

Biola University

Digital Commons @ Biola

Biola Radio Publications

Biola Radio

How to get rid of guilt : studies in Psalms

Al Sanders

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/biola-radio-pubs>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sanders, Al, "How to get rid of guilt : studies in Psalms" (1982). *Biola Radio Publications*. 102.
<https://digitalcommons.biola.edu/biola-radio-pubs/102>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Biola Radio at Digital Commons @ Biola. It has been accepted for inclusion in Biola Radio Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Biola. For more information, please contact university.archives@biola.edu.

**HOW TO GET
RID OF**

Guilt

Psalm 51

**A Guide to Restoring
Fellowship with God**

BJ
1471.5
.S61ht
1982
Spec
Fac

STUDIES IN PSALMS

By Al Sanders

BIOLOGIA UNIVERSITY

This page has been left blank to allow for proper page turns.

**HOW TO GET
RID OF**

Guilt

STUDIES IN PSALMS
By Al Sanders

Published in 1982 by Biola University
as a ministry of the Biola Hour
13800 Biola Avenue
La Mirada, California 90639

HOW TO GET

RID OF

at 1415 55th 1902 Sp...



Some months ago, a widely distributed national magazine used as its cover a simple statement with a familiar quotation. It declared that the six most important words in all the world are, "I admit I made a mistake." Sad to say, though, too few people are really willing to "own up" to their faults. Pride can so often rear its ugly head and prevent an open admission of guilt.

One of the prime things to remember when we're faced with guilt from our own wrongdoing is a willingness to say, "I admit I made a mistake." The words are easy to articulate, but the humble attitude of heart comes with a little more reticence. As a result we find only hopelessness and despair. Guilt is a terrible weight to bear when we're not willing to face up to difficulties it may cause. To be sure, admitting our sin is not a complicated thing, but generally it is very hard.

The Greatest Disease Of All: Sin

Years ago, some of you may remember, there was an old vaudeville team known as Smith and Dale. Some of their silly routines are even being repeated by comedians of today. One of their more memorable routines is staged in a pathetic

physician's office. Smith is the doctor. Dale comes in for a diagnosis of his illness. As Smith does all of the routine checking, he is obviously mystified as to the basic sickness. Finally, pondering over the problem, he asks Dale, "Have you had this illness before?" Dale, obviously in pain, responds immediately with a groan, "Oh, yes, Doctor, I've had it many times!" Unable to make a proper diagnosis, Smith simply enjoins, "Well, sir, I'm sorry to have to tell you, you have it once again." The routine serves as an illustration of a sickness we all have over and over again. Man is constantly beseiged and beset with the greatest of all diseases: sin.

As a matter of fact, ever since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, we've been plagued with the same difficulty. Sin has blighted the human race. Unfortunately, in these days, some people gloss over iniquity rather lightly, calling it simply a mistake, or perhaps not even willing to recognize transgression as an immoral impurity—falling short of the Almighty's standards! The fact remains that sin is basically a slap in the face of God. There is nothing, absolutely nothing pretty or clever about it whatsoever.

The other day we were discussing the subject of our sins with a friend. This individual was concerned because she thought as a believer, when we stand before the Lord's judgment seat, our sins will be revealed not only to us, but also to everyone else as well. We assured her, based on our understanding of Scripture, that she needn't worry because the revelation would simply be for our own benefit and any selfish works would be consumed. She responded by saying, "Oh, that wasn't what bothered me. I just wanted to make certain that at the time of Christ's judgment of believers, when everyone's sins are made known, I'd be standing near someone who had a really interesting past." Well, she was being facetious, yet, somehow things that intrigue people most today are those items of gossip, even what is base, immoral and impure, which is sinful in the sight of God.

Dr. David Ruebin, an acclaimed expert in the field of sex, recently wrote in our newspaper about a letter he'd received from one of his readers. The inquirer stated, "Some states are about to pass laws allowing minors to buy contraceptives. Why don't the local authorities okay money to pay for motel rooms, too? Isn't it about time our government stopped subsidizing sin?" Since the question was written with a tongue-in-cheek attitude, Dr. Ruebin's answer was quite perceptive, especially based on the times in which we're living. He rejoined, "Subsidizing sin probably would be a waste, since the price of sinning has gotten so low these days that anyone can afford it." What a commentary on our times! Isn't it sad to realize that people have such a low estimation about the cost of sin? I can assure you, in God's sight, however, that the only wages which haven't been frozen in our country are the wages of sin.

How Can One Be Relieved Of Guilt?

Because of past experiences and involvements, many people today are faced with terrible feelings of guilt. There is an unresolved sin question in connection with involvements of the past. How can one be relieved of guilt? One of the best illustrations to be found anywhere in the Word of God, is in Psalm 51. Now, some people might immediately think that passage is so intensely personal, it might be inappropriate to discuss this in public. Yet, notice the inspired caption. By the way, this is one of the few Psalms about which we know the exact cause for its writing and its ultimate purpose. Note that it's addressed to the chief musician. This plainly shows that it was a psalm meant to be used with the entire congregation—and in public worship! Therefore, its message of sin, guilt and restoration is most definitely intended for our own admonition and understanding.

I don't suppose there's any other psalm among the 150, whose cause for writing is so universally known. What is

amazing to realize is that David, the King of Israel, was an absolute monarch. He not only had his wives, but also many concubines. What eastern king would have even thought twice about any wrong in what David did? Even today, there are individuals who think lightly of taking other men's wives. Ever since 1974, our country has been occupied with the subject of "Watergate." Realizing what David did, murder as well as committing adultery, his monarchy was also tarnished by a genuine scandal.

Restoring Fellowship With God

Every student of Scripture certainly loves Psalm 51. Every scoffer or critic knows all about it and points the finger at God's man, David. But the wonderful thing is that every devout believer can come to this particular portion and realize the God-ordained way of getting rid of guilt. Fellowship with the Lord can only be maintained through confession, cleansing and re-commissioning.

The fact is that David committed a terrible deed. But there are multitudes of others who have continually committed in their minds things which could be considered far worse. This doesn't mean that David's failure was excusable. David was judged and condemned by God and bore the life-long scar of this degradation. Yet, we need to ask ourselves if we're so ready to find fault with others that we fail to see the sin in our own lives. Have you ever thought of it in this way? Without question, the greatest sin is to be conscious of none. Perhaps the reason we're so apt to point our finger at others is a subconscious hope that we can relieve our own minds about what God has said concerning transgression of His law.

Guilt plays a tremendous part in much of the mental and physical illness so prevalent on every hand. One noted London psychologist, with the facts to back him up, asserted that fully 70 percent of the people in mental hospitals could be released rather quickly if they could somehow find

forgiveness for the things they had done, said or even thought. Unable to find release, their minds are plagued with grief and guilt.

One Sin Leads To Another

Instead of confessing his sin, David compounded the ugly problem by trying to cover up his iniquity. It seemed to be an ingenious idea. He sent word to the head of his forces, Joab, requesting that Uriah, the Hittite, be returned from the battle lines. You can imagine the confrontation when Bathsheba's husband stood before him. Perhaps David nervously asked about the welfare of his captain, the soldiers, how the war was going or anything else he could think of, avoiding the main problem. Realizing that he had to do something, David urged Uriah to go home so he could spend some well-deserved time relaxing with his wife. Uriah, however, was completely dedicated to a cause. He felt that if his fellow soldiers had to be out fighting, it wasn't fair for him to enjoy the comfort and leisure of his home. He wanted to defend his king, so he took up a position at the doorway of the palace. There he remained for the entire night. David's clever plan had been foiled! Uriah could have had no opportunity of getting close to Bathsheba so that there might be a convenient excuse for her pregnancy. What could be done now?

