

THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF THE LORD
Psalm 51:1

Intro: Sin is a word which has practically vanished from the vocabulary of the average person today. We will talk about our weaknesses, our faults, our failures, but we carefully avoid any reference to sin. The things which the Bible speaks of as sin are not called sin anymore. In fact, sometimes they are strongly defended, even supported and encouraged.

The same is true of righteousness. Right and wrong are relative terms. It is up to each person to decide what is proper for him to do. And as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others, it is OK for us to do whatever we want to do.

The reason that this is true is because God is not in our thoughts. The only way in which there can be a proper definition of sin is in the light of the character of God. That which displeases God is sin. That which violates His will for us is sin. That which is pleasing to God is good and righteous and holy.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of David's confession of sin. It stands with Psalm 32 in which David was rejoicing in the forgiveness which was his in God. One of the important things about Psalm 51 is that David showed in this Psalm that he had come to grips with his sin under different titles, and also that he knew that only God could forgive His sin, and restore him to the fellowship that he had previously enjoyed with the Lord.

It is hoped that this Psalm would serve two purposes for the people of God:

- 1) To keep us from sinning.
- 2) To know how we can be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God when we have sinned. One of the greatest things about heaven is that we will no longer be bothered with sin.

We are introduced to sin in Genesis 2, and we are concerned with it all through Scripture right up to the last chapter of the Bible. Man may not want to recognize that sin is a reality, but it is nevertheless, and it behooves every person to seek God's remedy to his sin, and God's enabling grace to live a life of deliverance from sin.

As we turn our attention to Psalm 51, let us remember that we are dealing with the sin of a child of God, not the sin (or sins) of one who did not know the Lord. Here David was the

child of God who had sinned, and he was turning to God to have his sin forgiven. In his prayer he used different words to describe his sin, and he also used different words to express his hope that God would be merciful to him. In this first verse we have one word for sin, three words expressing David's hope in God, and one word indicating what David wanted God to do with his sin.

Let us look first at:

I. DAVID'S CONCERN.

We see it in the last word of verse 1: "transgressions."

Note first of all that it is plural, meaning that David was confessing not one sin, but more than one.

Many have recognized what these sins were (or, at least, most of them). He was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba. Then he was guilty of murdering her husband, Uriah, after he had tried to deceive Uriah in other ways to try to cover up what he had done. And we would probably have to include others who were killed in the plot to kill Uriah. David had failed to confess his sins for approximately a year after all of this took place. And then he gave the enemies of the Lord an opportunity to blaspheme God's holy name. Cf. 2 Sam. 12:14. This whole wretched account is given in 2 Sam. 11, 12. I always hate to come to these chapters in reading the Bible.

So David spoke of his "transgressions."

The word suggests that David knew that he was doing wrong. It indicates that he was in rebellion against God during those terrible days in his life. It is a word which also suggests, as Delitzsch suggested in his commentary (II, pp. 134, 135), that if it were possible to take each sin into a lab and examine it microscopically, we would see that each solitary sin would appear as many sins, entangled with each other, and bearing such a relationship that we could see that one sin produces another sin, and then that sin produces another sin, and so on.

No sin stands alone. Thoughts are involved. Words are involved. Actions are involved. David's troubles may have started when he was at home and not with his men who were at war with the Ammonites. And then one thing led to another. So our sins are a tangled mess of causes and effects provoked by temptations.

At this point it would seem, by the very fact that David used this word, "transgressions," that he understood how complicated and involved every sin is. Sin is not simple; it is very complex. That is why we have so much trouble trying to control it.

The fact remains that David had sinned, and this was his great concern.

Now let us go on to consider:

II. DAVID'S HOPE.

I am thinking now of his HOPE for forgiveness and cleansing, his hope for peace of mind, his hope for restored fellowship with God.

The experience of David should be a warning to all of us. David was not a spiritual babe when all of this happened; he was a man after God's heart, a man who knew God, who loved God, who had walked with God. Perhaps his multiple marriages had softened him up for this kind of a sin, but, for the most part, he was a man whom we could take for an example of godliness and godly living. We can never be too careful in all of our ways.

But what and where was his HOPE?

Was it in himself? Should he try to undo what he had done? How could he do that; Uriah was dead, and there was a baby on the way. Was abortion the answer? Where was His HOPE?

His hope was in the Lord. The Lord was the only one who could help David in this dreadful situation in which he found himself.

But how did David know this? He knew it because he had a tremendous understanding of the love and grace of God. Here in this first verse of his prayer he used three expressions which constituted David's HOPE. Obviously David was a man who knew His God.

Here are the expressions:

- 1) "Have mercy."
- 2) "Thy lovingkindness."
- 3) "The multitude of thy tender mercies."

Let us examine each one briefly.

A. "Have mercy."

This word indicated that David knew that God was favorably disposed toward him. He knew that God loved him, loved him even though he had displeased the Lord, and that God was already inclined to help him. David's sin had grieved the Lord, grieved Him terribly (as our sins do also), BUT THIS EXPRESSION MEANT THAT DAVID DID NOT HAVE TO SPEND ONE MOMENT, OR ONE WORD, TO CONVINCe GOD TO HELP HIM. DAVID KNEW THAT GOD WAS ALREADY DISPOSED TO HELP HIM.

B. "Thy lovingkindness."

As you might expect, this word indicated that David knew that the Lord loved him, loved him with a very strong affection.

This adds to the first word because this word means that the Lord was not only willing to help David, but that he was eager and zealous to help David before David ever turned to him. It is a word which indicates that the Lord will help us even though we do not ask Him for help! This is the kind of a God we have--how good, how kind, how loving! And He is this way when we least deserve it.

C. "The multitude of thy tender mercies."

God's "tender mercies" are those intense feelings of love and compassion which a mother has for the child which she has carried in her womb. This is the kind of feelings David described in Psa. 103:13, "Like as a father pitieth...."

The Lord has given us the feelings that we have toward our children so we will understand in at least a small way how much He loves us.

And notice the word "multitude."

