

PERSONAL REVIVAL

Psalm 51

Intro: There are various kinds of revivals spoken of in Scripture. There were national revivals in Israel. There were great revivals in the church. And there were also personal revivals. Sometimes the work of God was very extensive. At other times it seems to have been more limited to special times, or a special time, of revival in a single person's life.

However, there are always ways in which even in the revival of a single person's life the effects are felt in many other people's lives.

The Psalm we are to consider this morning was written because David had sinned. He had sinned very grievously. He had sinned in his more mature years. The tragic story is recorded for us in 2 Samuel 11. There was really more than one sin. One sin led to another. But the two that stand out are:

- 1) The sin of adultery with Bathsheba, who was another man's wife.
- 2) The murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, who was a Gentile, but one of David's most faithful men.

Some time went by, apparently, before David confessed his sin and made it right with the Lord. On both of these counts David, according to the Mosaic Law, should have been put to death. But he was not! His sin was all the more despicable because of the position which he held as king of Israel. Still he was not put to death. Psalm 51 tells about the dreadful time that he had as the aftermath of his sin, but it also reveals for us some of the things that he learned during that time, and what he did to get rid of the terrible guilt which was upon his heart.

I hope to cover the whole Psalm today, but not just in a verse-by-verse fashion in the sense of going from 1 to 2 to 3, etc. I want to deal with the whole Psalm, taking from it the various features which were true of David's life at that time, and which will be profitable for us.

Will you note that the particular sins of David are not mentioned any place in this Psalm? This does not mean that David never did mention them to the Lord. Undoubtedly he did! But they are not mentioned here because this Psalm was written for us--that we might read it thinking about our own sins. We need to know how David dealt with his sins so we can learn what we should do.

Now we may not be guilty of the sins which David committed, but we all have our sins. They may not be as glaringly evil as David's were, but any sin is grievous to God. We are sinning if we are not praying. We are sinning if we are slothful in our work. We are sinning if we are careless in our speech. We

are sinning if we harbor wrong attitudes in our hearts. We are sinning in any way that we are disobedient to the Word of God. Lesser sins always lead to more grievous sins. That is the reason we need always to be watchful about sin in any form. We need to be praying continually such prayers as we find in Psa. 19:14 and Psa. 139:23, 24. What about pride--proud thoughts, or proud actions? Do we glory in what we are, or in our position, or in our accomplishments? There are many, many ways in which we sin against God.

So let us remember that Psalm 51 was written for us. If you need proof of this, read Rom. 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.

Or read Rom. 4:23-25 where Paul was actually writing about Abraham, but he said this:

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

In 1 Cor. 10 Paul was writing about the sins of Israel on the their way to the promised land, but he said this:

Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

That is in verse 6. In verse 11 he wrote this:

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

So Psalm 51 is for you; it is for me. As we consider it, let us be praying that we will profit from it.

David had sinned. 2 Samuel 11:27 records these words: "BUT THE THINGS THAT DAVID HAD DONE DISPLEASED THE LORD." Nathan the prophet had said, "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7). David was in desperate need of a PERSONAL REVIVAL. How did it come about?

David was a child of God. He was a saint of God. Let me refer to him as a saint, one whom God had made holy, one in whose heart God would bring a greater degree of holiness.

I. A HUMBLER SAINT (Psa. 51:1).

We who are the people of God, more than all other people, are to be humble. And God will humble us. But what a tragedy if we have to learn humility through sin!

See also v. 16. David knew what the Law said. He knew what

he deserved. And so he did the only thing that he could do:
He cast himself upon the mercy of God.

His position did not help him. His past obedience and service did not help him. His age did not excuse him. He had only one hope--that God would be merciful to him.

One very obvious lesson in this Psalm is that David, in some way, for some reason, had become proud in his heart. And that pride led him into sin, and was sin!