Finally, he hit upon another plan. That was to get the brave soldier, Uriah, intoxicated so that he wouldn't know what was happening. In this way he could send him down to Bathsheba and the cover-up would be complete; no one would question the pregnancy. (See how sin compounds itself?) Still a man of conviction and dedication, Uriah refused to go. He had only a heart to serve his nation and leader.

What a dilemma! David's sin now had become more and more compounded! No other course of action remained. The evil deed of adultery had to find its ultimate source in

destruction. You remember, I'm sure, how David wrote a letter to Joab, which was ironically sent by the hand of Uriah. The commander of Israel's forces was told to put Bathsheba's husband in the front lines. It wasn't just a case of bravery. David wanted to make very sure that he would be killed. And Uriah, the willing soldier, evidently didn't argue a bit. He was ready, no matter the cost, to give his life for the cause in which he believed.

David's Sin: The Background To The Psalm

The background to Psalm 51 can be found in II Samuel, beginning at chapter 11 and continuing through chapter 12. Although many other portions of Scripture relate other aspects concerning this sin of David, this is the primary portion. Notice that when the Holy Spirit gives us the full disclosure, in no way does He seek to "gloss over" the account presented. Every sordid detail is included.

Let's look at it for a few minutes. The troops had gone out to battle. Joab and his servants had sought to destroy the enemies of Israel during the springtime. With his forces at the battle, one evening King David went out for some fresh air. While strolling on the roof of his home, he looked down to see a woman bathing. He couldn't help but notice that she was very beautiful.

We should pause here just long enough to indicate what may have been a vital factor in the story. While it isn't related as a revelation of the inspired record, it could well be that Bathsheba was not so innocent herself. It always takes two for the involvement. I'm sure that David, on many occasions, was known to go to the roof of his palace so that he could survey his beloved city of Jerusalem and seek out God's will for the people whom he ruled. A lonely Bathsheba could easily have known of the nocturnal practice of the king. This is only conjecture, but, perhaps, even at the appointed hour of his stroll, she made certain while her husband was gone that

she would be noticed by her monarch.

By the way, the very name "Bathsheba" is quite interesting. The first part, "bath" is the Hebrew term for "daughter," and "sheba" is the word for "seven," the number of perfection. Literally, she was the daughter of perfection. David certainly found her to be a perfect specimen of the opposite sex. He wanted to know more about her and find out who she was.

Once the information was presented to him that she belonged to another man, the wife of Uriah, it should have been sufficient. He shouldn't have toyed with the temptation. That would have kept her from ever being a part of his concubine, unless her husband died in battle. I don't think that possibility or necessity even entered David's mind at this time. All he knew was that he wanted Bathsheba. His servants were sent to bring her to him and he lost no time in committing the act of adultery. As this illustrated, every temptation presents an "open door."

Then, Scripture tells us that after the time of her purification (this could have been anywhere from eight days to 33) she returned to her own home. David undoubtedly thought that he would hear no more from the dalliance. But he failed to realize that what we sow we must also reap, and consequently, Bathsheba sent the shocking word that she was pregnant.

The Bible warns us, "Be sure your sins will find you out." One of the clearest portions in the Word of God on this subject is found in the first chapter of James. Beginning with verse 13, we understand that the author of temptation is none other than the devil. But, when the temptation comes, and we give in to it, it becomes sin and our life is blackened and blighted. You see, even as physical life is conceived, so lust gives birth to sin. Once conception has been consummated, something has to issue. Physically it is the birth of a child. Spiritually it is always death.

Shortly thereafter, when word came back to David that

the wicked deed had been accomplished, David claimed Bathsheba for his own. Doubtless he thought everything was now taken care of. His trail had been covered. He'd committed the perfect crime. He was free. After all, he was king. Who could bring a charge against him? The Bible says, however, in I Samuel 11:27, the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord (NAS).

A Convicting Parable

How did David come to write the 51st Psalm if he had experienced such a seeming victory in achieving his evil goal? The final blow of devastation came as a result of Nathan, the prophet of the Lord, who had come to David to point out the monarch's sinfulness. The approach he made was quite unusual. He told the king a story about greed and avarice; an illustration was so forceful it evoked an immediate response. Nathan said, "There were two men in a certain city, one of whom was very rich and the other, very poor. The first had everything for which one could possibly wish including great flocks of sheep, cattle, the whole works. The other fellow, however, had just one little lamb. And the family loved it. They even treated it as a pet, feeding it scraps from the table and allowing it to sleep with the children at night. One day a stranger came to town to visit the rich man. Wanting to royally entertain his friend, the rich man decided to throw a big dinner in his honor. Instead of taking an animal from his own abundant flock, he stole this poor man's only lamb.

When David heard about the deplorable situation, he became extremely angered and immediately decreed that the person who had done the sinful act would not only have to make restitution four times over, but must also be put to death. That was all Nathan needed. When David wanted to know who the individual was, doubtless the old prophet's finger of judgment straightened up forcefully when he accused, "David, *you* are the man."

It's interesting, isn't it, how sin led David deeper and

deeper. That's always the way it works. Yet, the Bible is right, reminding us that our sins will always find us out. This chapter is the outcome of the personal experience of a human heart which experienced tremendous guilt before confession and cleansing.

Confession: The Prerequisite For Cleansing

More than 400 years ago, a Christian writer, Victorinus Strigelius, wrote of Psalm 51, "It is the brightest gem in the whole book, containing instructions so large, and doctrine so precious, that the tongues of angels could not do justice to its full development." How right he was in that excellent evaluation.

David rightly began, as must we all, by coming to the Lord for forgiveness. Listen to his words in verse one, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." David understood that sin is a crime. It's an illegal act, a violation of justice, a commission of lawlessness. Notice the Psalmist comes asking for *mercy*, not for *justice*, realizing that because of his sin, he had done evil in the sight of the Lord. One of the ways we can measure the extent of God's mercy is by seeing the totality of His lovingkindness. It's certainly not because we deserve it, and it's definitely not because of what we've done. Let's make it perfectly clear—the mercy is all of God. He is the only One who can show grace for our sin-ridden lives.

Mercy That Surpasses Human Understanding

During World War II, several preachers were in an air raid shelter during one of those terrible London blitz attacks. Realizing the horrible devastation and problems with which they were confronted, one minister observed to the other, "You know, I wish I were God for just ten minutes." Whereupon his fellow clergyman injected, "Yes, but you

know, if *you* were God for ten minutes, I wouldn't even want to be here." You see, humanly speaking, we know absolutely nothing of mercy apart from that which has been showered upon us by God Himself. Think of this multitude of mercy for our multitude of sins. The Lord isn't a penny-pincher. He pours out His mercy liberally without being paid any price whatsoever.