God's love for us as our heavenly Father is one, long, continuous, unending band of love which never comes to an end. It can never be exhausted, used up. It is so vast that you and I are not able to comprehend what it all means.

You see, David could not plead anything from his side, and so he had to plead from the Lord's side. At this point, it was not David's love for the Lord that mattered, but the Lord's love for David. AND THIS WAS HIS HOPE, AND WHAT A HOPE IT WAS! And do you know that those same three terms belong to us just as much as they

did to David? Are you in spiritual need tonight? Then come to David's God if He is your God. He will be all to you that He was to David.

But I have one more point:

III. DAVID'S REQUEST.

As we go through this Psalm we will see David's request expressed in different terms. Here he simply said at the beginning of his prayer, "...blot out my transgressions."

David was making an amazing request. He was asking that this huge debt which was charged against him be rubbed out so that the record would be gone forever! It speaks of sin as leaving marks that are deeply ingrained.

God had the desire to do it. But He could not arbitrarily forgive and erase David's sin. The penalty for that sin had to fall on David, or it had to fall on David's Substitute. And it did! His Substitute was the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Lord died on Calvary He was paying for David's sins, Abraham's sins, Moses' sins, the Apostle Paul's sins, and yours and mine!

Listen to Hebrews 8:12:

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,
and their sins and their iniquities
will I remember no more.

Concl: Do Christians sin? Yes, I am sorry to say that we do. We cannot blot it out, but the Lord can and He does.

(Conclude with 1 John 1:8-2:2.)

This Psalm is not meant to make us lax toward sin, but to warn us, and to restrain us. But it also teaches us that in the darkest hour of our sinning we have hope, hope in God, hope in Christ, hope in the Holy Spirit. We have no hope in ourselves, nor in each other, but we do have hope in God.

How precious to know of THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF THE LORD.

SIN'S ONLY CURE
Psalm 51:2-4

Intro: At the time that David committed the sins which were such a disgrace to him, he was not a young man. It took place in his more mature years after he had experienced many blessings from the Lord. One writer has said that he was fully fifty years old when he fell into sin. So he was not a young man.

This Psalm reveals a deep conviction of sin, but it seems that it was at least a year later that David confessed his sin. Why he did not do this before, we do not know. But it shows that the sinfulness of our sins is not always seen while we are committing them, nor even immediately afterwards. It does seem that David had suffered a great deal in his soul because of his sins, but even that did not lead him to confess his sin to the Lord. It was only after Nathan the prophet said to him, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7), that David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13). And after that he wrote Psalm 51 in which we have the deepest and most thorough and most sincere confession of his sin.

David used many expressions to describe what he wanted the Lord to do about his sins. The first we had last week when we examined the last part of verse 1 where he said, "Blot out my transgression." In verse 2 we have two more. And there are still more coming when we get to verse 7.

But the thing that stands out especially in these verses is the fact David recognized that, just as his sin had been primarily against God, so he had to turn to God to find the cure for his sin.

And so this Psalm of confession is a Psalm addressed to God, and only to God.

I. DAVID'S CONTINUING REQUEST (Psa. 51:2).

David was not asking the Lord to do something in addition to blotting out his transgressions (v. 1), but was expressing what he felt the need of as far as his sins were concerned. If God blotted out his sin (v.1), then he would also be washed and cleansed (v. 2). But all three are apparently mentioned to show us how deeply David had experienced the effect of sin in his life.

Here we see that sin made David feel dirty, defiled, and especially unfit for the presence of God. Although David has given us some of the most wonderful prayers in the

Bible, we can be sure that it had been a long time since he had felt the blessing of God during his times of prayer. Perhaps he had felt each day that things would get better. But they didn't get better; they got worse. All that he might have done to put his sin behind him had done no good. Time had not erased it. And now at last he came to God seeking cleansing because God is the only One Who can cleanse us from our sins!

As we might expect, the washing that David desired was in his heart, but he used a word which would describe what you ladies do when you wash your family clothing, especially if they were very, very dirty.

Cleansing speaks of the result of the cleansing.

You see various commercials on television which tell you why one washing compound is better than another. The ads tell us about the worst kind of stains being removed. David was praying that God would not only wash his soul, but that it would once again be pure and clean, that all of the defilement of his sins would be removed, and he would be fit for the Lord's presence.

So the next time you do the family washing, let it remind you of what God has done for you and, hopefully, for each member of your family. He has washed your sins away.

Let it remind you of Isa. 1:18.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:
 though your sins be as scarlet,
 they shall be as white as snow;
 though they be red like crimson,
 they shall be as wool.

And we know, as doubtless David knew, that it was not the blood of bulls and goats that would take away his sin, but the cleansing of the blood of the coming Redeemer about Whom David spoke in many of his Psalms. The terrible nature of our sins can only be understood in the light of the price our Lord had to pay for our forgiveness.

But in this second verse we have two more words for sin:

- 1) "Iniquity."
- 2) "Sin."

Notice that David said "my transgressions" (v. 1), "mine iniquity" (v. 2), and "my sin" (v. 2).

What more can we learn about sin from these two added words?

The word "iniquity" indicates that David was perverse in what he did with Bathsheba, and in what he did to Uriah, her husband. He did not sin in ignorance; he deliberately did what he knew was wrong! He knew that he had no right to Bathsheba. He knew that all he did to involve Uriah was wrong, and that it was wrong to have him killed. He knew all of that, but he did it anyway! He was guilty of iniquity.

It is bad enough to sin in ignorance, but even the Law of Moses made no provision for the person who deliberately did what he knew was wrong.

The word "sin" is the Old Testament equivalent for the NT word word which means to miss the mark. David was not only guilty because he had done the wrong thing, but he was doubly guilty because he had failed to do the right thing. The sin of the king was worse than the sin of anyone else in Israel. The greater responsibility a person has, the greater his guilt when he fails to live up to that responsibility.

Bathsheba was to be blamed because she was bathing where she could be seen. And she was to be blamed because she did not resist David in what he wanted to do. But David's guilt was far greater because he was the king, and, as the king, was to have been the example of godliness to his people.

