**In Grave Sin: Worship Through Confession**

**Psalm 51 (ESV)**

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We come to celebrate the mercy of God this morning. I invite you to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 51. It’s a very famous psalm. It’s a trembling psalm. It’s so rich, so deep. It never ceases to teach us more and more about confession, about God’s mercy, about our need and about God’s provision. And so we’re going to look at Psalm 51. It tells us at the outset that it’s a psalm written by David.

*To The Choirmaster, A Psalm of David, When Nathan The Prophet Went To Him, After He Had Gone In To Bathsheba*

So this psalm was written likely about 12 months or so after the sin. It took him nearly a year to repent. For nearly a year he remained silent about his sin. Psalm 32 tells us of his experience during that year. It tells us that his bones were wasting away. He knew spiritually, he was just getting eaten up inside. And yet he didn’t confess until God sent Nathan, a prophet, to bring the Word, a word from the Lord to David. And that broke David’s heart in confession. So from David we learn what the worship of confession is about. So let’s read that together. David writes

***1*** *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.* ***2*** *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!*

***3*** *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.* ***4*** *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.* ***5*** *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* ***6*** *Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.*

***7*** *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* ***8*** *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.* ***9*** *Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.* ***10*** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* ***11*** *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.* ***12*** *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

***13*** *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.* ***14*** *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.* ***15*** *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.* ***16*** *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.* ***17*** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

***18*** *Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;* ***19*** *then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

Wow! May God use this word to feed our souls this morning!

What does great worship sound like?When we imagine the sound of worship we often bring to mind an auditorium full of people with voices full of joy, singing loudly with their whole hearts to the Lord. Certainly, that is one really important sound of worship. We plan to teach on jubilant worship on September 1st and September 29th in this series on worship. But last week we learned that the sound of worship may be one of hope-filled lament. One of the sweetest expressions of worship that we see in Scripture is the scene where Job hears for the first time that his children have been killed in a violent storm as Job’s oldest son’s house caved in upon them. And the Scripture tells us that immediately, as soon as he heard that message…Imagine being Job and hearing that message. Out of the blue it comes to you. The Scripture tells us

**Job 1:20-21** Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Job did acts of lament as he worshiped. When we hear Job say those words, we should not imagine Job’s tone being upbeat and giddy and gleeful. “Blessed be the name of the Lord!” It is said and spoken in a minor key. It’s spoken with groaning in his heart. Our Lord Jesus offered this same sound of worship from the cross when He cried out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

The sound of worship is not always what we think it is.Worship is not a straight edge that looks the same in every context. Worship bends to the misshapen circumstances of our lives. Worship is not one color; sunshine yellow. Worship is often painted by God’s people in painful purples and bleeding blues. Today we open up our Bibles to Psalm 51. Here we discover that the sound of worship includes deep sobs of repentance. It includes tearful weeping.

The main idea we want to chase through this wonderful psalm is that we worship God when we confess our sins to Him and ask for Him to forgive and cleanse us. That’s worship!We are highlighting this topic of worship in this series, because worship is our main calling as God’s people. Worship is our ultimate goal. Nothing else matters if we aren’t worshiping God. Jesus told us in John 4 that the Father is seeking after people who would worship Him. He is seeking for such people, Jesus says.

A.W. Tozer writes, “Why did Christ come? Why was He conceived? Why was He born? Why was He crucified? Why did He rise again? Why is He now at the right hand of the Father? The answer to all of these questions is, ‘In order that He might make worshippers out of rebels; in order that He might restore us again to the place of worship we knew when we were first created.’”

That’s His purpose. That’s God’s calling for us as a people. That is the driving goal that God has for us as a church. It’s worship! Worship is both the means and the end of the Christian life. So what is it? I offer this definition. I don’t claim this to be the best definition, but as I thought about worship I’ve included this definition because there are aspects of worship that often are missing in our thoughts about it, that this definition includes.