Old Billy Bray, the coal-miner evangelist who worked among the Methodist churches many years ago, had it right when he said, "God has given me both vinegar and honey; but thank goodness He's given me the vinegar with a teaspoon and the honey with a ladle!" He compared it to when he would come home from school in the afternoon. Being hungry, his mother might give him a piece of bread with some butter on it. But then on another afternoon when he'd come home, asking for something to eat and feeling famished, his mother might give him a piece of bread, put some butter on it and top it off with her good homemade strawberry jam. Licking his lips, he concluded, "That's what I call loving kindness." You see, God isn't just kind to us, but He shows His gracious love in super abundance.

Sin Is Like A Debt

The second part of this verse includes the earnest request, "blot out my transgressions." You see, sin is also like a debt. I remember how we felt the other day when we made our last payment to the bank on a loan that had been taken out. I went in to pick up the piece of paper and oh, how good it felt to know that the debt had been paid; the slate was wiped clean.

In some circumstances however, we're not always sure that the obligation has been completely cared for. A friend of mine has a teen-age son who somehow had gotten into trouble with the law. He wasn't a bad boy, but just happened to be at the wrong place at the right time. As a result, his name

got on the police record. His father realized what this could mean if the boy ever wanted to get a good position where security was important and his background would be investigated. So, he hired an attorney and started proceedings to make certain that his son's name was extracted from the police records. He told me the other day of his continuing concerns. While it cost him a great deal of money, he pessimistically observed, "I'm still not sure that we've been successful. The police officer said that the file had been destroyed, but you know how such things are. No one really knows for sure!"

Confession Is Not Complicated, Just Humbling

Undoubtedly one of the hardest things for any of us to say is "I am sorry." We all know how such impenetrable barriers can often go up between husbands and wives, children and parents and boss and employee because of simple misunderstandings. They probably never would have been created if we were willing to say to the other person, "I'm sorry."

As you can see from this first verse of Psalm 51, confession is not complicated. David simply says, "I am a sinner. Forgive me." No, confession isn't complicated, it's only hard because none of us, in our own selfish pride, wants to admit that he or she is wrong. This is why difficulties in our homes are not a result of incompatibility or some imaginary generation gap. If there's any gap at all, it's a communication gap.

Notice in this verse, David is asking for mercy, more specifically, for "tender" mercy as well. The word "mercy" in the original Hebrew has the idea of affections being expressed by moaning over something that a person loves. Some years ago when we were on a missionary survey in the Orient, we followed a Chinese funeral. What a sound arose from the procession. There were people wailing and weeping at the top of their voices. You've never heard such a cacophony! Our

missionary friend told us that these especially noisy ones were the paid mourners. They were really actors who shed false tears and imaginary sympathy. That's not what God wants. When He shows us mercy, it's not something manufactured for the occasion. The Lord's mercy originates out of His sincerity and genuine, gracious concern for each of us.

These tender mercies are even more lofty in their aspect of compassion. Let's look at it further. The tender mercies are those which have been translated and described as "bowel concerns." Now that may sound rather coarse at first until you realize that this part of the anatomy is what science knows as the region of the solar plexus. This is where we find the seat of our emotions. Think of it this way. Have you ever had to speak or sing before a group? Before your appearance, you've probably gotten a bad case of butterflies. In the same manner, have you ever been so concerned over something that you just didn't want to eat? Now, those are bowel compassions or deep emotional concerns. The reason they're the most vital is because they affect us, as well as the situation which confronts us. David was asking for these concerns, these "tender mercies," from God Himself. Listen, the wonder of it is that God's wrath comes by measure, but His mercies are without measure.

You see, the biggest trouble with sin is that it confronts us individually. Someone has aptly pointed out that the problem with sin is the "i" right in the middle of it. We're all guilty in God's sight. We're not willing to own up to the source of the difficulty we're experiencing.

I once heard a story, which I'm sure is apocryphal, about a certain preacher who announced to his congregation that there were 726 different kinds of sins. After making this dramatic pronouncement it seems that he was besieged with requests for the list. The illustration quotes him as observing that people all think they're missing out on something. Actually, it's not how many kinds of iniquity that is the real question, for we're all guilty in the sight of

God. While the price of sin may be down to practically nothing, the fact remains that the person who has slight or low thoughts of sin will never have great thoughts about God and all His redeeming goodness.

Getting Rid Of The Stain

After coming to confess his sin, David in the 51st Psalm takes the second most important step. He now asks for cleansing. You see, not only is sin like a crime and a debt, it's also like an ugly stain—a black and bleak defilement on the human soul. I'm sure most of us have had friends or loved ones who have experienced the dreaded disease of cancer. The natural concern of every doctor performing a delicate operation due to a carcinoma is to make certain, as much as is possible, that every speck of the disease is taken out. If any of the cells remain there will always be the danger of metastasizing—that is, growing again and destroying the physical body.

The very same thing is true spiritually if we allow any vestige of unconfessed sin to remain in our lives. Scripture affirms that we can't be clean if any wicked part remains. David intones, "Wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." The King James here uses the word "thoroughly" and I like that. Although it is translated generally "thoroughly," I still especially appreciate the idea of "thoroughly." This suggests being washed not just superficially but from the inside out. When God does the washing and the cleansing, this is the way He rightly performs the necessary task.

I remember when I was growing up, my mother would sometimes want to know if I had washed thoroughly. She would even occasionally check behind my ears. To me, that seemed to be such a foolish place to waste soap and water. After all, no one ever saw there. But, God cleanses *every* part of our lives.

This word "thoroughly" also means repeatedly. In the first chapter of I John a wonderful assurance is given. We know that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to keep on cleansing us from all iniquity. He does it repeatedly. "Wash me thoroughly" has a literal translation from the Hebrew as "multiply to wash me." In other words, constantly, keep it up.

The Psalmist begins with iniquity. This might be as the thoughts which go through our minds, while sin might be looked at as the very deed itself. We need cleansing for both. Often we only think evil thoughts, yet they're often far worse than the actual deeds committed by others. Notice the different words in this Psalm which are used to designate our stepping aside from the love of God. We find "transgressions" in verse one, "iniquity and sin" in verse two, "evil" in verse four and they are repeated again in verses three, five, nine and fourteen. No matter how dark the picture, if we allow God to cleanse our hearts, using the searchlight of His Word, He'll carefully make certain that all sin, every vestige of it, is removed.

In James 1:23 and verses following, we're told that many of us are just like a man who will go to his mirror, look at himself, and then go away forgetting all of the things wrong with him. Certainly none of us can see the sins of omission, much less, sometimes because of a seared conscience, the sins of commission. This is why we so desperately need the Holy Spirit.

True Cleansing Comes Only Through The Blood Of Christ

It is only through the power of the blood of Christ that we can be cleansed from our sins. David earnestly petitions, "Wash me thoroughly." God will not do the job half-way. I saw an interesting commercial advertised on television for a product called "Grease Eraser." Suppose those annoying

stains that we can get on our clothes don't really come out regardless of what miracle product we use. I'm sure this Grease Eraser may be as good as the next product in its category, but still that stain can remain and even an ugly circle where the application was made. The Bible tells us that when God takes away our iniquity, He does it completely.

Micah 7:19 reads, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." A minister once spoke on this passage. After the service a little boy came up to him and suggested, "You know, Pastor, you should have said that sin was heavy like stones so people wouldn't think it floats like corks. 'Cause God really gets rid of it all." He was so very right. Sins are removed completely.