It is no wonder that David cried out for the mercy of God to be extended to him in blotting out his sin and cleansing him from all of its defilement. His sin was very, very great!

But let us go on to verse 3. Here we have:

II. DAVID'S CONFESSION (Psa. 51:3).

This was a long time in coming, but now here it is.
(Read.)

He was saying, "I know my transgressions," and as the NEB renders the latter part of this verse, "my sins confront me all the day long." Wherever David turned, whatever he was doing, regardless of who he was with, he was always staring his sin in the face. He could not get away from it. That is why he was crying out to God for his transgressions to be blotted out and for his iniquity and sin to be cleansed.

Nobody had to argue with David about the sinfulness of

what he had done. He knew it, knew it deeply, and it was a terrible grief and burden to him.

Later Solomon was to write those words found in Prov. 28:13, and we can wonder if he was thinking of his father when he wrote them. This is the verse:

He that covereth his sin shall not prosper:
but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them
shall have mercy.

We also have that familiar promise in 1 John 1:9. David was confessing his sin because he was saying the same thing about his sin that God has said in His Word. He did not try to excuse it. He did not seek to make it less serious than it was. He called it by its rightful names, and the Lord extended great mercy to him to take away his great and terrible sins.

Is it any wonder that some of the Puritans used to say that the greatest word in any language is the word, forgiven.

But we have one more verse. Let us call it:

III. THE JUSTIFICATION OF GOD (Psa. 51:4).

When you speak about sin to many people today, they will argue with you as to whether or not the things that a Christian calls sin are really sins.

How would we define sin, whether we call it sin, or iniquity, or transgression, or give it any of its other words.

David helps us with it here. Sin is anything that is "against" God! Sin is anything that is contrary to the nature of God Who is holy. Sin is a violation of His Word; it is disobedience to His Word.

Is adultery sin? Yes, it is! The Word of God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). What if it is between "consenting adults," is it still sin? Yes, it is? What if society approves of it, or at least does not condemn it; is it still sin? Yes, it is!

What about murder, it is sin? Yes, it is! The Word of God says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

And we can go down the line speaking of homosexuality, abortion, dishonesty, stealing, and on and on. Sin is sin because God says it is, and God holds the sinner

accountable to Himself. Excuse your sin however you may, some day you will find yourself answering to God! Then people will learn that "the wages of sin is death"-- spiritual death, eternal death!

How important it is for us to repent of our sins, to face the fact that it is sin, and that even though others might be involved in our sin, yet our sin is, when all is said and done, primarily against God. Even sin in our hearts which never becomes an act, is still sin. Our Lord said in His Sermon on the Mount,

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,
Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh
on a woman to lust after her
hath committed adultery with her already
in his heart.

And the women who provoke such thoughts are equally guilty. Does that mean that if you have had the thought, you might as well go ahead and commit the act? Of course not! But it does mean that there is sin in your heart that needs to be confessed, and cleansed, and forsaken.

In David's case, he knew that although he and Bathsheba had sinned in the seclusion of his quarters, yet it was in the full view of God Himself! He did not need to tell God what he had done. God knew. What he needed to do is what we find him doing here: confessing that he had sinned against God.

But now let us look at the last part of verse 4.

Do you know where this is quoted in the NT? You will find it in Rom. 3:4. Please turn to that passage.

What was David saying as he quoted this verse from the LXX?

He was saying that the day is coming when every man who has ever lived will learn, some to their eternal dismay, that when it comes to what is sin, and what is not, He was right, and, if they disagreed with Him, they were wrong. And if they face Him still in their sins, their penalty will be eternal death in the torments of hell.

Concl: If we want to see how bad sin is, there are three places to look:

- 1) At God as He is revealed in the Bible.
- 2) At the Cross where our blessed Lord died.
- 3) At what the Bible teaches about hell.

No one can really look in these three directions, and do it

without understanding, and then come away saying that there is no such thing as S-I-N.

We are just getting started in this Psalm, but we can sense in our own hearts the peace that began to come back into David's heart when he confessed his sin, and cast himself upon the mercy of God. The Law demanded his death on two counts:

- 1) He committed adultery with another man's wife.
- 2) He had her husband killed.

The troubles that followed in David's life are a warning for us not to follow in his footsteps. But the grace that God extended to David, even though his sin was so much greater because he was the king, is for God's glory and for our help when we sin against God. Oh, the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus! It covers the greatest of our sins; it covers all of our sins!

"BEHOLD"
Psalm 51:5, 6

Intro: There are two very important truths in these two verses, truths which have their roots in the OT, but which are continued on into the NT. The first of these two truths is the doctrine of original sin. The second is the doctrine of the spiritual life. These are truths of which all of us have some knowledge—or should have! They are truths which we have to understand if we are to see the need for salvation, and if we are to learn how to live in this world in a manner that is pleasing to God.

Let us take them up in order, and then we will come back to the word which introduces both of these verses: the word, "Behold."

I. THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN (Psa. 51:5).

Let me say, first of all, two things which this verse does not mean.

David was not blaming his mother for his sin.

This is what modern psychology is inclined to do, not at conception, but after birth. We have literally thousands of young people in our country, plus those who used to be young people but now are father along in life, who blame their parents for all of the trouble that they have gotten themselves into. Many children have been neglected or abused, and have lacked the upbringing that a good home would have provided for them, but we cannot lay the blame for our sins upon our parents. Society may let us do it, but God will not. We all stand accountable to God for our own behavior, and the sooner we learn that, and believe that, the better off we will be!

No, David was not blaming his mother for the sins which he had committed.

Neither was David saying that he was an illegitimate child. David was the eighth son of Jesse. His mother's name is never given in Scripture. In Psa. 86:16 he called himself "the son of thine handmaid." And he did the same in Psa. 116:16. This suggests that she was a child of God, and possibly a very godly woman. Some of the later Rabbis have taken this verse (Psa. 51:5) as meaning that David was an illegitimate child, but there is nothing in Scripture to suggest this.

If he were not saying either of these things, then what

was he saying?