Worship sees God as the All-Sufficient Creator, the Loving Savior, and the Holy King that He is and then looks in faith for Him to be God to us. That’s worship! It’s a right perception of God as God and then a longing for God to be God to us and for us. Worship embraces God for who He is and embraces God personally. He is My All-Sufficient Creator. He is My Loving Savior. He is My Holy King.

The point I hope to press to you is that worship is not our giving something to God that God needs. That’s not what worship is. Worship is fundamentally looking to God for something that we need. That’s what worship is. Worship is the empty hand looking up to God and saying, “God, we have nothing to bring to you that is of value in ourselves. And you have everything to provide for us that is of value. We need you, God. And we see you as this treasure; this great, generous, good, loving, holy, righteous God. And so we call out before you.” That is worship! David drives this view of worship home in this psalm at the end, in verses 16 and 17.

***16*** *For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.* ***17*** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

A broken spirit is an impoverished soul. God will not turn away from anyone who comes with a gaping hole in their soul and says, “God, fill me. I need you.”

Now keep in mind that David was a really wealthy king. He could have given God thousands and thousands of animal sacrifices. But he says, “If I did that in worship, if I expend my whole kingdom in worship to you, you wouldn’t care one bit. That’s not what you desire.” David is also a very powerful sovereign. He is a very talented man. He could have offered to serve God in amazing ways, ways that most of us wouldn’t be able to serve Him because we don’t have that much power and we don’t have that much talent. But the psalmist recognizes, “That’s not what you want. That’s not what you take pleasure in. You don’t take pleasure in that I have a bunch of talents to offer you and pledge to you and commit my way to you. What you really desire is just simply a broken soul that comes to you and says, ‘God, I have needs. Be merciful to me.’”

God would be worshipped when David was broken by his own neediness and in the midst of his neediness, look in faith to God to give him what he needed in order for him to have life and joy. See, here’s the truth about worship. God is most honored when we announce our neediness to Him and trust Him to be the generous, all-sufficient God that He says He is. That’s when He is most honored. That’s when He is most adored.God is most adored when we believe that we have absolute needs that we can’t meet. We come to that recognition, and that God alone will satisfy. Confession of sin is one of the purest acts of worship that we offer to God because in confession we come to God for something we can’t provide for ourselves. We come to Him for forgiveness. We come to Him for cleansing. And we can’t make that happen in our own soul. We can’t clean ourselves from the inside out. Psalm 51 begins this way:

*To The Choirmaster, A Psalm of David, When Nathan The Prophet Went To Him, After He Had Gone In To Bathsheba*

Keep in mind that for forty-six years, David was a really, really, really godly man. He was a man who worshipped the Lord in remarkable ways. He was a man of integrity, faith, and godly leadership. Really, he is without equal among men in this regard. He was a man who knew the Word of the Lord, who loved the Word of the Lord, and obeyed it. Remember, he wrote Psalm 119 and he wrote Psalm 19. So he was not ignorant of God’s Word and of its power, of its transforming effect. He experienced that. He was a man who loved God and obeyed Him…until he didn’t.

Around forty-six or so years of age, he looked out and down from his palace and he saw a woman bathing. And he entered into the kind of sin that filled his life with darkness. He not only took advantage of a young married woman, he in this position of power and wealth. But he covered up his adultery with Bathsheba by having Uriah, her husband, killed in battle. That’s pretty, pretty low isn’t it? You think of all the low things that a person can do. That’s one of the lowest of the lows. Has anyone known anyone to have done that? I don’t have a friend that I know of that has done that. I know some people that have done some really low things, but I don’t personally know someone who has done that. And here David is entering into that kind of sin, and he doesn’t confess his sin. He hides it for nearly a year, until God sends Nathan, His prophet, to confront him. And now David composes this psalm to help us understand that chapter in his life and to help us learn from it. There are many lessons that can be drawn from David’s sin and confession. Let me quickly share two of them and then I’ll park on the third one.