II. A REPENTANT SAINT (Psa. 51:3).

There is no attempt to excuse his sin, nor to hide his sin from God. He acknowledges it, and he calls it what it is. Notice the words that he used:

- 1) "Transgressions" in vv. 1, 3.
- 2) "Iniquity" in vv. 2, 5, "iniquities" in v. 9.
- 3) "Sin" in vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9.
- 4) "Bloodguiltiness" in v. 14.

We do not have to wonder what was on David's heart because his confession of his sin is very, very clear.

And to show that his repentance was genuine, note also that David was . . .

III. A BROKENHEARTED SAINT (Psa. 51:16, 17).

See also v. 4. Does this not remind you of the bitter tears which Peter wept? See Luke 22:62.

Have you ever wept over your sins? As you think of them now, do they still grieve you? God may forget them, but we never do. The memory of them remains that we may remember also how much we need the Lord to keep us from repeating them.

But in this same connection will you notice that David was . . .

IV. A WISER SAINT.

This is seen in several verses.

A. See v. 4 -- All sin is primarily against God.

Do you remember what Joseph said to Potiphar's wife? David must have know that story. Cf. Gen. 39:9b, ". . . how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

When David acknowledged his sin to Nathan, he said, "I

have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13a).

When Samuel was talking to the people of Israel after they had asked for a king, he said, "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you . . ." See 1 Sam. 12:23a.

All sin, whatever it is, is first of all against God!
We sometimes have to learn that the hard way.

B. Look at v. 5.

I suppose if I were to ask how many of you believe in the total depravity of the human heart, that most of you would raise your hands, indicating that you do. But do you know it in the depths of your heart? Do you know it as an ever-present threat to your own life and blessing? Do you really believe that you are capable of the worst of sins?

Only God can teach us this. We can hear it taught as a doctrine, but only the Lord can really make us know what it means that we were born in sin!

David knew that as a doctrine, but now he learned it in a way that he had never known it before. May God keep us from having to learn it as he did!

C. Look at v. 6.

David had become careless about what was going on in his heart. His son, Solomon, was to write these words:
"Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life"
(Prov. 4:23).

Do you know this? Are you keeping your heart?

Note that this is not only what God desires, but this is what He will have in our hearts. He will make us to know wisdom.

More could be said, but let me point out three other things that are evident about David from what he wrote in this Psalm.

V. A HOPEFUL SAINT.

People have various ways of dealing with their sins, but there is only one effective way. They may try to compensate for it. They may try to forget it. They may try to excuse it. But sin is never settled, even for a child of God, until it is confessed to God, and forsaken.

Look at vv. 7 and 8 and 9 and 10 and 11 and 12.

And all of this expressed that David was in a new and different and deeper way . . .

VI. A DEPENDENT SAINT.

— He did express what he wanted to do for the Lord, but all of that was conditioned upon what the Lord would do for him in forgiving him and cleansing him. Only God could forgive him and make things right. If God did not look upon him with favor, it was all over for David.

Every word of the Psalm expresses in one way or another his new sense of dependence upon God.

Finally we have . . .

VII. A GRATEFUL SERVANT.

How would David show his gratitude to the Lord? Notice how he plead (pled) with God for a restoration of his joy. See vv. 8 and 12.

There were two ways:

A. By worship. See vv. 14, 15.

— B. By service. See v. 13. Note that David did not just desire the activity of service, but he longed to be fruitful!

Concl: Now it is an easy thing for us to read a Psalm like this, and to hear it explained, and to go away saying, "Isn't that a wonderful Psalm!" And then proceed to forget about it.

But here is what I want you to do.

We are praying for revival, aren't we? We are looking to the Lord for a spiritual awakening. We are spending these Sunday mornings looking at the subject of revival in Scripture because we want a revival.

But what we may need at this time more than anything else is PERSONAL REVIVAL, a revival in each of our hearts. And the one thing that hinders that is sin, sin in some form.

— During the coming week would you read over this Psalm at least once a day, asking the Lord to search your heart, to show you your need, to cleanse you from those sins which are in your life and which only He can remove. If you will talk to the Lord like David did, this could mark the beginning of a true revival in your heart, as well as in our church. May God grant that it will be so!