgiven.

In verse 8 we see that while sin may produce a kind of pleasure for a time, yet that is only a false front to entice us into sinning. Sin produces grief and pain. And as long as sin goes unforgiven, the pain increases. David had not heard joy or gladness since the day of his sinning. He longed for that peace and quietness of heart which his sins had taken away. To describe how he felt he likened it to the breaking of his bones. In other words, his sin had taken a dreadful toll on him physically. The cost of his sin was greater than he could bear. David knew that he could not have peace in his heart as long as his sins were unforgiven by God. And so he renewed his plea in verse 9.

While David was sinning, and afterwards when he tried to cover up his sins, he was unaware that God saw everything that he had done. But he knew it afterwards, and that is what gave him such great distress. David's prayer teaches us that it is when we begin to see how our sin appears to God, and how it grieves Him, that we are beginning to understand the awfulness of our sins, whatever they may be. We may have attitudes that are displeasing to God. We may be holding a grudge against someone. And we continue on content that we are keeping our feelings to ourselves. But then we realize that even our innermost thoughts are fully known to

Psalm 51 - Part 2 (4)

God, and only His forgiveness can take them away. How wonderful it is when God blots out our sins, but remember that it is always through Christ and the sacrifice He made for our sins.

But there is one point about David's prayer in Psalm 51 that we must not miss. It is this: *David not only wanted to be forgiven, but he wanted to be restored! He desperately wanted to get back with the Lord where he had been before.*

It is illustrated by the way David later treated Absalom. Absalom had killed Amnon because Amnon had violated his sister. And so, although David longed for Absalom, Absalom was away for three years. Finally, when David did allow him to come back to Jerusalem, David refused to see Absalom. And this estrangement lasted for another two years. We read in 2 Samuel 14:28,

So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

David seemed to have forgiven him, but he did not restore him. And even though Absalom proved to be very unworthy even of forgiveness, he was not satisfied until, as we read in 2 Samuel 14:33, "He came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom." He wanted to be restored!

This is what David longed for. He wanted to be forgiven, but forgiveness alone, as marvelous as that was, was not enough. He wanted to be restored, not in his sin, but transformed from what he had been into the man that God intended for him to be. David was still "a man after God's heart."

In verses 10-12 David asked the Lord to do six things for him which together added up to full restoration.

II. DAVID'S PLEA FOR RESTORATION (Psalm 51:10-12).

Notice what the six requests are.

A. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (v. 10a).

The verb "create" is the same verb that is used in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is the way the

Psalm 51 - Part 2 (5)

Apostle Paul spoke about salvation. It means becoming “a new creature,” or better, *a new creation*. I am not saying that David was asking the Lord to save him. He was already saved. But he was saying that he wanted to be restored to that relationship with the Lord that he had before he had sinned so grievously against the Lord. What David needed in his heart was a work that was just as impossible for him to do as if he had been asked to create a universe! And so he was calling upon God to make him like he had been before.

What was his second request?

B. “And renew a right spirit within me” (v. 10b).

This word “renew” is the word that is used in 2 Chron. 24:4 and 12 where how Joash had in his mind that he wanted to “repair the house of God.” So here David was recognizing his need to be repaired, and to have his relationship with God repaired. He longed for that sweet fellowship with the Lord that he had enjoyed in the past. And this would require “a right spirit.” The NKJ translates that as “a steadfast spirit.” The same is true of the NASB. To be steadfast is to be unchanging, not strong one day and weak the next. David needed some repair work in his spirit so that he would not fail in times of temptation.

Adam Clarke said in his commentary that this means David wanted to give himself up cheerfully to the Lord so that he would no longer be “bound and degraded by the sinfulness of sin.”

What was his third request?

C. “Cast me not away from Thy presence” (v. 11a).

David knew what he deserved. He knew that the Lord would have been justified in not having anything more to do with him after all that he had done. David is the one who wrote,

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:11).

And David would have agreed with Asaph who wrote:

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee (Psa. 73:25).

David probably could think of nothing worse than for him to be cast forever from the presence of the One with Whom he had walked for so many years, and with Whom he had enjoyed such wonderful fellowship.

What was David's fourth request?

D. "And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (v. 11b).

David must have remembered those ominous words which were spoken of Saul in the day when Samuel anointed him, David, as King over Israel. The words are found in 1 Sam 16:13-14:

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

If the anointing of the Spirit of God was removed from Saul because of what he did, then there was surely the possibility that the Lord would remove David from the throne because of what he had done. And so David was pleading with God not to remove him from his appointed position of service.