He was expressing the doctrine of original sin. He was saying that his ability to sin, his inclination to sin, had been passed on to him at the time of his conception. He was saying that he was a sinner by nature. Franz Delitzsch says in in commentary on this Psalm (II, 137) that "the fact of hereditary sin is here more distinctly expressed than in any other passage in the Old Testament."

By the way, this is a good verse to use with those abortionists who try to tell us that life does not begin until we are born. Such a nature assumes that there is life.

Paul has given us an even clearer picture of original sin in Rom. 5:12. Listen to what it says.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world,
and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men,
for that all have sinned.

That one man through whom sin entered into the world was Adam. Adam passed on his sinful nature to his children, and his children passed it on to their children. And so on and on it has gone throughout every generation in every nation on the face of the earth. This basically is why you and I sin: we are sinners by nature. We do not become sinners by sinning; we sin because we have a sinful nature.

Paul repeated this truth in 1 Cor. 15:22 when he wrote (and I am rearranging the words slightly):

For as all who are in Adam die,
even so shall all who are in Christ be made alive.

Physical death is a solemn testimony that we are all sinners. Human history is a testimony to the sinfulness of man. I heard Saddam Hussein called "an evil man" this morning--and he is! But so are we all by nature. By the grace of God we do not demonstrate the full extent of our evil nature, but the potential is there with all of us.

This godly man, David, was declaring this about Himself. He traced those terrible sins of adultery and murder and deceit to the awful reality that his original nature was a sinful nature.

We can see also from what David did that, when we are saved, our sinful nature is not taken away. We become

new creatures in Christ, but the old nature is still there. And it can give us plenty of trouble. In fact, as I have mentioned before, some of the worst instances of sin in Scripture are the sins of adults! It has been estimated that David was in his 50's when he committed adultery and murder, and this came after years of walking with the Lord. We must never minimize the potential for sin that is in every single one of us.

But now let me go on to my second point in verse 6:

II. THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (Psa. 51:6).

Do you see? Verse 6 is the counterpart of verse 5. Verse 5 states David's problem (and mine, and yours); verse 6 gives us God's answer.

Remember that we are talking about a believer. We are talking about a man who was saved. He was a child of God. He had been justified by faith in the promised Redeemer. And yet, being still able to sin, he was setting forth God's provision for our deliverance from sin in this sixth verse.

When David said that God "**desirest** truth in the inward parts," by the word "desirest" he was indicating that which God delighted in, that which pleased Him, that which he desired for all of His people--"truth in the inward parts."

Now whether you take that word "truth" as meaning the truth of the Word of God, or faithfulness, it all amounts to the same thing.

It is usually assumed that David wrote the 119th Psalm. Furthermore, it is believed that the verses of that Psalm were written, not all at one time, but throughout his life, probably beginning with his youth and carrying through to his old age.

This being the case, then this doctrine which he was expressing was not anything new to him. He had written in Psa. 119:9,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

And then he added in Psa. 119:11,
Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
that I might not sin against thee.

So even in those days it was the Word of God in the heart that God used to keep His people from sin, to keep them

from doing the very things that David had done!

This raises the questions: What does it mean to take heed according to God's Word? What does it mean to hide God's Word in our hearts?

Does it mean reading the Word of God? Yes, you will never have the Word in your heart if you do not know what it is. But that is not enough. Does it mean memorizing the Word? Yes, that is a great help, too. But even that is not enough. Does it mean going to a church where the Word of God is taught and preached? Yes, that is very important. But this is still not enough. Does it mean that we should talk about the Word with others? Does it mean that we should be able to state what we believe about the great doctrines of Scripture, and give some proof from the Bible as to why we believe what we believe? Yes, this is also very important. BUT EVEN THIS, WITH EVERYTHING ELSE THAT I HAVE MENTIONED, IS NOT ENOUGH.

When are we taking heed to the Word? What is the proof that we are treasuring up the Word of God in our hearts? It is when we are obeying the Word of God, lovingly obeying the Word, doing God's will from our hearts. You see, the evidence that I am really learning something about the Bible is that it is changing my way of living. I not only need to know the Word of God, and to believe it, but I need to live it. Long ago I heard a man say that the truth of God's Word is not only something to believe, but it is something TO BEHAVE!

And the last statement of verse 6 indicates that the Lord is going to deal with us until the truth that we know gets into our hearts and changes our lives.

Now I doubt if this is new teaching to many of you who are here tonight. You not only know this, you have taught it to your children. You not only want them to know the Lord, but you want them to obey the Lord. In that verse which I have quoted often, the Apostle John said,

I have no greater joy than to hear
that my children walk in truth (3 John 4).

He did not say talk about the truth, but "walk in truth." He wanted them to live the truth.

Now let me ask you a question: If this truth is not new to you, do you think that it was new to King David? Of course, it wasn't new to him! He may have known it better than you and I do--and this is the way he had lived! He had obeyed

the Lord. He had trusted the Lord. He had walked with the Lord as few of the Lord's people have lived. WHAT, THEN, WENT WRONG?

I really don't know. But I do know this: in some way, or possibly in many ways, he had gotten careless. It seems to be generally agreed among Bible expositors that he should have been at war with his men instead of resting at home.

But think of what we are actually told.

He saw a woman bathing herself, a very beautiful woman. What should he have done then? He should have turned away so that he would not have been tempted any more. But what did he do? He went to find out who she was, and even though he learned that she was the wife of one of his most faithful men, he took her, lay with her, and the thing which David did greatly displeased God. Cf. 2 Sam. 11:27b.

David knew better than to do what he did. And then he knew better than to try to cover up his sin like he did. But he did it. And all I can tell you is that he had in some way, and perhaps for some time, failed to live by the Word of God which he knew so well.

Do you realize that more often than not we are tempted by what we see, or by what we hear. We learn this from Eve's temptation in the Garden of Eden. We learn this from Achan's sin at Jericho. We even learn this from the way that the Devil tempted our Lord Jesus Christ. He took Him up on a high mountain and "shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8). He "shewed" them to Him.

As I have pointed out to you before, there is a lot of wisdom in that children's chorus which says, "Be careful little eyes what you see." May the Lord enable us to heed the warning that is before us tonight. If David could fall, you and I can fall.