Lesson #1: Every redeemed person must battle a terrible enemy within our own hearts. Every redeemed person is capable of great sin. Theologians call this enemy “indwelling sin.” It is indwelling sin that seeks to take control of us and to move us toward our passions instead of toward God. The Apostle Paul speaks rather eloquently and deeply of indwelling sin in a number of places. Romans 6, perhaps is preeminent. Paul pleads with the church at Rome to

**Romans 6:12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

Don’t let that happen! It will destroy you. It will bring such heartache and unhappiness. Indwelling sin is in the corruption of our soul that produces an appetite for those things that transgress God’s law, that dishonor God’s person and that deny God’s goodness.

Lesson #2: Sin in the life of the believer carries painful costs. Sin’s juice is never worth the squeeze. Godly people can sin in terrible ways, but they will always suffer miserably for it. God never allows His children to sin successfully. Know that!When David sinned, he did not see that his sin would cost him the lives of four of his sons. He couldn’t see that! When he saw Bathsheba he didn’t say, “I’m going to allow four of my sons to die in order to enter into that sin.” But that’s what happened to him. That was the miserable close end cost to his sin. David didn’t see that sin would bring civil war and division to the nation that he loved and led. David did not see that this sin would lead one son to try to kill him and take his throne from him. You see, indwelling sin blinds us to sin’s consequences. Indwelling sin whispers, “Others have suffered because of their sin, but you won’t. You’ll escape.” The third lesson, and this is one we’re going to park on and take some time to unravel is

Lesson #3: God offers grace to sinners who humbly come to Him in true confession. What a bright ray of sunshine this lesson is! It’s the primary lesson of Psalm 51. Our pride tempts us to look for other ways to find relief from the guilt, shame and pain of our own sin. But there is no other remedy. Only God as our Savior and only coming to Him through broken, contrite confession to God connects us to His mercy. David tried other remedies for his sin before he cast himself upon God’s mercy. And all of those remedies didn’t work. Here’s what he writes in Palm 32 about those attempts and their effects.

**Psalm 32:3-4** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

One of his remedies was just to hide it and keep silent about it; not talk about it. What should I do when I sin against the Lord? The answer is, let’s worship God by confessing our sin to Him. And again, I want to apply this very personally and practically. Are there sins that you have rolling through your hearts and lives today that you’re not confessing? Listen to Psalm 51. Listen to the hope offered! Listen to the goodness offered here. There are four qualities of worshipful confession that we want to trace through this psalm. The first is

**Quality #1: Belief in God’s mercy.**

It always starts with a faith about who God is; a faith in His goodness. He writes in verse 1, this is how he starts off this psalm. He says

***1*** *Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

David begins where we all must begin; coming to God on the basis of God’s character, on the basis of God’s mercy. God’s qualities of steadfast love and abundant mercy are the roots of true confession. We would never confess our sins to God if God were not merciful, if we didn’t know Him to be abundant in His lovingkindness. God’s mercy is where we find the starting place in our conversation with God. And that’s important because that’s not the way our flesh would naturally even come to God regarding our sin.

We must not begin this conversation with God with an explanation of the circumstances behind our sin. We must not begin with a declaration of all the ways we obeyed God and the righteous actions we’ve taken, as though they are on a scale. We must not begin with any rationalizations, minimizations or excuses. We must not begin this conversation with promises to God of an obedient life in the future. We don’t even begin this conversation with God by talking about the merit of our tearful sorrow. We don’t say, “Lord, listen to how sincere I am when I tell you that I am really, really, really sorry for my sin.” No, we begin this conversation with God by pleading something that is outside of ourselves. And that something is God’s mercy. We say, as David did, “Have mercy on me, O God.” That’s where we begin.As David meditates upon God’s character, he knows that God is a God of mercy. It’s on the basis of this quality that David asks for forgiveness. He says

*according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.*

The principle we learn is that it is God’s mercy that motivates our confession. That’s what fuels it. God’s mercy is never purchased by our own works to make up for our sins. It’snever merited by our tears or by our sorrow. It’s never earned by years of good behavior and thinking that maybe if we behave long enough, then God’s mercy will accumulate for us. No, God’s mercy is rooted in Himself. He is the God of mercy!