Then came request #5.

E. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (v. 12a).

Sins can be forgiven without the joy of salvation being restored. David earnestly desired both. After all, the joy of the Lord is our strength, as we are told in Nehemiah 8:10. It is sin which robs us of the joy of the Lord. David had known the joy of the Lord in past days, but through his sin he had lost it. Only the Lord could restore it to him.

It was probably in earlier days that David had penned the word found at the beginning of Psalm 21:

1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips (Psa. 21:1-2).

How tragic it is to be saved, and yet not to be enjoying that salvation.

The last of the six requests is:

F. “And uphold me with Thy free spirit” (v. 12b).

By the word “uphold,” David was looking for support. He was looking for the spiritual strength that he was lacking when he committed the sins which were now such a grief to the Lord and to himself. “Free” means *a willing spirit, a heart inclined toward God and His will*. David understood the truth expressed many years later by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Philippi when he wrote,

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

David came out of this tragic experience more conscious of his dependence upon the Lord than he had ever been before.

Concl: This is a very wonderful prayer although the circumstances which led up to it are among the worst in Scripture. It is very clear in the Psalm that David had learned, or learned in a deeper way the truths which we all as the Lord’s people need to know. How tragic it is that there have been those who have used David’s sin as an excuse for their own sin! It must be doubted if people like that, usually men, know what salvation really is. This Psalm was written so that we would learn from David’s experience what we need from the Lord to keep us from David’s sins, and from every other sin regardless of what it might be. It is a good Psalm for us to memorize, and then to meditate often on it, that we might be kept from sin and be enabled to live lives that will glorify God, lives that will not leave us with the kind of regrets which David must have carried with him to his grave. God forgives and forgets. We can know the joy of forgiveness, but we remember our sins so that we will not repeat them again.

I often remember what Dr. Ironside said was the daily prayer of his heart: “Father, let me get home to glory without bringing dishonor upon your holy Name.” Let that be our prayer as well.

A KING'S VOWS AND FINAL PRAYER

Psalm 51 – Part 3 (Final)

Intro: We have spent two Sunday on Psalm 51, and I hope, the Lord willing to complete our study of this Psalm today. We have gotten down to verse 13 where King David began to make some vows to the Lord, and where at the conclusion of the Psalm we have his final prayer.

As we have seen this is David's Psalm in which he confessed the sins by which he had grieved the Lord so greatly, and by which he had brought shame upon his own name. His sins were even worse because of who he was, the King of Israel. Leaders always bear a greater responsibility because they are supposed to be examples to those who are under them. And so, as I have pointed out, David had not only sinned against Bathsheba and her husband, but he had sinned terribly against the people over whom the Lord had made him King. But it is obvious in the Psalm that he did not take his guilt lightly. He was deeply humbled over what he had done, and he could only plead the Lord's lovingkindness and His tender mercies, as we have seen in verse 1.

We saw last week in the middle section of the Psalm, that David not only wanted to be completely cleansed from his sins, but he also wanted to be restored. He not only sought forgiveness, but a return to the blessing and favor of God which he had enjoyed before he sinned. So in verses 10 through 12 he asked the Lord to do six things for him, and all of these amounted to restoration.

Verse 13 with which we begin today starts with the word, "Then." This meant that if the Lord would graciously do what David had asked Him to do, "then" David would do what he said he would do here. It was not that David was bargaining with the Lord, but he knew that if the Lord did not forgive and restore him, he would not be able to do what he promised, or vowed here in verse 13, that he would do.

And so in verse 13 we have:

I. DAVID'S FIRST VOW (Psalm 51:13).

Transgressors and sinners are not two kinds of people, but they are two names often for the same person who is guilty of doing that which is dis-

Psalm 51:13-19 (2)

pleasing to God. David had referred to himself using both of these terms right here in this Psalm. See verses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9. A “transgressor” is one who in his behavior has broken away from God by rebelling against God. He may not be instructed in the truth of God’s Word, but he knows in the depth of his heart when he has done the wrong thing. He may not always recognize it as rebellion against God, but that is what it is.

A “sinner,” on the other hand, is one who has missed the mark for which he was brought into this world. The word sinner points to the fact that we are creatures of God, and that we were made to glorify Him, not to grieve Him and offend Him with that which is displeasing to Him.

So in general terms both are words which indicate that people are guilty before God, the emphasis in the one is that is a transgressor is that he has done that which is displeasing to God; the sinner is one who has failed to do that which pleases God.