But I still have one thing to do before I quit. I still have not dealt with that word "behold" which comes at the beginning of verse 5, and again at the beginning of verse 6.

III. "BEHOLD."

Some commentators do not even mention it. How can they pass it by, especially when it is here twice.

Fausset in the JFB series says that the word "behold" ties these two verses together. The one is incomplete without the other. That is worth noting.

Secondly, it indicates something that is very important-- probably the most important part of this Psalm. David was not publicizing his sin. One purpose that he had in recording this for us was to warn us, to keep us from doing the same thing.

Thirdly, I detect a note of dismay in this word, "Behold." It is as though David were saying, "I knew all of this. I knew better. But this was the time in my life when these truths meant more to me than there ever had before."

David knew better than ever before the awful power of sin that was resident in his own heart. He saw the importance of responding daily to the Word of God. How often we know what we should do, but we find some excuse for doing something else.

Remember that old saying that a friend of mine had printed on the front of his Bible, and his Dad had it printed there for him. It said this:

Sin will keep you from this Book,
or this Book will keep you from sin.

Concl: Last winter many of us memorized the book of Colossians. I want to close tonight with two verses from the third chapter of that epistle, chapter 3, verses 16, 17. Listen to them.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly
in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
And whatsoever ye do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

What does that word "richly" mean? It means to get the Word of Christ, the Word of God, into your heart largely, abundantly, until your heart is overflowing with the truth. With the Word indwelling you, you will be kept from sin, and will be enabled to live so as to please God.

A SEVENFOLD REQUEST
Psalm 51:7-10

Intro: If you will count the requests in these four verses you will see that there are seven of them. However, if you consider them more closely you will see that they are in reality seven ways of asking for the same thing! David was asking for forgiveness. If God were to forgive him, He would have to do all seven things for him. And so we do not have seven independent requests, but seven requests which total up to ONE REQUEST.

Just as sin is a terrible thing (regardless of what the sin might be), so forgiveness is surpassingly wonderful. Sin requires divine wrath; forgiveness requires divine grace. It is man who sins, but man does not forgive sin. We may forgive those who sin against us, but the sin is not really gone until God grants His forgiveness. And we know now that forgiveness is only possible because of the death of Christ. The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:7b that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

In verses 1 and 2 of this great 51st Psalm David acknowledged that his only hope for forgiveness was in the mercy and lovingkindness of the Lord. And it was right after that that he asked the Lord,

Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin (Psa. 51:2).

But then in verse 7, and continuing down through verse 10, David renewed his request to God for forgiveness.

Let us examine the seven parts of this one request. As we do, we will see with greater clarity what it means to be forgiven.

- I. PART ONE: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (Psa. 51:7a).

Please turn to Lev. 14:4-7.

Remember also that it was hyssop that the blood was applied to the lintel and the two side posts of their doors on that first Passover night. Cf. Ex. 12:22.

With this request David was acknowledging that sin was to his soul like leprosy would be to his body: incurable and hopeless. He was deserving of death; he was asking for life. And it was only through a blood sacrifice that he could be cleansed.

Many attempts have been made to identify the hyssop. It

seems that the majority feel that it was that hyssop about which Solomon wrote in his Proverbs and songs. Cf. 1 Kings 4:33. It was very common, growing out of the wall. Some have indicated that it is a type of humility.

David's hope from this purging, this cleansing, was that he would once again be pure and bright and clean before God, and that fellowship with God would be restored, and his worship acceptable to God.

II. PART TWO: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

This was the same word that David had used in verse 2. As the first part spoke of cleansing through the blood, this speaks of cleansing through the Word. Cf. Psa. 119:9 and Eph. 5:26.

There is cleansing power in the blood, but there is also cleansing power through the Word. Snow is white, but the cleansing work of the Lord through His Word makes us even "whiter than snow."

III. PART THREE: "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice" (Psa. 51:8).

Just as sin defiles, so sin takes away our joy. He was like a wounded man whose body had been crushed with the load of sin. The "joy and gladness" to which David referred in the first part of this verse seems to be the "joy and gladness" of the Lord. David wanted to be able to hear that in his soul, the joy which the Lord experiences when one of his own seeks forgiveness and cleansing.

When David knew that God was pleased, then he would be able to rejoice again. We often think about what our forgiveness means to us, but David was thinking about what it means to the Lord. You will remember that the last statement of the chapter in which David's sin is recorded, is this: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Sam. 11:27b). David could only be happy in knowing that the Lord was not displeased with him any more.

IV. PART FOUR: "Hide thy face from my sins" (Psa. 51:9a).

Just as David was aware of the fact that his sin was more against the Lord than anyone else, so he was keenly aware of the fact that God had seen him as he committed those terrible sins, and that just as his sins were ever before him, so they were ever before God. For God to hide his

face from David's sin was to cover them in such a way that even God could not see them again.

Hezekiah said later in his prayer, "For thou has cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isa. 38:17).

Cf. also Micah 7:18, 19:

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity,
and passeth by the transgression of the remnant
of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever,
because he delighteth in mercy.
He will turn again, he will have compassion on us;
he will subdue our iniquities;
**and thou wilt cast all their sins
into the depths of the sea.**

These verses give expression to what David wanted.

- V. PART FIVE: "And blot out all mine iniquities" (Psa. 51:9b).

This is the word that David used in verse 1.

Isaiah used this word from the Lord in Isa. 43:25,
I, even I, am he that blotteth out
thy transgressions for mine own sake,
and will not remember thy sins.

And he used it again in Isa. 44:22:

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud,
thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins:
return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

David wanted to know that the record of his sins was gone, and that they would not be remembered against him any more. Cf. Jer. 31:33, which is quoted in Heb. 10:17.

- VI. PART SIX: "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa. 51:10a).

This is like renovating, or remodeling, an old house. It called for a work just as miraculous as the creation of the heavens and the earth--the same word is used here. Like all of the other requests (but it is especially apparent here), David was calling upon the Lord to do things for him that no human being could do, nor could he do them for himself. Only God can make right that which is so wrong. Talk about something that seems too good to be true! This is it! And we would not dare to think that such a thing would be possible if it were not written for us here in the Word!