Notice the importance of the personal pronoun in "wash *me*," in verse two. Throughout this penitential Psalm it is "*mine* iniquity. . . cleanse *me*. . . *my* sin." Too often we're concerned with the faults of others, not realizing that we ourselves need the cleansing only the Lord can provide. A hypocrite is content if the outer garments—all that others can see—are clean. David's not talking simply of the outward aspect of his being when he says, "wash *me*." This prayer is the true expression of a genuinely contrite heart. After all, when you get right down to it, all of our righteousnesses in the sight of God are but as filthy rags.

What does the Lord do when He washes us? Well, according to Psalm 103, verse 12, He removes these transgressions as far as the east is from the west. Did you ever think about that? Just how far is the east from the west? Well, I can assure you it's not just the difference in mileage from Los Angeles to New York. It's actually an entire eternity apart, it can never be seen again.

Each Of Us Is Faced With Sin

I'm also impressed in verse two with the fact that the Psalmist is discussing his *own* sins. I'm afraid too often we use one set of terms to describe our own faults but then go on

to use an entirely different set for the shortcomings of others. Perhaps we're like the fellow who, after a convicting message, told his friend, "That's the kind of preaching I like. Everything the pastor said applies to somebody I know."

Oh yes, how easy it is to condemn others. We say he has blind prejudices but when we display the same we simply call them basic convictions. It's easy to blame another for his foul temper while at the same time excuse ourselves by the explanation that ours is just righteous indignation. Others may gossip, but we just share vital information. Let's remember that we ourselves, each one of us, are very definitely faced with the problem of sin. It was Martin Luther who wisely pointed out that "the ultimate proof of any sinner is the fact that he doesn't recognize his own sin."

On this score, I remember talking to a prison chaplain who told me something absolutely amazing and that I've never forgotten. He startlingly observed that there were no guilty men in prison. I could hardly believe that until he went on to explain that in his counseling ministry the condemned men generally blamed their environment, their parents, pressures of the times and a multitude of other things and individuals. They universally failed to see or to own up to their own insufficiencies. Is this the way we approach the ineffectiveness and failures of our own lives?

Charles Hadden Spurgeon once declared, "When we deal seriously with sin, God will deal gently with us." And you know, every scriptural illustration of a great sinner who has been forgiven should be ample encouragement for us to come to God for our pardon as well. What He has done on their behalf in ages past can be personally experienced today as well.

Now, in verse three, David points out, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." One thing I'd like to have you notice here in particular is that the word "sin" is singular but "transgressions" is plural. The Psalmist is saying we should lay all of our problems out

before the Lord and acknowledge our failure. It's true, He's seen them before, but if we want to be relieved, to get rid of our guilt, we'll have to say exactly the same thing about our sins as God says about them. Now, this is exactly what the word "confess" means. We are to say the same thing about sin that God says about it.

We Need To Acknowledge Our Sins Individually

Missionary statesman Dick Hillis once related about how the people over in China wash their clothes. He was referring to the many poor people living out in the country without electricity or any modern devices. He said that the women would take their clothing down to the riverside, placing each article on the rocks and there pound out the dirt and wash them in the stream. He used an illustration when I was a Biola student about 25 years ago. He spoke of an imaginary Chinese woman who brought her bundle of clothes, all tied up in a handy knapsack, about her neck. She simply took them in that state and, without opening the bundle, doused them in the water up and down a few times. Then she carried them home. Dr. Hillis asked the Biola students, "Do you think her clothes would be clean?" The answer was obvious.

His apt point was that, when we come to God with our sins, we often present them all to Him as a neatly wrapped package, asking for His forgiveness on them all. What we really need to do is to acknowledge them individually. We are to lay them all out before Him. This is what confession really means. And you know, quite frankly, one of the greatest things for mental help and positive therapy is just this. The first thing required is to present our sins in this very fashion to the Lord.

I'm sure we're all amazed with the scandals which have rocked our government. We still recall how certain public officials steadfastly avowed that they were innocent—that is until their backs were against the wall. Only then did they

confess because they had no other place to go. And generally they only confessed those things with which they had been caught "red handed." Why are we so slow in wanting to lay out things before God which He already fully knows?

This reminds me of the church deacon who went astray and got drunk. A group of his fellow leaders in the church were hastily called together and sought to restore him to fellowship. After the matter was investigated they had him lead in prayer. He began rather piously, "O Lord, Thou who didst make heaven and earth; Thou who didst form man out of the dust; Thou who didst love us with an everlasting love; better than anyone else, Thou dost know how easy it is for all of us to go astray. You know the pressures that we all face." As he went on intoning his prayer, waxing even more eloquent, one of the rather exasperated but godly fellow deacons stopped him short with the query, "Brother Harry, why don't you just tell God you sinned and got drunk? Lay it out for Him!" He was exactly right and this is what "acknowledge" means.

Covering It Up Won't Bring Peace

The second part of this verse presents sin in the singular tense. I'm afraid it's all too easy for us to sear our conscience. Maybe you've heard of the Indian who was asked if he could explain what his conscience was. He thoughtfully replied that his conscience was like a three-cornered sharp instrument in his heart. When he did something wrong, and knew it was wrong, it began to turn around fast and those sharp points hurt in his heart. But that wasn't the end of it. He further explained that the more he did the deed and tried to overlook it those sharp corners began to wear down. Finally, after repeated involvement, no longer was his conscience bothered.

The fact is that we can all sear our consciences before the Lord. How sad that we would allow such a thing to take place and it so often does. You remember, Adam and Eve tried to blame God for their difficulties. That was the height of folly!

Don't try to cover things up. David said, "It's not Your fault, Lord, I lay out every one of my transgressions before You." So many people are always trying to justify themselves. Their conscious or unconscious desire is that they might come out "smelling like a rose." Don't ever excuse or even minimize sin in any sense whatsoever. David said, "My guilt is always right in front of me."

I wonder, do you have something bothering you as well? You can't get it off your mind? Listen, you'll have absolutely no hope of peace except through the cleansing mercies of God. If you won't acknowledge your transgressions before the Lord, some day He'll have to point them out to you in judgment. If you don't think you're a sinner, just how willing would you be to allow your thoughts to be flashed on a life-sized screen? This includes those impure concepts you've had this past week or even this past day.

It was Ford Jarrel who commented, "I certainly hope I don't have to live long enough for scientists to develop some kind of a machine that will enable me to look at an instant replay of my day." I think I know what he means. There are certain things all of us should be ashamed of. This is why David was frank to confess, "I lay my sin before Thee because it's ever before me. Lord, put it away both from Thee as well as from me." When you get right down to it, we as individuals can't put our sins behind us until we're willing to face them. But the wonderful part is that whenever a man is ready to uncover his sins, God is always more than ready to cover them with His own blood. Don't let your conscience be dulled. "The farther away a person walks from the *light*, the less he can detect the inconsistencies of *life*." We need to have our attention brought often and readily to the problems confronting us.

All Sin Is A Slap In The Face To God

I'm thinking of a wonderful verse from Romans which reminds us, "Let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is

written, that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (3:4). Sin always strikes at the heart of God. Notice verse four: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." David is not trying to pass over the trouble he has caused to those whom he has wronged. He knew that he had sinned against himself, against his family, against Bathsheba, against Uriah, even against the little helpless baby that was born from his illicit union, for the child died. David certainly also sinned against Israel. Basically, however, his sin, as is all sin, was against God. When you get right down to it, any sin is a slap in the face of God.