David in his own sin knew that he would not have the Lord’s blessing while he was still defiled by his sin, but he also knew that if he were forgiven he would not only want to warn others about transgressions and sins, but that if he did, he knew that he could expect to see many to whom he spoke, turn from their sins and turn to the Lord.

David was recognizing here a very important truth. It is that if we expect to serve the Lord with his blessing, we ourselves must be cleansed from sin. Holiness of life is the great prerequisite for effective and fruitful service. Tonight we are going to observe the Lord’s Supper after Mr John Seavey ministers the Word to us. And one of the purposes of the Lord’s Supper is that we will take the time to look into our own hearts to make sure that we are not guilty of displeasing the Lord. And if we are, those sins need to be confessed to the Lord and forsaken before we partake of the Lord’s Supper. Remember what Solomon said about this:

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy (Prov. 28:13).

What did David mean when he said that he would “teach transgressors Thy ways,” speaking of the Lord’s ways. He meant that he would teach them how sins are forgiven, or, on the other hand, he would teach them what happens to a person who does not seek forgiveness.

I believe that when he spoke of those who were “transgressors” and “sinners,” he was not speaking primarily of believers, but of those who had never known the Lord and who lived as transgressors and sinners. David was guilty of transgressions and sins, but he did not live that way. No true believer can live in sin. We may fall into sin, but we don’t live that way. The person who lives in sin has never known the grace of God in salvation. But as David looked out upon the world and saw people who were living as transgressors and sinners, his heart was moved with compassion toward them, and he wanted to teach them what they obviously did not know – or they wouldn’t be doing what they were doing.

What are the ways of God with transgressors and sinners?

They are twofold in the sense that transgressors and sinners have only two choices: either to continue in their sins and face the judgment of God, or to turn from their sins to seek cleansing and forgiveness from God. And David would have told them about the promised Redeemer Who was coming to die for sinners and through Whom they could be forgiven. And David would tell them that was the only way of forgiveness. On the other hand, to continue on in sin would mean ultimately to face the eternal judgment of God.

When we know God’s forgiveness through Christ, it ought to give us a greater burden to carry the message of salvation to those who are still in their sins.

And so once again David pled with the Lord for forgiveness. This time it was:

II. A PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM BLOODGUILTINESS (Psalm 51:14a).

Here David must have been thinking about Uriah whom David had asked Joab to put in the front lines of battle where he would most certainly be killed. And all of this was done by David in an attempt to cover up what he had done. He may have felt that Uriah’s blood, like that of Abel, was crying out from the ground for vengeance. Here David comes the closest in all of the Psalm to naming what his sin had been. He knew only God could hold back judgment, and that if He did, it would only be through His grace and mercy. And notice that David called upon God as the God

of his salvation. His only hope was in the Lord.

So this led to:

III. DAVID'S SECOND VOW (Psalm 51:14b-15).

This was a vow to praise the Lord. "My tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness." And he added to this the petition, "Open Thou my lips" followed by the promise, the vow, "And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise."

How could David possibly claim that the Lord would be manifesting His righteousness if He were to forgive David for what He had done?

Paul had not yet written those words which we find in Romans and in 1 Corinthians, but David evidently understood much about their truth. I am speaking of Paul's words in Romans 3:24-26:

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

David knew that it would take more than the blood of bulls and goats or lambs to take away his sins. His bloodguiltiness could only be removed by the shedding of the blood of the promised Messiah. He wrote in Psalm 17:15,

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

The other verse which Paul wrote to which I was referring, is 2 Cor. 5:21:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Then David spoke of:

IV. THE SACRIFICES OF GOD (Psalm 51:16-17).

Psalm 51:13-19 (5)

Do you suppose that David got out the Law which he was supposed to have been reading every day, and of which he was supposed to have written his own copy, to see what it said about the sins that he had committed? Or did he just remember that there was no offering that was acceptable for adultery, and no offering that would cover murder. Instead, he would have found that the penalty for both of these sins was death! Cf. Lev. 20:10 and Genesis 9:6.

But what was God looking for?