VII. PART SEVEN: "And renew a right spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10b).

The margin of my Bible reads, "a **steadfast** spirit." David was asking that the Lord make him like new. He wanted to be repaired and restored like he had been before he sinned so grievously against the Lord. David would never forget his sins, but his fellowship with the Lord could be restored so as to be the same, OR EVEN **BETTER!**

David had been strong and faithful to the Lord; that is what he wanted to be again. And it is to the Lord's glory that we can say that David never again sinned as he had sinned in the events surrounding his sin with Bathsheba.

In fact, is it not a singular evidence of the grace of God that Bathsheba eventually gave birth to Solomon, and that Solomon was in the direct line which led to the Lord Jesus Christ. How marvelous is God's grace and His goodness!

Concl: What was behind David's confession?

Three things:

- 1) Sincere sorrow for what he had done.
- 2) The intention that, by the grace of God, he would never do those things again.
- 3) The desire that he would find full and glad acceptance with the Lord.

It is not an uncommon thing for people to take their lives because they cannot live with their guilt. How wonderful it is to know that there is not only forgiveness with God for the sinner through faith in the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but there is forgiveness, cleansing, restoration, and a fresh start for the child of God. And all that David sought he was able to find because of the coming sacrifice of Christ.

In Psa. 130:7, 8 we find a word for Israel, but it now has been extended to the Gentile world as well.

Let Israel hope in the Lord:
for with the Lord there is mercy,
and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel
from all his iniquities.

There is enough for all who will come. Therefore, bring to the Lord our sins, and seek the provision that He has made for us in Christ.

BEYOND FORGIVENESS

Psalm 51:11-13

Intro: David was one who knew the Lord as few men know Him.

When Samuel told Saul that the kingdom was to be taken from him, he said, "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). Paul quoted that passage in Acts 13 when he was preaching in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. Paul said that the Lord said,
 I have found David the son of Jesse,
 a man after mine own heart,
 which shall fulfil all my will (Acts 13:22b).

Both of these passages suggest very strongly that a man after God's heart is a man committed to do God's will. Saul was rejected for not keeping the Lord's commandment; God sought a man who would do His will. And, up until the time that David sinned against the Lord with Bathsheba, that was the kind of a man he was. He did the will of God from the heart. He did it consistently and joyfully. It was that one thing, doing God's will, that characterized David's life more than anything else: doing the will of God.

But now he had sinned grievously against the Lord. It is not for us to classify sins, but his sins were just as bad, if not worse, than Saul's sin. Saul had been turned out by the Lord as king. David deserved the same treatment, the same judgment. And the burden of these verses is an indication of the great fear that now gripped his heart.

Is the hope AFTER FORGIVENESS? A person can get no lower than when caught by his own sin, seeking forgiveness, he ponders the future. Can things ever be the same again with God. Remember that this is the man who wrote those wonderful words in Psa. 27:4, 5, "One thing have I desired of the Lord...." The two things that meant more to David than anything else were:

- 1) His fellowship with the Lord.
- 2) His service for the Lord.

I want to consider these three verses as containing four requests from David, culminating in a very special result.

And so let us look at:

I. DAVID'S FOUR REQUESTS (Psa. 51:11, 12).

A. "Cast me not away from thy presence" (Psa. 51:11a).

Cf. David's words in Psa. 16:11.

If "fulness of joy" is to be found in the Lord's presence, then that is a sufficient joy. It needs nothing else to make it complete. Would that fellowship with the Lord which had been such a delight to the heart of David now be taken from him forever? Was there no possibility for him to get back where he was spiritually.

We know that David suffered some dreadful consequences of his sin right in his own family. The memory of sin remains, and there are of results that stay with us. But what about the Lord? What about our fellowship with Him?

Last night before Lucille and I retired for the night we read those familiar words of the Aaronic blessing which I often use when I am signing my name:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee;
 The Lord make his face shine upon thee,
 and be gracious unto thee;
 The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee,
 and give thee peace.
 And they shall put my name
 upon the children of Israel;
 and I will bless them (Num. 6:24-27).

This is a prayer that God gave to Moses to give to Aaron for Aaron to use in praying for the people of Israel. And it shows one thing: It shows that our fellowship with the Lord is precious to the Lord, more precious to Him than it is to us. And being a prayer which the Lord gave, it obviously is a prayer that the Lord intends to answer.

The very fact that David was led to pray this request, and that the Holy Spirit has included this in our Bibles, is evidence that our fellowship with the Lord can be restored, and that we can go on with the Lord even after sinning so terribly against the Lord.

Peter's experience teaches us that, too. Cf. Luke 22:31, 32.

Also look at 1 John 1:6, 7, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness..."

B. "And take no thy holy Spirit from me" (Psa. 51:11b).

I do not think that David was worried about losing his salvation. We know that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the OT was not permanent. The

Spirit seems to have come upon the people of God, and then left them without affecting their salvation. The Spirit came upon Saul after he was anointed as king, and the Spirit of God departed from him after he was rejected as king. This is what David feared might happen to him! It was not that he would lose his salvation, but that he would lose his ministry, his place of service, his position as king over Israel. In the depths of his despair, he feared that this might happen.

But that which caused him to have hope was, in his case, the promise of God. Cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-17. The same prophet who called him to repentance has before given him these very assuring words. And so, David was here claiming the promise of God. His ministry was not over. He should have died for his sin, but God had been most gracious to him—an encouragement for us.

Cf. Psa. 103:10-13 in this connection.

Sin hinders our ministry, and sin persisted in can bring an end to our ministry. We do not know how often God had dealt with the men who have been recently disgraced before the eyes of the whole world. They did not listen until it had gone too far. But David did not persist.

Anyone who has served the Lord can realize the sorrow it would bring if that could not continue. How gracious the Lord was to David.

- C. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psa. 51:12a).

David did not ask for his salvation to be restored; he asked for "the joy of thy salvation" to be restored. He wanted the Lord to give back that which he had lost: the joy!

