

Create in Me a Pure Heart

Psalm 51 - Part Two

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We have been going through a sermon series called: "How the Psalms Teach us to Pray."

Last week we began looking at Psalm 51.

I will read the entire psalm tonight, but we will focus today's sermon on the second half.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, from Psalm 51.

For the director of music.

A psalm of David.

When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your unfailing love;

according to your great compassion

blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity

and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions,

and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned

and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are right in your verdict

and justified when you judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,

sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;

you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;

let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins

and blot out all my iniquity.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence

or take your Holy Spirit from me.

- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.
- 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- 15 Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.
- 18 May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

Please pray with me.

Father in heaven, thank you for teaching us how to pray through psalms like this.

Help us trust and believe that you hear every word we pray in the name of your beloved son Jesus.

For our good and your glory, amen.

Last week we heard from 2 Samuel 11 about David's sins of adultery and murder.

David wrote Psalm 51 as his prayer of repentance.

David wanted his relationship with God to be repaired.

But David also had a damaged relationship with himself.

Forgiveness for his past sins was not enough, because David would surely sin again.

David knows that he needs to be changed on the inside so that his outside behavior will change.

Sanctification is what the second half of Psalm 51 is about.

The first half was about justification.

I will explain what those terms mean, after I read verses 7-9 again:

7 "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness;

let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

9 Hide your face from my sins

and blot out all my iniquity."

David asks God for justification in these verses.

Justification is a legal term.

Imagine you are charged with a crime and brought into the courtroom.

The government believes you are guilty.

But if the judge announces that you are "not guilty," he makes a legal decision that you are innocent.

You are justified in the eyes of the government.

David knew that he was guilty of great sin.

He cannot change the past, nevertheless David asks God the judge to declare him innocent.

For that to happen, God needs to wash away David's guilt and shame.

Last week I shared that hyssop was the plant used to spread and sprinkle blood as a sign of God's forgiveness and protection.

When David asked God to cleanse him with hyssop, he asked for a substitute victim.

David asked God to forgive his terrible sins through the blood of another.

Look at this picture please.

Jesus is on one side, with no sin at all.

He is the only human being who ever lived without sinning even one time.

I am on the other side, stained red by my sin.

The stain of sin affects everything we do, and it separates us from God.

But Jesus was willing to take the punishment that should be ours, so we can be forgiven.

Through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we can be declared innocent in the court of heaven.

When our sin and shame are transferred to Jesus, His holiness and honor are transferred to us.

We receive the gift of justification.

The apostle John described it this way in 1 John 1:9.

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

Justification by faith is a gift from the Holy Spirit, something we cannot earn through our own efforts.

Sanctification is the process of God making us more holy in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

We participate in our sanctification, but it is God who molds us into new people.

Look with me again at verses 10-12, where David asks for sanctification.

10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God,

and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence

or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation

and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.:

Notice that David is asking God to do these things for him.

"Create" is the Hebrew word "bārā."

This word describes things only God can do.

The same verb is in Genesis chapter 1, where God created the earth and seas, the moon and the stars.

David's heart needs more than repair.

David knows he is weak and tempted by sin.

He needs God to give him a "steadfast spirit" that will resist sin.

David needs to be born again, with a new heart, so he can live in new ways.

The apostle Paul describes this rebirth in Ephesians 2 verses 1, 4, and 5:

"1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--

it is by grace you have been saved... "

Through faith in Christ, anyone can be saved, justified, and resurrected spiritually.

Your name is changed to "child of God" and you become a citizen of God's Kingdom.

Then God helps you begin to live like a child of God.

Paul describes the connection between identity and practice in Ephesians 2:8-10.

8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--

and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--

9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

10 For we are God's handiwork;

created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

God has called to do good work, to pursue our sanctification and walk in the Spirit.

Our good work cannot earn God's love, but other people can see the effects of sanctification in our lives.

My friend Cindy recently went to visit her mom in China.

Cindy's mom has Alzheimer's disease, so she is losing her memory.

She could not even recognize her daughter Cindy when she arrived in China to visit.

Then Cindy's mom looked at her and said:

"You look like my youngest child, but you seem different.