There are two gospel truths about God’s mercy that Sunday School children should know as they are raised in Christian homes and raised in Christian churches. The first gospel truth is that God’s mercy is free. It’s never purchased by any merit, by any effort, by any acts that we do. It’s received simply by a beggar’s heart saying, “God, I have a need and I know you sent your Son, Jesus Christ to die upon the cross. It is on the basis of His finished work on the cross that I plead for forgiveness. His mercy is free. The second gospel truth is that God’s mercy is more. We sang about that just a few moments ago. Whatever sin we have committed, God’s mercy is full enough to bring forgiveness and cleansing.

I have a caution as we think about God’s mercy and its connection to confession. My caution is, don’t place your faith in your confession. There’s a big difference to placing your faith in God’s mercy and placing your faith in your confession. Don’t think that God now will forgive you because your confession is so humble, so sincere, so tear-laced. No, that’s the wrong place to put your faith, to put your trust, to put your confidence. Don’t think that because my confession is the right kind of confession, therefore God must forgive me. No, it’s because God is merciful that God will forgive.

No one ever grieved over their sin more than Judas did. And yet Judas was not forgiven because he didn’t plea for God’s mercy. He didn’t believe in it. God forgives us because He is merciful to broken hearted, repentant people. The application of course then is that we are to believe His mercy will abound toward you when you come to Him and seek Him with a broken heart. Just believe that! There is no obstacle to God’s mercy being sufficient for you. None!

It’s easy to see confession of sin as something kind of negative, as something necessary, but something that is kind of unpleasant. Friends, confession of our sin is one of the most positive activities that our soul can engage in. It’s super, super positive! It’s a positive experience because God is so merciful and we know what God will do to a soul that comes to Him in humble repentance, in humble confession. Yes, confession is filled with sorrow over sin, but it’s sorrow rooted in hope. It’s sorrow that embraces the guarantee of sufficient comfort. In confession, we are not merely turning away from our sin. We are turning toward an infinitely generous God who offers us His very self. So the first quality of confession is belief in God’s mercy.

**Quality #2: Humble plea for forgiveness and cleansing.**

Notice how many petitions that David makes throughout this psalm.

***2*** *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!* ***3*** *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.* ***4*** *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.*

Notice that David does not minimize his sin in order to find relief from its guilt. He fully confesses the wickedness of his own sin. He owns it. He says, “My transgression, my iniquity, my sin. I sinned and have done what is evil.” That’s what he says about himself. That’s a full ownership. Satan and our flesh deceive us into thinking that we have not sinned as badly as we have or that our sin is some sort of misstep, some flaw, instead of a great evil, a great wickedness. David cries, “Wash me!” because he knew how dirty his soul had become, how corrupted it is.

He calls out for God to wash him because he knows he can’t wash himself. Sin had created this stain upon his soul that he couldn’t cleanse. And what is true of David is true of us. Only God can wash us. Only God can make us clean. So the cry of confession is “Wash me! Cleanse me!” David didn’t make excuses. He didn’t plead extenuating circumstances. He didn’t pass the blame. He didn’t whitewash the seriousness of his own sin. In Psalm 32:5, and again, this is another one of the psalms that I think he writes a little later, upon even further reflection upon this time in his life. He says

**Psalm 32:5** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah*

He says, “I stopped doing my first strategy when I confessed my sin.” David knows that man’s first response to sin is to find refuge from the guilt of sin by hiding or by making excuses. That’s what we do. He knows that by his personal experience, but he knows that also on the basis of the Word of God. He had read Genesis and he had read what Adam and Eve did when they sinned against God. He remembers that when they sinned against God, they first sewed fig leaves together to cover their shame. They thought they could do something to cover the shame and that would take care of that sin’s shame. He knows that when God walked in the cool of the day, that they hid from Him. They thought they could actually escape His gaze. He knows that when God chased them down and God confronted their sin, he knows that Adam said, “It’s that woman. Yes, I did sin. But it’s that woman whom you placed in the garden with me.” And then when God turned to Eve, she said, “Yes, I sinned, but it’s that serpent that you created, God, that drew me into this sin.”