Verse 17 of Psalm 51 gives us our answer. (Read.) There is no sacrifice that David could bring to make an atonement for what he had done. What he was to do was to offer the sacrifice of “a broken and a contrite heart” David was sure that God would not despise. This is true repentance, and nothing short of this can be considered true repentance. Repentance means that there is deep sorrow, deep regret, for the sins that have been committed, coupled with the intention that by the grace of God those sins would never be repeated. And that, by the grace of God, all sin would be forsaken. “Broken” means *broken in pieces, crushed*. “Contrite” means basically the same thing. David felt the deepest remorse for the sins he had committed, and he turned to the Lord knowing that he had only God’s mercy and grace as his hope.

We may not have committed the sins which David committed, but all of us are sinners nevertheless. And our sins regardless of what they are, are abominable in God’s sight, and for them we deserve to die. Have we been crushed by our sins? Have we shed tears over the ways we have displeased God, or over our failure to do what has been acceptable to Him?

Horatius Bonar has expressed what David was faced with, and what all of us face because of our sins until we find forgiveness and peace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died to save sinners from their sins. This is what Bonar wrote, and it is in our Hymnal, #403:

Not what my hands have done, Can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne Can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do Can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears Can bear my awful load.

Psalm 51:13-19 (6)

Thy work alone, O Christ, Can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, Can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, Not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, And set my spirit free.

The forgiveness of our sins and the cleansing that we have in Christ, is something to sing about, isn't it? How thankful we can be that it is in righteousness that we are forgiven because the penalty for our sins has fallen on Christ.

And we know that while the effects of David's sin remained, and even though he was to suffer the consequences of what he had done, yet he was forgiven! And the rest of his life was spent in fulfilling the vows which he made to the Lord in this prayer and psalm.

The last two verses of the Psalm give us:

V. DAVID'S CLOSING PRAYER (Psalm 51:18-19).

Various attempts have been made to say that the last two indicate that this is not David's Psalm at all, but that it was written by someone else at the time of the captivity when the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. Adam Clarke believed that these last two verses made up a Psalm by themselves, and were absorbed by Psalm 51.

But I personally am inclined to believe that they belong where they are. David's sins could have had disastrous effects upon the nation of which he was the King. And the nation did suffer under the rebellion set in motion by David's son, Absalom. And so it seems to me that David was here praying here for his people, that the Lord would build a fortress about them, to keep them from sin and the effects of sin, so that through His good pleasure upon them they might be a people who would walk with the Lord, and whose sacrifices, offered in faith, would bring pleasure and glory to the heart of God.

Concl: The Lord Jesus taught us while He was here on earth to pray that we would be delivered even from the temptation that can lead to sin. Satan accused God of having built a hedge around Job. The Lord does safeguard us from sin and the Evil One. And among the very best things that God does for us is to restrain us from sin and to preserve us

Psalm 51:13-19 (7)

from all that the Enemy would do to us if he could. So we must never play with sin, but must by God's grace live each day trusting the Lord, and seeking always to please Him, in what we do, where we go, what we say, and even in the thoughts that we think. Obedience to the Lord is our greatest need, and our surest safeguard against sin in all of its many forms.

DAVID, BETRAYED BY A FRIEND

Psalm 55:22

Intro: The verse in this Psalm that many of us have memorized is verse 22. I am sure that this is a verse which most of us have read with real thanksgiving, especially when we have been going through a trial of some kind. I personally memorized it many years ago, and I have always been inclined to link it with 1 Peter 5:7 where the Apostle Peter wrote: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” Verses like these can be a great encouragement to us, knowing that the Lord is aware of what we are experiencing, that He is concerned, and that He will help us.

But, as you have heard me say many times before, any verse means more if, instead of lifting it out and examining it by itself, we look at the setting in which we find it and learn all that we can about the circumstances which led the writer to express such a truth.

The heading tells us that this was one of David’s Psalms. The circumstances which David described in this Psalm fit into that period of his life, following his sins which he so deeply regretted, and which he confessed in the Psalm which we have been studying the past three Sundays, Psalm 51. David’s own son Absalom engineered a rebellion against him, with the intention that he would become the king of Israel in place of his father. This was the worst time in David’s life, worse than all of the wars he had been involved in before, because his son was his enemy, and Absalom had been joined in the rebellion by David’s dear friend and trusted advisor, Ahithophel.

Ahithophel is mentioned in two Old Testament books: 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. He is called in 2 Samuel 23:34, “Ahithophel the Gilonite.” This is because he was from the village Giloh, which was located in the hill country of Judah. It is mentioned in Joshua 15:51 as one of the towns that was given to the tribe of Judah when the land was divided among the twelve tribes. In 1 Chronicles 27:33 he was called, “the king’s counsellor.” David trusted him. He was actually more than just David’s counsellor; he was David’s friend. Notice what David said about him in verses 12 through 14. It seems that there was no one closer to David in all the kingdom than Ahithophel. When a friend like Ahithophel betrays you, the effect is worse than everything else that might be going on. There is no doubt but that it was the worst trial of David’s life.