Salvation brings joy, great joy. Sin brings sorrow, great sorrow. When a believer sins, he loses his joy. One of the great blessings of repentance is that the joy can be restored.

There is joy in knowing that we are forgiven. And that joy is increased in knowing that, as far as God is concerned, it is forgotten. There is joy in knowing that our sins will not be brought up again when we stand before the Lord. There is joy in

knowing that we cannot lose that which God has given in grace: our salvation. But it is possible for us to be saved, but not to have the joy of God's salvation in our hearts.

Be sure to remember the connection that this request has with verse 8 which we considered last week. There he was concerned about God being pleased with his confession; here he was seeking the restoration of his own joy.

I want you to remember this request in connection with the result that David mentioned, and which we will come to in just a moment when we consider verse 13. It is important not only that we are saved and know it, but it is equally important for us to be happy in our salvation.

But let us go on to the fourth request:

D. "And uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psa. 51:12b).

The NASB translates this, "And sustain me with a willing spirit." The NIV renders it essentially the same way: "And grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

David was here referring to his own spirit, to himself, not to the Holy Spirit. This was a work that only the Holy Spirit could do, but David wanted his own spirit to be sustained.

MT-HENRY SAID THAT
THE MORE CAREFUL WE
ARE IN OUR DUTY, THE
MORE CONSTANT WE WILL
BE AT IT.

"A willing spirit" is not only a spirit that is willing to serve the Lord, but eager to serve the Lord. David was asking that his enthusiasm for the work of the Lord be restored. This, in itself, as Kidner remarked in his comments on this Psalm, is an antidote for sin, and even to temptation. When we get discouraged in the work of the Lord, temptation is not far away. This one statement may tell us more than we realize about that which led up to David's grievous sins. He may have lost the joy of serving the Lord, and was under a cloud of discouragement. He needed fire to be put back into his soul. He needed the Spirit's work make him willing to do, and strong to do, the good pleasure of the Lord. Cf. Phil. 2:13.

How do you feel about the Lord's work, and your part in it? Are you discouraged? Would you like to drop out? Be careful--and I say this to all of us. The

Devil knows how to move in when our guard is down, and to place some temptation before us. Pray that your joy in serving the Lord may be restored, and then trust the Lord to do that for you as you continue on doing what the Lord has appointed for you.

Be sure that you do not forget these words of David. Remember that we do not need to fall into the sins which David committed in order to need these requests for ourselves. You may be far away from the Lord in your heart tonight. Maybe those closest to you do not know how far you are. Perhaps one reason we are considering this Psalm in our Sunday night services is because the Lord wants you to be warned by David so that you will turn back to the Lord.

Are you as happy in the Lord as you were when you first came to Christ? Have you grown lax in your relationship with certain things that you know are wrong. Then turn back to the Lord. If you have left your first love, ask the Lord to give it back to you. There is no greater preventive against sin than a life lived in true fellowship with the Lord.

Now we come to:

II. THE DESIRED RESULT (Psa. 51:13).

David was not saying, as even some preachers are saying today, that sin will make you more effective as a servant of the Lord. I know of a preacher who is divorced who now says that divorce is a great learning experience. That kind of talk is nonsense. Divorce is nothing short of a great tragedy, regardless of how one might try to justify it. A truly forgiven sinner never looks upon sin as a good thing. It is never good.

You cannot get the idea from this Psalm that David felt that he would be better prepared to serve the Lord because he had committed adultery and murder. He hated his sins. He wished that he had never done what he did in either case. He is flashing all kinds of red lights in this Psalm. Undoubtedly David's 51st Psalm has been used by the Lord to turn people away from sin, just as it has been used to turn people back to the Lord. Unfortunately some people have used it as an excuse for sin, saying, that if the Lord would forgive David, they could be forgiven also. But this is not the talk of one who really knows the Lord. It is the talk of one who is playing with sin.

This verse helps us to understand what is necessary for an effective ministry. David believed in teaching, teaching the Word, teaching about sin, teaching about the need for salvation, teaching about how we can live so as to please God.

But he was not satisfied just with teaching; he wanted to see people's lives turned around! He wanted to see the effectiveness of the Word in his teaching. There is little point in teaching others when we ourselves need to learn, or when we need to obey that which we know to be the Word of God. God uses His Word as He pleases in the carrying out of His own will. We are not promised that we are always going to be "successful." But the only kind of servants who have any right to expect the blessing of the Lord upon their ministry are those who are staying away from sin in any form, and who, by the grace of God, are seeking to live to please the Lord.

Concl: I think that one reason that David did not mention adultery or murder or deception or drunkenness, or any other sins, is because, if he had, we would have been inclined to say, if our sin were not listed, "This is for somebody else, but it is surely not for me!"

He was speaking of sins, iniquities, transgressions--all kinds of sin. This is for us. It is for you, and it is for me! God will use it either to keep us from sinning, or to show us the way back when we have sinned. There may be some sins which are worse than others, but God has not left it up to us to place sins in certain categories--some we feel comfortable with, and others which we are not comfortable with. SIN IS SIN, whatever form it takes. And you and I need to walk carefully and prayerfully, seeking always to obey God, so that we will not fall prey to the Enemy and bring dishonor upon the Name of our heavenly Father and His beloved Son, our Savior.

May God be pleased to use this Psalm in each of our lives tonight as He sees we have need!

THE APEX OF RESTORED FELLOWSHIP
Psalm 51:14-19

Intro: There is evidence in Psalm 51 that David had learned a great deal through the tragedies of his sins. And, as we have seen before in the Psalm, the things which he learned may be an indication of the reasons for his sin. This does not mean that David did not know some of these things before, but for whatever reasons, they did not have the place in his heart at the times of his sins that they needed to have. I have reference to verses 5 and 6 as well as the effect of sin upon one's God-given ministry as seen in verse 13.

What is the apex, the highest point, of fellowship with God? Is it soul winning? Soul winning and fellowship with God go hand in hand, but that is not the apex. Is it powerful preaching? There certainly cannot be powerful preaching over a period of time if the preacher is out of fellowship with the Lord. But powerful preaching is not the apex?