Let me ask you a question. Would Adam have sinned if Eve were not present in the garden? Let me ask you another question. Would Eve have sinned if the serpent hadn’t been created? I see different answers. Do you know what my answer is? My answer is that I don’t know. I don’t know whether Adam would have sinned if Eve wasn’t present. I have no reason to believe he wouldn’t, but I have no reason to believe he would. I don’t know whether Eve would have sinned if the serpent wasn’t there. But here’s the point. It doesn’t matter!

For the sake of argument, let’s suppose that Adam wouldn’t have sinned if Eve weren’t present. Adam, it doesn’t matter. Why are you talking about that? Let’s suppose that Eve wouldn’t have sinned if the serpent hadn’t have been in the garden. Eve, it doesn’t matter. Why are you bringing this up? The presence of tempting influences does not bring about any excuse whatsoever for our responsibility to obey God. Our flesh looks for refuges other than God to find a solution to our sin problem. Here’s the truth. We cannot find refuge in some back story that minimizes our sin and also confess that sin fully to the LORD. We have to choose. It’s impossible to do both! Adam, you have to give up your back story about Eve. Eve, you have to give up your back story about the serpent, or you can’t confess sin.

I don’t know. We’re not told whether David had a back story, but he certainly could have. He was the guy who his brothers didn’t really appreciate. Do you remember when he went to visit them on the battle field? He was the guy who only did what was right by Saul, and yet Saul tried to kill him. He was the guy who Saul gave his daughter to marry and then Saul took his wife back away from him. Do you remember that? Those are bad things. And he could have said, “You know, look at all that happened to me as I was growing up. This is what led me to this point where I was tempted to gaze upon Bathsheba and desire her.” But you know what? It doesn’t matter. And confession caused him to realize that his only refuge to bring true restoration and cleansing and forgiveness, is God. It’s a full acknowledgement of the responsibility for his own sin. Look what he says in verse 4. I love this because he’s even driving deeper into his own wickedness.

***4*** *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.*

“God, you would be completely righteous to put me away forever. You are blameless in your judgment. When you call out my sin, there is nothing wrong with what you say about my sin.” He says

***4*** *Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil*

But didn’t David sin against Bathsheba and Uriah? Yes, he did. Didn’t David sin against the nation and his family? Yes, he did. David is not denying that. But he sees his sin as being first and foremost, an offense to God because God is the ultimate authority in all of life. God is the one who created us. God is the one who loves us. God is the one who provides for us. It is this focus upon our wickedness before the Lord who never does us wrong, that is the heart of true confession. Our sin is wicked primarily because we sin against the God who gives us life and who offers us eternal joy.

Now it’s important for us here not to think that because perhaps we haven’t committed adultery, we haven’t committed murder like David did, that our sin is not as serious as David’s. Our sin, whatever it might be, is infinitely wicked because we sin against God. We will learn to truly hate our sin only if we see it as treason against the God who loves us. Look at verse 5. He continues to delve even deeper into the confession of his own sinfulness. He says

***5*** *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

His confession included a right evaluation of the wickedness of his own heart. He knows that it’s not just his deeds that have dishonored the LORD, but it’s the whole attitude of his heart. He confesses that his actions revealed a heart that was defiant. With this verse, what David is saying is, “Do you know why I sinned? It’s because my heart is dark and wicked from the beginning.”