I can't help but relate this to what our Lord experienced when Judas was the one who betrayed the Lord. We must remember that although the Lord was God, He was also a Man. And Heb. 2:17-18 tells us a little of what it meant that our Lord was a Man.

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

But one of the most touching scenes in all of Scripture is when the Lord spoke to Judas when Judas came with the mob to arrest the Lord. The Lord had just returned to Peter, James, and John, and had said to them, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me." Let me read to you what followed according to Matt. 26:47-50:

47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

Then this is the part that I had reference to:

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?

Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

What do you see in those words? Unless I am very mistaken (but I don't think I am), the same emotions were going through our Lord's heart that David had experienced a thousand years before when he heard that Ahithophel had joined Absalom in his rebellion.

Now let us look at Psalm 55 to see how David expressed himself.

In the first 7 verses we have:

I. DAVID'S FEAR OF DEATH (Psa. 55:1-7).

This Psalm is a prayer. David was under what one writer called, an "intolerable strain" (Kidner, I, 199). The rebellion was so well organized and so strong, that David could not see how it could fail. He probably had never gone through such a time as this in his entire life. Humanly

speaking, everything looked hopeless. All that he knew to do was to flee.

But let me say a word on David's behalf here. He was a man of war. He had faced death on numerous occasions. He knew the Lord, and he knew where he was going when he died. So he was not afraid of death. What was of concern to him was the kingdom. He was concerned about his people and what it would mean for him to be overthrown.

Last week we saw at the end of Psalm 51 his concern for Jerusalem. He was troubled by what his sins could mean for the people over whom he reigned. And his parting thoughts in his prayer of confession was for his people, who were really the people of God. Of course he fled from Jerusalem to save his own life. But his concern was for the people, the people of God. And that accounts for the severity of the requests that he brought to the Lord in the second part of the Psalm.

Here in verses 8 through 15 we see two things:

II. DAVID'S PETITIONS AND HIS SPECIAL GRIEF (Psa. 55: 8-15).

Note his emphasis upon "the city" in verse 9, upon "the walls" in verse 10, and upon "the streets" in verse 11, and upon "their dwellings" in verse 15.

He knew that the people who were in rebellion against him had been deceived by Absalom and Ahithophel, but he saw what the people did not see. He saw that what they were doing would ultimately mean the destruction of the city from within. And the greatest grief of all was that his own very close and familiar friend, had turned against him. David knew that Absalom has the advantage with Ahithophel on his side because of the wise counsel that Ahithophel would give him

Notice how David described Ahithophel in verses 12-14 without mentioning his name. (Read.)

It seemed incredible to David that one who had been so close to him even in the things of the Lord, could have turned so quickly to be his enemy.

And so we have David's petition in verse 15. Later when David knew

that Absalom was in danger, he instructed his men to spare him, but here in verse 15 he called upon God to judge the rebellious ones because what they were doing was wicked in God's sight.

We need to be reminded here that God is the One Who sets men up in places of authority, and He is the One Who removes them when His time to do so has come. But when men try to remove the king, this is an act of rebellion against God. We need to remember how consistently David refused to kill Saul because he was the Lord's anointed in the Lord's appointed place.

Next we see:

III. DAVID'S CONFIDENCE IN GOD (Psa. 55:16-19a).

David preferred to leave himself in the Lord's hands. Nevertheless he gave himself to special times of prayer with the confidence in his heart that as the Lord had heard and answered many times before, so he would trust the Lord to hear him and deliver him in the present trials he was facing.

This is truly a wonderful part of the Psalm. *New trials call for special prayer.* We know that God will always be faithful, but that does not excuse us from the need and the responsibility to pray. One of the reasons for our trials is that the Lord is seeking to draw us even closer to Himself, and to make us realize in deeper ways how dependent we are upon Him.

At this point I want to take the time to read portions of 2 Samuel 15 and 16 and 17 so we can see what the outcome was as far as Ahithophel was concerned. Many of you will remember this story, but we all need to be reminded of the details.

Please turn with me to 2 Samuel 15, and I will read to you verse 30 to the end of the chapter. (Read.)