Some time ago our newspapers carried an article with a Miami dateline about a woman who had married a man to save him from a prison sentence. It had been passed against him for earlier having shot and paralyzed her. The woman was pushed to the courtroom in a wheelchair. Now, her plea was entirely different. She asked that her husband be sent to jail. He had refused to care for her and even brazenly flaunted other women in her presence. The judge had earlier put him on 17 years' probation, ordering him to support the woman whom he had crippled as his wife. The man had already pleaded guilty to assault with intent to commit murder. Well, his wife, who had become incapacitated because of his deed, found that her husband really didn't do what the judge had demanded. So, he was sent to prison for 15 years. As the magistrate passed sentence, he pointed out, "You got the break of a lifetime. You shot this girl, paralyzed her and put her in a wheelchair. You've kept out of jail on her account. You owe a debt to this community. But most importantly, you owe a tremendous debt to God." What a wise judge he proved to be. This is exactly what David is saying. When we sin in any way whatsoever, no matter who else is involved, the sin is still against God.

God Watches Everything We Do

We must remember that the Lord is watching *everything* we do. Notice the words, "I've done this evil in Thy sight." Suppose the best person in your estimation who ever lived—perhaps your mother, your wife, the pastor or some other loved one—were watching your every action and thought, you'd probably think and live a whole lot differently.

I once read about a young man who had been sent to prison because of murder. His mother wanted to call on him, but he refused. The warden had to respect his wishes as he explained, "Don't bring my mother to my cell. I don't want her to see me the way I am now. It would break her heart." The fact is that the presence of a child or even an idiot can restrain some men from many attacks of sin which they might otherwise venture to commit alone. For instance, consider the subject of swearing. I've found people with very vile language, who, when they've discovered that I'm in Christian work, all of a sudden clean up their language. The transformation is amazing.

If we are concerned that other people see our actions, keep in mind that God knows exactly what we are. We should certainly be more concerned and have a proper perspective of the fact that He's constantly watching us.

I was in one of those little convenience stores one evening when the manager apprehended a young boy for stealing. He reprimanded him by saying, "What would your mother and father say?" That seemed to frighten the lad as he considered the consequences at home. But even much higher than this, you see, we have the responsibility of pleasing God.

In recent days we've seen how it's possible to tamper with the laws of our judicial court system. People have been able to get away with certain things. Yet, make no mistake, it's not possible to tamper with the laws of God. Standing before His bar of judgment, everything we do shall be accounted for in His holy presence. Christ can *forgive* any trespass, but He

cannot *overlook* even one of them! David readily admits, "I have done evil with the Almighty watching." The literal translation of this is, "When Thy eye was fixed on me, with the Lord watching, I fell terribly!" You see, the virus of sin lies in its basic opposition to God. For a thief to steal in the very sight of the judge is certainly the highest form of impudence. Yet, in a sense, this is exactly what often takes place in our lives. To injure our fellow man is sin, mainly because we thereby violate the law of God.

We Were Born With A Sinful Nature

Many years ago, while I was at home as a boy, I can recall hearing about a friend of our family, a man who was married with children, who had gotten involved with another married woman. My parents had spoken of the fact that this wasn't the first time he had done so. He just seemed to have a continually wandering eye. But they were rather shocked at how lightly the individual's mother had passed off the entire problem. She spoke of her son (who we'll call Freddie) in this fashion, "You see, Freddie just can't help it. He was born too handsome. Women simply can't resist him." How foolish can a person be? One thing is for certain. All of us have been born, not necessarily too handsome or too beautiful, but without question, we've all been born in sin. This was David's entire point.

In the fifth verse he clearly testifies, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Make no mistake, he's not talking about some wrong relationship which might have involved his father, Jesse, and his mother; nor is this merely poetic language. It is a clear and concise statement of fact. I think the Amplified Bible characterizes it even more meaningfully when we read the words, "Behold, I was brought forth in a state of iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me; and I, too, am sinful."

The fact that David uses the word "shapen"—shapen in iniquity—reminds us that no baby has to be taught how to lie,

steal or cheat. These things very sadly form a part of his very nature. Corruption entered the human race through the fall of Adam and Eve. Because of that, sin is the ultimate result in us all. Original sin and natural depravity are so carefully taught in many portions of Scripture that to deny it would be open blasphemy. David is pointing out, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the source of his entire existence is even unclean.

It's interesting when you stop to think about it. Some people say that they were born with a love of music, or born with a love of nature, or born with a certain disposition. Yet, the only real thing to make note of is that all of us have been born in sin. Sin can be traced back to the very moment we drew our first breath.

There's something else, too. In Hebrew, the word "shapen" means to twist oneself with pain, or to writhe. What a picture of how the pain of sin has caused all humanity in bondage to writhe under the burden of oppression. This continues unabated until Jesus Christ sets man free through faith in His shed blood.

We Sin Because We Are Sinners

A popular song, written a few years ago, foolishly encouraged people to do what comes naturally. Well, if we follow the suggestion of that song, we would all sin—that's the one thing that comes naturally. Let's look at it this way. A dog isn't a dog because it barks; it barks because it *is* a dog. And similarly, we're not sinners because we sin; we sin because we *are* sinners.

Along this same line, David also wrote in Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Jesus pointed this out to Nicodemus when He told him, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." We can't ever change the flesh or its propensity and desire to sin. That's always with us. But thank God there is a

Power that breaks the power, and that is our Savior's transforming grace, imparted through God's Holy Spirit, revealed in our lives by faith.

Paul expresses this succinctly to the Roman believers when he explains, "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" (Romans 5:12.) "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He led us, even when we were dead in sin, hath made us alive together with Christ, because it is by grace that we have been saved."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon related an interesting experience he had during a special preaching mission in a remote area of Italy. He stayed in one of the village homes and couldn't help but note the extremely dirty floors. He didn't know what to do and was just about to ask the woman of the household, in a very kind way, if she would mind him pitching in and scrubbing the floor. All of a sudden, he realized that the floor was nothing more than hardened mud! By trying to wash it, the floor would simply become more muddy. This is just exactly the way it is with the flesh. You can't clean it up. It can't be washed. That's why baptism doesn't drown the devil. The old nature is still with us, no matter what we do. Sin will forever be before us until it can be cleansed by the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, David comes to the understanding that all of his days were times when sin could easily have the upper hand in his life. I had to smile when I heard the comment recently that, considering all the taxes to be paid, laws to be obeyed and problems or shortages to face, it's no wonder that a baby cries when it comes into the world. Well, not only does it cry, but it soon must realize that sin and depravity actually have captured its being.

God's Truth As Compared To Man's Sin

Now David comes to a new point as he realizes the depths of his own sin. In contrast, he clearly sees the majesty

and greatness of our Lord. Verse six declares, "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom." Let me pause long enough to point out that whenever we find the word "behold" in Scripture, we should realize that it's God's "STOP, LOOK and LISTEN" sign. It means He wants us to pause and marvel at what He is about to suggest. What He desires more than anything else is that we remain true not only to ourselves, but also with ourselves. This inward truth is imperative and it's a commodity which so often is lacking.