Again, in our natural flesh we look for places for hiding, for cover from that kind of confession. Our flesh says things like, “That happened, but that’s not really who I am.It hit me in a moment of weakness. I’m not really like that. If you came to know me, you’d know that I’m really a pretty good person. I’m just a good person who made a really bad mistake.” In verse 5, what David is saying is, “No, I really am like that. That’s me! That’s my heart. If you want to see the real David, look to that adulterous relationship. Look to that murder. That’s me! That’s my heart. That’s my problem.” It is this kind of confession that is worship. It’s a full acknowledgment of our neediness. Beware of admitting the guilt of your sin without fully accepting the blame for your sin.

**Proverbs 30:12** There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.

Again, our own subjective feelings must not drive our understanding of our soul. God’s grace convinces us of our own sinfulness. If any of us are convinced of our sinfulness like David was, it’s only because God’s mercy has already met us. We would be at a loss, and that’s why we need the lamp of God’s Word to light our soul. We need to see ourselves for who we really are. And it’s only God’s grace working through His Holy Spirit and by His Word, through Jesus Christ, that helps us to come to this kind of acknowledgment. Otherwise, we’re always chasing after a different refuge. God calls us to humble ourselves before Him and to confess our sin. That brings us to the third quality.

**Quality #3: Reliance upon Christ’s atoning sacrifice.**

God’s mercy does not denigrate His righteousness. Confession doesn’t perceive God as a permissive parent who looks past our sins and pretends they didn’t happen. No, we recognize that God is just and in order to forgive, sin’s full payment for the injustice of our sin must be met. And that’s the reason why David says in verse 7,

***7*** *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

What is hyssop? Hyssop is a plant that grew in the ancient Near East, and it was used as a brush. The first time the word “hyssop” is used in the Bible is when God gave instructions to the people of Israel while they were in enslavement in Egypt. He told them to kill the Passover lamb. There is going to be an Angel of Death that is going to judge this people. So you have to kill a Passover lamb, take a hyssop branch and dip the hyssop branch in the blood of that lamb, that atoning sacrifice. Paint the door posts of your house with that blood on the top and the sides. And then when the Angel of Death comes, it will see the blood. It will see the covering. It will see the sacrifice was made, and it will pass over and won’t bring judgment on that house that’s covered by the blood.

So this is very clearly an acknowledgment of God’s provision through a blood sacrifice, that David was looking forward to and we look back upon, which is Jesus. He is the atoning sacrifice. He is the Passover lamb whose blood offers the justice of God, offers the righteousness of a full payment of the punishment our sins deserve in Jesus. This is why John would write as he thinks about the cross of Jesus,

**1 John 1:9 NAS95** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He used the word “righteous.” In other words, God has already laid the sins of His people upon Jesus and there is no double payment for sin. Once that sin has been paid for, it would be actually unrighteous of God to require another payment for the same sin after it’s already been paid. And so, if we confess our sins, it is through Christ and His atoning blood that God is faithful and He is righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Note here in Psalm 51 that David twice says, “God, wash me.” David knows that his past sin has cast his soul into a stinking, foul mud pit. And as he climbs out of that pit, he’s no longer sinning, but he still has mud caked upon his soul. He tries what he can to wash it, and he can’t wash himself.

In your worship devotions, I wrote a story of when I was a youth pastor. There was a junior high boy that asked his dad for his, I think it was his 13th birthday, if he could just have his friends over to play mud football. So his dad is a rancher and he dug this big, huge pit about 6 or 8 inches deep. He filled it with water and let it rest there. And then of course he asked his youth pastor to come and play. And so it was an amazing day, but I was covered with mud and sweat by the end of the day. There was mud on the top of my head, mud in my eyes, mud in my nostrils, mud in my mouth, mud everywhere! I went home and I was so tired that I said, “Kimberly, I’m so tired. I’m just going to flop down here on the bed and rest for the night. (Laughter!) No, I didn’t do that. I couldn’t wait to be clean. It was fun getting muddy, but it was really great, and what a great feeling to get clean and to go to bed in a clean bed.