You are much more patient than my youngest child ever was."

Cindy explained to her mom that she was that same daughter.

But her mom could see the result of sanctification at work in Cindy's life.

One of the most-common mistakes in Christianity is to reverse the order of justification and sanctification.

I understand why this happens.

It makes sense to us that we must pursue sanctification first.

We know God will judge us for our behavior, so we want to perform well.

We think that our progressive holiness will one day cause God to declare our innocence.

But David doesn't believe that.

Hundreds of years before Jesus the Savior was born, David knew that he could only be justified through the sacrifice of another.

Look at Psalm 51 verse 14:

14 "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness."

The only way God could forgive David for shedding the blood of Uriah was through the shed blood of a substitute.

God does not ask us to pay for our sins, because we cannot.

David understood that God will provide the Lamb for the sacrifice.

God asks us to provide our broken hearts and repentance.

We see this in verse 17:

17 "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise."

I remember talking to a good friend of mine, whose heart was broken about his failures.

He was depressed, full of regret and shame.

Because he felt so broken, he wondered if God would despise and reject him.

I said no, it is impossible for God to reject any of his children.

I told my friend:

"This broken place is WHERE you are.

It is not WHO you are."

Satan wants us to think that when we sin, we are bad.

Yes, sin is bad, and we make bad choices.

But we ARE saints--that is who we are.

We are holy and innocent in God's eyes.

Listen to how Paul describes the Christians in 1 Corinthians 1:2-3.

2 "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus,

called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul refers to the Christians in Corinth as saints.

The Greek word means "holy ones."

It refers to everyone who has received justification and declared innocent.

But Paul is not a fool.

Paul knows that these justified people continued to sin, that's why he wrote this letter to them!

Listen to 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

18 "Flee from sexual immorality.

Every other sin a person commits is outside the body,

but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?

You are not your own,

20 for you were bought with a price.

So glorify God in your body."

Paul wrote those words to the same people he called "saints."

Paul is encouraging the justified saints in Corinth to walk in holiness--to pursue sanctification.

My friends, in God's eyes we are not sinners who sometimes do right.

We are saints who sometimes sin.

We are children of God, through faith in Christ's finished work.

The joy and peace of this irreversible fact gives us hope to keep fighting the power of sin in our lives.

Let me tell you about this man, No Kum-sok 노금석.

No was lieutenant in the North Korean Air Force during the Korean War.

In 1953, he flew his fighter jet to an American Air Force base in South Korea and asked for political asylum.

The United States accepted his surrender and interviewed him.

Then they gave him a new name and identity.

He was allowed to live in the United States and become an American citizen.

When you decide to follow Jesus, your experience is kind of like that.

You become a citizen of God's Kingdom, but it takes time to absorb the values and practices of your new home.

When No changed kingdoms, some external things changed about his life.

He changed his name to Kenneth Rowe.

He moved to Florida and lived there with his wife and children, until he died this past December.

But internally, No did not immediately change when he came to America.

He didn't immediately begin thinking and acting like a man who lived in a free democratic society.

Changing our mindset and habits can only happen over time.

Thankfully, God is patient and committed to the work of sanctification in our lives.

He helps us learn to live according to our new identity as children of God.

Let me summarize what we've seen today, and then we will pray.

On the cross, our sin and shame were transferred to Jesus.

And Jesus transferred to us his righteousness.

We received Christ's record of obedience to God's law, and the Father declared us justified and innocent.

In other words, we are saints, who also continue to sin.

But we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts.

When we walk in the Spirit, we learn to say no to temptation, and say yes to holiness.

Sanctification is God's gift to his children, that we are blessed to receive with gratitude and hope.

Let's pray together now.

Father in Heaven, thank you that you hear our prayers.

We fail to obey your commands every day.

But you welcome our prayers and you bless us because we do not come to you with our shameful record.

We have given our shame and failure to Jesus.


And he has given to us his honor and his holiness.

Thank you for the justification we receive in Christ.

Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who helps us live like saints.

Make us more like Jesus, please.

We pray this in His name, amen.

 One Voice Fellowship