I'm sure you've heard such comments as, "Well, to tell you the truth" or "Honestly, now" or "the *fact* of the matter is". When I hear those kinds of things I begin to wonder about some of the other things the people may have been sharing. Were they really the truth, or just some manipulated exaggeration? This reminds me of the father who had to scold his boy for some things he had done wrong. He insisted, "Now, son, I want to hear your answer and I want to hear the truth." That confused the lad who responded rather sheepishly, "Well, dad, which one do you want? My answer or the truth?"

Too often do we try to fool ourselves into thinking that we've misled God. Listen, it doesn't work in that manner. There's absolutely no way that you can have His wisdom if you're not truthful with the Lord.

Fooling Yourself Won't Alter The Situation

Consider for a moment a doctor who examines an individual suspected of having cancer. Suppose the physician finds the disease, but he doesn't tell the individual about the spreading disease which, if it goes along unchecked, will surely cause the patient's death. Such medical treatment is deplorable and inexcusable. But how far worse and foolish it would be for a doctor who examines himself with the same purpose in mind. Discovering he has cancer he tries to make

himself believe that he doesn't. Isn't that about the height of folly?

Yet the world's filled with people who have the cancer of sin, but who are trying to tell themselves they're just as good as the next person. This is an even greater tragedy for it affects their eternal destiny. In the sight of God they have only sealed their everlasting destruction. There's a great danger if we tell ourselves something long enough and loud enough that we even begin to believe it. That's the way many have sought to sublimate sin in their lives. But this doesn't change God's standard whatsoever.

An interesting story apparently took place many years ago, before civilization was known in some of the African countries. An explorer had been going into a certain tribe where he was trading little trinkets for some of the things the artful natives had made. The head of this certain tribe was a queen who apparently, although unknown to herself, was extremely ugly. On one of his trips, as a gift to her he presented her a mirror. In this way, for the first time, she could see herself. The result caught the trader by surprise. When she held up the glass reflector and saw the horrible visage, she recoiled and asked her fellow tribesmen who it was she looked upon. Who could be so grotesque and ugly? They didn't know what to tell her but the truth. Upon finding out, the queen became so infuriated that she broke the mirror, dashing it to the ground, and ordered the trader never to come back on pain of death. Since the reflection was broken, she could no longer see herself as she really was. But that didn't change her actual image whatsoever.

This is exactly the way it is in our own lives. You can tell yourself you're not a sinner; you can tell yourself that you don't deserve the judgment of God, but yet, the Bible says something entirely different for God's Word is true. The Lord desires us to have a truthful realization in our inward parts. Scripture tells us that if we confess our sins, God will deliver us. And the word "confess" simply means to say the

same thing that God says about our sins. If we're willing to say that we're sinners, God is then willing to forgive us. And He wants us to know the true wisdom that's from above.

Wisdom Comes From God

The Bible also tells us that reverential trust is really the beginning, the starting place of all real wisdom. I read the other day about an individual in Connecticut who is currently suing a northeastern university because it seems he had attended classes there for five years, and even graduated, but still claimed he didn't have knowledge. Spiritually speaking, when a person is willing to desire the truth of his own life, God will freely give him that wisdom which is above anything an individual can gain in some earthly classroom; it is supernatural.

The first step to keep from falling back into a repeated pattern of sin, after we have confessed the deed, as David did, is to make sure that we're faithful and truthful in our own hearts. What David is praying for is simply, "Give me an understanding of the real facts of life. Help me to catch a solid grasp on the truth about myself."

You know, there's so little truth in society today. Have you heard about the little Sunday school boy who was asked if he could define a lie? He thought for a few moments and then responded, "Well, a lie is an abomination unto the Lord." Then he stammered for a few moments, thinking there surely must be something else to add to that statement. Finally it hit him and he added, "And a very present help in time of trouble." Evidently on the national scene there may be certain political leaders who appear to live by the boy's definition.

Listen, in case there's any doubt, a lie isn't what God is looking for. He desires *truth* in the inward parts. Now, in the original Hebrew, "inward parts" refer to the reins, or the seat of the mind, the feelings, the intellect. There's a favorite delectable French pear that occasionally finds its way into the

better stores throughout the United States. It is called "Le bon Chretien." Translated, that simply means, "The Good Christian." And the way it originally got its name is from the fact that farmers who grow it claim that it's never rotten at the core.

Say, what about your inward parts — your intellect, your feelings, your emotions, the seat of your mind's judgment? Are you truthful with God, yourself and with others? Do you know the wisdom of the Lord as far as your own life and leading are concerned? If not, then perhaps there's a need to confess some sin and be willing to find God's truth for your own need. Truth is whatever God says about anything. That's why we must keep it very carefully in mind. And wisdom, as someone has said — it may have been Mark Twain — "is what we learn after we think we know it all." Never can we come to a final settled conclusion concerning the truth of God's Word.

Purging Ourselves Of Impurities

After the confession there is always the need for cleansing. Verse seven declares, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." In the Old Testament the women were told on occasion, in fact they were commanded in the making of passover bread, to purge out every bit of the old leaven, leaven being a symbol of sin.

Webster's definition of this word "purge" means to cleanse by separating and carrying off whatever is impure, heterogeneous or superfluous. And that simply suggests that we are to rid our lives of everything that commends itself to the flesh. In German, Martin Luther literally translated this verse, "Unsin me with hyssop." In other words, take away my bent to evil.

What is hyssop? Well, there are some very interesting passages of Scripture concerning it. The first, of course, deals with the Passover in Israel when the children of Israel were to slay the sacrificial animal. Then, in accordance with God's

will, they were to take the hyssop, applying the blood of the animal to the plant, and sprinkle the red substance on the doorpost at the top, two sides and the bottom. This form in typology, of course, the perfect symbol of the cross. The Passover application is later repeated in Leviticus 14; and we also read of it as part of the purging from the old ways discussed in Hebrews 9.

No one is fully agreed, as far as biblical scholarship is concerned, as to what the hyssop really was. Some think it was a spongelike plant, like a moss, which grew freely out of the rocks. Others considered it a very special type of aromatic European mint. As a matter of fact, Webster defines it as any species of the thistle family. The thing that impresses itself upon my mind concerning hyssop, as far as the children of Israel were concerned, is that whatever its form it was a very common bush which was readily available. It probably grew almost like a weed. This means of applying the blood as a sacrifice substitute was near at hand for everyone, regardless of their status in life.

Now, our family likes artichokes. And if we were told that we would have to apply the sacrificial blood with the leaves of an artichoke, it would mean that we wouldn't be fortunate enough to do so because artichokes don't grow where we live. We can only get them shipped in certain seasons of the year. But the hyssop was a plant always readily available for the application of the blood. How beautifully this speaks of the immediate access and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives. He is right now at hand to cleanse us from every sin. We don't have to go any distance at all. We can have the transformation take place in our own hearts in our own lives, by faith. God wants us to come to Him so that we may be cleansed completely.

Purge out everything entirely that is unseemly. This doesn't refer to "good works" many people perform in an effort to "earn" salvation. I remember in the Philippines, watching a religious ritual where flagellators took long fish

hooks. With great pain and agony they jammed them into their bodies so they might carry, with these fish hooks weighing down the flesh, the statues of their gods. It was almost more than we could bear to see. In no sense is this what David has in mind. The purging is not on our part. It's what God does for us. David is asking the Lord to wash him and the cleansing is performed by the Almighty Himself. And I can assure you, the purification that comes isn't with Dove soap, partially soap and partially cleansing cream. The Lord's washing is not even with Ivory, which is 99.44% pure. That's not sufficient for soul-cleansing. God does it with the perfect peerless blood of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Whiter Than Snow

Listen to David's words, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." The reference here is to being ceremonially clean as far as the perfect law is concerned. The washing, of course, is the reality of cleansing which comes experientially. We have absolutely no more right to blame God if there's sin in our lives than we might blame soap for all the unclean people in the world. The difficulty is that we fail so often to apply the perfect provision which has been made available for our lives.