David says, “My soul is muddy. It’s dirty. Wash me. Wash me. Wash me. I don’t want to spend one more night like this. Wash me!” And the blood of Christ cleanses us of all our sins. If we confess our sins to God, He is faithful to wash us clean.

**Quality #4: Yearning for God to be glorified.**

We’ll be brief here with this.

***10*** *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

That word “create” is used of God’s creation in Genesis 1 and 2 when God created the worlds out of nothing, when God created the animals of the air and the land and the sea, when God created man. That word create is *bara*. He knows, “I need a miracle.” This is not something like taking a hose and washing me off. I need a miracle. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Create in me something that is new and that is right.

Is it possible to be given a new heart after sin has corrupted it? Yes, that’s what God does. A thousand times, yes! By the power of God, who spoke the world into being, you can have a new heart. And David knows that if he doesn’t have a new heart, he’s going to climb back into that pit again. I don’t know how many of you have been in a cycle. You say, “I sin and then I confess. I sin and I confess. I sin and I confess.” It’s like an unending cycle. You just keep crawling back into the same pit. And what you and I need is for God to create. We need Him to do a miracle and give us a new heart so we can be liberated and free, so that sin won’t be our master. Is it possible for a person to glorify God after he or she has sinned?

***13*** *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.* ***14*** *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.* ***15*** *O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.*

David knows that his sin brought dishonor to God and that his sin negatively impacted the spiritual vitality of the nation around him, of his family. He knows that his sin had a negative effect. He says, “I don’t want to live one more day, having a negative effect upon people. I want my life to be used so that other people would also worship God.” And he envisions that. That’s what confession does. It actually envisions that God would be the kind of God who not only forgives and not only cleanses, but the God who restores to godly influence. Confession’s ultimate goal is the increase of worship in one’s life and among God’s people. David prayed for that.

Let me finish with four specific applications. What do we do in view of Psalm 51? I hope we do much.

1. Let us humbly seek the mercy of God for ourselves.

David’s sin should humble us and cause us to say, “Well, my heart is dark, too. I need Christ.” And if you’ve never come to Christ for cleansing, come to Christ today. He is a merciful God. Why are you fleeing from Him? He is a God full of mercy if you come with a broken, contrite spirit. He won’t despise you.

2. Let us make confession a daily, normal part of our prayer life.

Thin praying makes for thin souls. Confession is God’s means to powerfully create in us daily, clean hearts. And oftentimes, we don’t have because we don’t ask. Jesus, when He taught us to pray, part of daily prayer is “Father, forgive us our sins even as we forgive those who sin against us.” God intends for confession to be part of our natural conversation with the Lord. So let’s make confession a daily part of our prayer life as well as supplication and adoration and thanksgiving.

3. Let us lovingly offer the mercy of God to others.

In other words, let’s forgive well. We sin against God. Other people sin against us. We have the greater guilt because our sin is against God. Here’s the Gospel logic. If God forgives us, who are we to withhold forgiveness? If God forgives us so greatly, who are we to withhold forgiveness for so little?

4. Let us pursue the joy of our salvation together.

Look around you for a moment. We’re going to sing that song *Create In Me A Clean* *Heart*. Who is sitting around you? The answer is sinners. There are sinners who have indwelling sin. Many of them, most here, I know are redeemed sinners. Some are not. But we’re sinners. And for this reason, God says that when we come together we have a real, special opportunity. He says in Hebrews 10

**Hebrews 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This indwelling sin will grind every one of us down if we’re isolated and alone. And the person sitting next to you, I can almost guarantee you that indwelling sin is pressing against them in some significant way, a really significant way. And they need the encouragement of brothers and sisters who would pray for them. Not gossip about them, not slander them, not criticize them. They need brothers and sisters who say, “I care for you and I want to pray for you. I want to encourage you. And I want to do that more and more as the Day draws near.”