What is the apex of fellowship with God?

The apex of fellowship with God is the worship of God. There is no higher point to which a child of God can go than when he is "lost in wonder, love, and praise." And if this is the apex of fellowship with God, it is also the apex, the highest point, of RESTORED FELLOWSHIP (such as David was seeking at this point in his prayer). David found that that which had previously brought such great joy to his soul, was greatly affected by his sins. He was a man after God's heart which really means that he was a man who delighted in worshipping the Lord. But his sin had changed that which had been the chief source of joy in his life.

As David's prayer of confession ended, it was this that he was seeking to have given back to him.

These last six verses have a twofold division:

- 1) David's desire to worship the Lord (vv. 14-17).
- 2) David's plea for the work of the Lord (vv. 18, 19).

Before we look at the two sections, I want you to notice that there are only four requests in these two sections--two in each one. The first is in verse 14. The second is in verse 15. The third and the fourth are in verse 18.

David here seeking to get back to the top of the mountain of his fellowship with the Lord. And so let us consider verses 14-17.

I. DAVID'S DESIRE TO WORSHIP THE LORD (Psa. 51:14-17).

A. The first request (v. 14).

Notice the words "salvation" and "thy righteousness" in this verse. This should lead us to see that David was thinking at this point of his own eternal salvation.

I mentioned earlier in our consideration of this Psalm that David did not mention adultery. He did not mention murder. He did not mention deceit. He did not mention any of his sins by name. But here he used a word to describe them all: "bloodguiltiness," or, as it is in the Hebrew, bloods! Delitzsch says that this means "blood violently shed, and then also a deed of blood and blood-guiltiness" (II, 140). This was David's final appeal that the guilt of the sins he had committed would not be allowed to remain on his soul. He was praying about the continuation unto the completeness of his salvation. He deserved to die. He deserved to die a twofold death (if such a thing were possible)! But he was pleading that the work of salvation would go on in his soul.

If God answered, what would he do?

THIS IS WORSHIP! "...and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness."

You see, one thing that God does when He works in our hearts is to change the songs that we sing. That is clear from what Paul said in his Ephesian epistle about being filled with the Spirit. I am sure that David would not have much interest in the light, worldly-sounding music that is so popular in many churches today. They demonstrate a tragic ignorance of the majesty and glory of God. Many Christians are being taught to sing songs which please themselves, but they have little or no thought that their singing needs to please God. Our Lord made it very clear when speaking to the woman at the well that the Father is seeking worshippers, not entertainers, nor people who want to be entertained. The result of the work of grace in our hearts is that our singing becomes GOD-CENTERED, and we sing of His glorious attributes. "...my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." David had loved godly music before his sins; now he loved it more than ever!

How I would love to have heard David sing after his heart had been delivered from the bloods of which he was guilty.

But let us move on to verse 15:

B. The second request (v. 15-17).

Some grammarians feel that this should be translated as an earnest plea: "O Lord, mayest thou open my lips...."

David probably composed many psalms, and then had sung them, without the deep realization that he had here that only the Lord could actually open his mouth to sing the praises of the Lord.

Did you notice the change from "God" to "Lord" as you move from verse 14 to verse 15. As God, God stands as the Judge of His people. As the Lord He is the One Who has brought His people into an eternal covenant of salvation with Himself. Sin ties our tongues; grace opens them again. And, as Matthew Henry pointed out, when the Lord opens our mouths, then we will be like Zacharias when his speech was restored to him: he sang (or spoke) the praises of the Lord!

Again let me point out that there is a difference in what we sing and how we sing when the Lord opens our mouths. We sing to His praise, to His glory. Our singing is centered on God, not ourselves.

Having said this about praise, David went on to express a truth which I am sure he knew before, but now had been impressed upon his heart in a greater way than ever before.

Verse 16 seems to indicate two things:

- 1) There was no sacrifice prescribed in the Law for the sins which David had committed. His sin was willful and with the full knowledge that what he had done was wrong.
- 2) The value of the sacrifice is traceable, as verse 17 indicates very clearly, not to the sacrifice itself, but to the heart of the one making the sacrifice.

To speak of that which delights the heart of God is to point out that which pleases him the most.

What does please him the most?

Our answer is in verse 17.

That which pleases the Lord when we come to Him is "a broken spirit." He will "not despise" "a broken and a contrite heart." He will not reject such a person, nor treat them with contempt.

What is "a broken and a contrite heart"? It is a heart truly repentant for sin, and desirous of forsaking that sin. It is

a heart that is submissive to the Word of God, and, if necessary, submissive under the judgment of God. It is a heart which seeks always to be obedient to the Word of God. It speaks of people who joined Ezra in his grief over Israel's sin in Ezra, chapter 9. They "trembled" at the Word of God.

But let us go on to the last two verses.

II. DAVID'S PLEA FOR THE WORK OF THE LORD (Psa. 51:18, 19).

I hope that you have been able to see the meaning of what David said in his prayer, and that you will now be able to relate this to his plea in these last two verses.

As I read these verses I was reminded of Psa. 127:1:

Except the Lord build the house,
they labour in vain that build it:
except the Lord keep the city
the watchman waketh but in vain.

David could pray for the Lord's people now, and pray for the Lord's blessing upon the Lord's work. Sin hinders effective prayer, and it is essential that David, the King, the spiritual leader of the nation, should be able to pray with power and with blessing for the people over whom he reigned.

And, as verse 19 indicates, the sacrifices of the people, all of the sacrifices, would be pleasing to the Lord, only when the King and his people were living at the apex of their fellowship with the Lord.

Concl: How important it is for us to learn the lessons that these verses teach us. We have had two lessons on sin, repentance, and forgiveness today. I did not plan it this way, but undoubtedly the Lord had this in mind.

We, too, are looking for the blessing of the Lord. We need it. How the Lord may see fit to bless us, is in His hands. But it is our responsibility to be prepared for the blessings by living our lives at the apex of fellowship, where sin is laid aside, hearts are cleansed, and we are able to worship God and to pray effectually that His blessing would be upon us.