Now look on into chapter 16, and verse 15, and I will read to the end of this chapter. (Read.). And then read 2 Samuel 17:1-14, concluding with verse 23. (Read.)

And so we see that Ahithophel died by his own hands. He evidently had

been a hypocrite with David although David counted him as a true friend. But we see what can happen to a man when he sets himself against the will of God. Absalom also met death, but that is another story.

Returning to our Psalm, and picking up David's account with verse 19b, we have:

IV. DAVID'S DESCRIPTION OF AHITHOPHEL (Psa. 55:19b-21).

None of us likes trials. We would rather have things run smoothly all through our lives. But that was one of Ahithophel's main problems, although he didn't know it. Life had been very easy for him, so he felt that he had no reason to fear God. He put forth his hand against David who was at peace with him. He was disloyal to the agreement he had to be David's counselor and friend. And he succeeded in deceiving David with his sweet words, but in his heart he had always been David's enemy, just waiting for the opportunity to do him in. *C.F. Prov. 26: 23-28.*

Verse 19 is a verse that describes our country today. Everything is going so well that we think we have no reason to fear God, that is, to do His will and to trust Him. David, however, did not fall into that category. He had lived a life of trials, and he knew how much he needed the Lord. His sins had emphasized to himself his need of the Lord. So although we don't seek trials and troubles, and often complain and chafe under them, yet it is in the difficult places that we see our need of the Lord, and turn to Him in prayer and in faith.

The Psalm ends with:

V. A MESSAGE, A PRAYER, AND A VOW (Psa. 55:22-23).

A. The message (v. 22).

Do you remember the verse of poetry that goes like this:

Bear not a single care thyself,
One is too much for thee.
The work is mine, and mine alone;
Thy work, to rest in Me.

It is not just the big burdens that we need to give to the Lord, but every

burden. Often what we call the little trials make it harder for us to trust the Lord than the big ones – because we feel that we can handle the little ones. But without making any distinction David said that we are to “cast” our burdens upon the LORD. This means to throw it on the Lord just like you would throw something away. You are not throwing it away, but you are giving it to Him. And we are so constituted that we usually have to give it to Him more than once because we give it to Him, and then we take it back.

This is the same word that David used in Psa. 51:11 which we have just concluded, when he said, “Cast me not away from thy presence.” David did not want to be a castaway, but he had learned that the only thing to do with our burdens is to give them to the Lord. So he knew what he was talking about.

The word for “burden” is a very interesting and a very wonderful word. It means *that which is assigned to you*. Who does the assigning? God does! David was here talking about *the providence of God*. This meant that Absalom was not in control (although he was responsible for what he did). Nor was Ahithophel in control (although he was responsible for turning traitor to David). But it meant that God was in control. When you and I think of David *walking* away in shame from Jerusalem, it should remind us of our first memory verses for this year: Psalm 37: 23-24:

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

But David here gave two promises. First, not that the Lord does away with the burden until He is ready to, but that “He will sustain thee.”

What does “sustain” mean?

It means that He will keep you and make every provision for you to go through the trial. This is the promise of His grace which is always sufficient for the needs of His people.

What is the last promise? That “He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” So this is a promise for the Lord’s people. And it means that He

will not allow anything to move us out of the course that He has planned for us. It often looks like people have more influence on what happens to us than the Lord does. That is because we can see people, but we can't see the Lord. But the Lord is always on the job, watching out for us, meeting our needs, and, as Paul would teach us later, *working all things together for our good*, so that instead of being hurt, we are being helped along the way to become more like our precious Savior.

I trust that all of us will not only remember this verse, and memorize it if you don't know it, but let's make sure that we obey it, and believe it. That is where we will find our peace – keeping our eyes on the Lord and His Word.

B. The prayer (v. 23a).

Sometimes when we pray it is good for us, not to ask the Lord to do something for us, but to tell the Lord what we know He will do for us. David knew from the beginning of the trouble that Absalom and Ahithophel were on the losing side.

C. The vow (v. 23b).

Remember that David was still in the middle of the problem when he wrote these words. But there was no doubt in his mind as to what he would do: "But I will trust in the Lord." This is what the Lord is waiting to hear from everyone of us.

Concl: We all have our problems. We may have some Absaloms and some Ahithophels in our lives. But whatever the Lord has assigned to us, let us cast it upon the Lord, believe that He will do what He has promised to do, and then let us tell Him continually, "But I will trust in Thee." That is why we have our trials, to draw us closer to the Lord, and to help us to see how much we need to trust the Lord every day that we live.