It's interesting, too, that the Psalmist uses the simile of snow. You remember Isaiah 1:18 avows, "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." I remember when we lived in Chicago just after being married 34 years ago. It was our first opportunity to see what snow really was. Nothing was ever so white as that first fallen drift. But it didn't take long in the city of Chicago before the coal smoke and the mud of the automobiles would make certain that white turned black, or at least a dirty brown. But the snow David's talking about here is an enduring purity. When God cleanses us we are

made completely white, with no blemish at all. The specific sin can never be brought back again.

Dwight L. Moody used to preach on this subject because it is a most important one. He would emphasize that when we come to God for cleansing, confessing our sins, the Lord takes our iniquities and casts them into the depths of the sea. Moody wouldn't stop there. He rejoiced, "But the Lord does even more than that. He then puts up a 'No Fishing' sign over the spot where they've been dumped!" You see, when God has washed us and cleansed us completely, we don't need to go after or dwell on the past. The slate has been wiped clean.

Forgiveness Means A Complete Erasure Of Sins

In our radio ministry, we send out hundreds of tapes every week to different broadcasting stations over which these programs are heard. After the presentation is played on your local facility, the tape is returned to us and we erase it completely. Then we can put another program on the tape and send it back to the outlet for later release. In this way the tapes are used over and over again. It's really a wise expenditure of the Lord's funds and one reel can be used untold numbers of times. We have a machine in our duplicating department which is known as a degausser. A stack of used tapes is put on this machine (which, incidentally, was invented by a fine born-again Christian) and the tapes then go through and across a series of powerful magnets. In this easy manner, everything—the voice, the music, the sounds that are on this tape—are completely and forever erased. They can never be brought back again to that piece of tape without re-recording the same material all over again. The tape is absolutely clean. A new program can now be put on it and a new message can go out. This is the way in which God cleanses our lives. These sins cannot be brought back. They are completely under the blood.

With that statement, someone may ask, "Why all the

blood? Why is that necessary? Why can't God just expunge or cleanse with water, or some other substance? Several years ago I was commissioned by the Lockman Foundation to read through the New Testament of the New American Standard Bible, which incidentally, I believe is one of the finest translations of the Scriptures available today. The New Testament is now completed and is available on cassettes. It was a thrilling experience to read aloud the Bible. But again and again I've been reminded, especially in the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, of all the blood which had to be offered, with the animals slain. The reason for this is that this means of worship all pointed toward the one perfect sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ who came as the peerless, impeccable Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

Someone may still say, "But why is that necessary? Why all the blood?" Listen, the reason is that sin is so deeply imbedded in the human race, in us personally, that it cannot be cured by anything less than the death of the innocent One. The old life has to die. God doesn't improve it. There's no way this can be done. The gospel song has it correctly, asking the melodic question, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but the blood of Jesus." You see, a right view of sin will always give us a right view of God. No snow is so white in the eyes of saints and angels as a soul who has been cleansed from sin in the sight of God.

The Promise Of Joy And Gladness

Now, the result of this cleansing is even more exciting to contemplate. Just stop to realize for a few moments what the Lord has done for us. In verse eight, David anticipates, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "Make me hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice." In essence he's declaring, "Say something to me, God. I can't hear you." You know, it may be that in your own life

there seems to have come a coldness between you and the Lord. It could well be that sin has separated you and your God. The heart that seems weighed down, the body which feels at times physically crushed, can be made to experience joy and gladness once again.

Why ought it to be as David has suggested here, that we should be made to hear joy and gladness? Let me underscore the word *made*. Actually, these are the two things, joy and gladness, that all individuals most definitely want. We might use our more common synonyms of contentment and satisfaction. This is what the Psalmist is talking about. Well, very simply, the problem is because of the sinfulness of the flesh. We so often long after the things of the devil and the things of this world. In this way we lose sight of the fact that the only way we can find joy and satisfaction in this life is through the power and the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

You remember, recorded earlier in this book, David had written that God, as the Good Shepherd, actually made him to lie down in green pastures. Here again one would ask the question, "Why would God have to *make* us to lie down in those fields for which the sheep are constantly searching?" The reason is that so often we go off on our own, trying to find that which satisfies, not realizing that there is absolutely nothing in this world that can completely and entirely satisfy apart from a knowledge and a right relationship as believers with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are We Deaf To God's Voice?

I'm sure you've read ecology reports in newspapers and magazines on how this world is constantly being surfeited with an over-abundance of noise. As a matter of fact, sounds have increased to such a tremendous pitch of ascending decibels that our young people are actually going deaf far earlier than their time. Many predictions have been made that by the time most young people reach 40 years of age they'll

have a hearing less advantageous to them than today's generation of 65 year-olds.

And you know, what's true physically is often true spiritually as well. There are a lot of people who have become absolutely deaf to the things of God's truth. Unfortunately, many of them, in earlier years did listen to His voice, but now a coldness has swept over them. Oh, the prayer of David should be the concern of our hearts that He would *make* us (if necessary even force us) to hear joy and gladness. Only in this way can we find the satisfaction He so definitely wants to give us, and which we so desperately need.

Notice that word "joy". And while you do, be sure to keep in mind that it's not the same, nor is it even synonymous with the term "happiness." There is a song, I think it was written by George Gershwin, that seeks to encourage, "Come on, and let's get happy." What the lyricist is talking about is that we should surround ourselves with friends, money, social prominence, anything that would make us happy. But you see, joy isn't conditioned by outward circumstances.

Joy For The Despondent

At the rock of Gibraltar, standing at the gateway to the Mediterranean Sea, there are two currents which flow in that great body of water. There is a current which comes from the Atlantic Ocean and flows into the Mediterranean. Then too, there's a current flowing out of the Mediterranean into the Atlantic. Both of these strong forces are in the same body of water, constantly running contrary to each other. Yet, they still exist in that great vastness.

Think of that illustration in connection with your own life. It may be that all about you things are dark and foreboding. You are besieged and beset with problems and perplexities. You may not have any of those items which would make you want to sing, "Come on, and let's get happy." But with the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior you

can still experience matchless joy and gladness. Your life can find satisfaction, contentment and fulfillment. You don't need to be despondent and depressed. Oh, I know sometimes when we get down it seems that we'll never be able to get up again. But, here, David is praying that the crushing burden that has been upon him because of sin might be lifted. This gladness for which he's petitioning is answered in abundance from the Lord.

The term "gladness" originally meant "brightness," or what we might call "excitement." I wonder, has life become dull for you? Is it simply one continuous boring routine? You go on with your existence Monday through Friday, hoping for some better day. Vance Havner describes a "rut" as simply nothing more than a grave with both ends kicked out. Does that in any way describe your condition? Maybe you are in a rut. Listen, the good news for the believer is that God wants us to experience joy, satisfaction, contentment, gladness, brightness and excitement in our daily existence.

Brokenness Leads To Healing

Notice, too, that the bones which God has broken might again rejoice. David doubtless remembered his earlier life as a young shepherd. That had been his occupation before he was anointed king over Israel. Sometimes a shepherd has to do that which superficially seems cruel and unkind. When a sheep will constantly go astray, not seeming to learn the necessary lesson of staying close to its master for food and protection, drastic measures have to be taken for its own good. While it seems heartless on the surface, yet the shepherd will break the sheep's legs so that it will no longer wander away on its own.

Listen, the Lord may have to break you, my friend, if there's some unconfessed sin in your life for which you've not sought His cleansing by faith. I wonder, it may be today you have some broken bones that need His healing. They're

hindering you in your fellowship and service. They cause you to be depressed. Do you have anything that makes you immobile? Sometimes the "broken" aspect is necessary so that as the pieces are knit together it gives God the time and opportunity to speak to our hearts.

True conviction of sin normally will carry both physical as well as the spiritual effects. David certainly knew exactly how this worked and how the results came to him. Joy and gladness are really the certain and inalienable rights of the individual whose sins are forgiven. They are his positive possession when fellowship with the Lord has been unbroken. It isn't something that comes as the pastime of the ages. Actually, it's the perfect privilege of all who know the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. And I'll tell you one thing, there's never going to be any kind of a trace of headache the morning after when these broken bones finally come to know joy and gladness once again through the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Are We "Audience Sweeteners?"

One reason why we should want joy and gladness in our lives is because these things are infectious. I was amazed a year or two ago to meet a man who has a most unusual occupation. He's what is known as an "audience sweetener." That's right, an "audience sweetener." You see, what he does after a comedy show has been completed on video tape or film, is go into a small studio with all of his electronic mechanisms. He has an endless variety of tape recorded sounds of laughter, applause and the like. The laughter can be anywhere from a few voices to a thunderous guffaw. He watches the comedy program, which may or may not have any audience reactions on it at all and he puts in the sounds where he thinks they'll be effective. The philosophy behind this is that when the program comes out over the television screen, if you hear other people laughing, then you think surely the joke or sequence must be funny and you start

laughing, too. Sometimes these laugh tracks are played in front of a studio audience. They're not even aware of the fact that they're hearing it come out over a loud speaker system. It sounds for all the world like other people in the studio with them. It's all done just to get the audience into the feeling of laughter. So, you see, joy can be infectious. And as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we should want to be "audience sweeteners" as it were, making the sounds of rejoicing. Too often we are hypocritical in the sight of the Lord and before others.

Guilt Can Be Removed

Now, as we look at verse nine in Psalm 51, we find another petition David makes. He seeks to have the guilt and the stain removed from his life. How we need this, too. He says, "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." Have you ever stopped to realize that if God can't see our sins, then we can't see them either? In this way, the guilt can be completely removed.

There's an old story you've probably heard before. Doubtless it's apocryphal but it does illustrate a point. It concerns a man who is greatly disturbed because his wife has been nagging at him constantly. He commiserated to his friend, "You know, whenever my wife gets mad and upset at me, she always gets historical." His friend laughed at him and corrected, "You've got that a little mixed up. You don't mean that she gets *historical*, you mean that she gets *hysterical*." The brow-beaten husband affirms in response, "No, I mean she gets *historical*. She keeps throwing up the past to me." Well, unfortunately that may be true in certain homes. But God never does that. When our sins have been confessed and when they've been completely cleansed thereby, God's face can no longer see them.

It's really tragic, I think, that we're so anxious to see or at least to hear about the sins of others. I don't know why it is that people have such a morbid curiosity about the trans-

gressions and iniquities in which others have become involved. If you don't believe it, if it sounds like an exaggeration, just take a look at the headlines in any gossip magazine. This is why the Bible warns us that we should rejoice not in the sins of others, but rather to rejoice in the truth of God.

So, as we come asking for cleansing, we can have the confident realization that the guilt has been completely removed. God no longer looks upon sins now confessed and cleansed. David is praying, "Blot out *all* my iniquities."

There's been a familiar commercial on television concerning a certain paper towel company. In 30 amazing seconds it's shown to be superior not only in soaking up all liquids, but also it goes on to scrub without the towel falling apart. I'm not here to vouch for the product, but listen, God's cleansing does far better than any product man may develop. His isn't just a paper towel cleansing, it's absolutely and amazingly a means of complete cleansing for our hearts and lives.

No Need To Dwell On The Past

If God can't see our sins, why should we? Why the morbid desire to keep dwelling on the past? These things have been confessed and cleansed! We need to realize that it's simply an insult to God to claim that He can't do anything about our sins. That's in essence what we're saying when we keep bringing up the past.

I've so often talked to people who have asked God for cleansing but they still bear the terribly oppressive feelings of guilt. They might say something like, "Yes, but you have no idea of the things that I've gotten involved in." Generally it's something that has an immoral, sexual or monetary background. Look at the third word from the last in this ninth verse of Psalm 51, the word "all." Let me ask you, is there any sin God can't cover? Remember, He's both willing and able! The question is, are we ready to bring our sins *to* Him?

A New Heart And A New Beginning

Then, in verse 10, David humbly prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." One cannot help but be impressed as you read this 51st Psalm, with the fact that David's spiritual progress is constantly on the ascendency. You see, God's still in the creating business. What the Psalmist wants to see created on his behalf is a clean heart. The Lord's the one who has to do it. We can't.

This Hebrew word "create", as we find it here, is the same used in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created." What did He do? Well, essentially, He took that which was nothing and made something useful out of it. Now, in our own lives, He does exactly the same thing. He takes our lives, blasted and blighted because of sin, and out of nothing He creates that which is new, living and vibrant. Sin has so destroyed us that the Creator must be called in once again.

In an area where we used to live there was a huge junk yard. We had to pass it on the way to work and church. You should have seen all the junk heaps thrown into that wrecker's yard. It was something! Who would foolishly think of suggesting that the proprietor take those old automobiles and send them back to Detroit so that they could be "fixed up?" Repairing them wouldn't really be a feasible situation. The scrap would have to be melted down and recast. Even so, with God, we can take these lives and send them back to the Lord and have Him create once again a clean heart within us. That's what we need. You see, salvation is a marvelous display of God's supreme power. It's His desire to create what we can't do for ourselves. He makes absolutely new what we have given Him from the old.

It's Not Others That Need Changing—It's Us

Now consider the last two words of the tenth verse. The Psalmist properly asks, "Renew a right spirit *within me.*" So often when things aren't going right, and when problems face

us, we may feel God ought to do something about it in others. Haven't you questioned, at least to yourself, "Why doesn't God change her?" or, "Why doesn't God change him?" In actuality all the while it's really we who need the changing. The older I get the more convinced I am that one of the greatest temptations of the devil, and one of his most successful, is to become critical, finding fault and being cynical about things and others.

Perhaps you've heard of the chronically critical man who went by the taxidermist shop. He saw in the window an owl which had been placed on a perch. Immediately and in his usual critical attitude, he began telling his friend what was wrong. The taxidermist evidently wasn't a very good craftsman because the owl was obviously stuffed all wrong. The feathers were ruffled unnaturally, and the very stance of the bird on the perch was incorrect. Then, all of a sudden, the bird blinked and flew away to another part of the shop. Chagrined, the critic shut up and walked on. Let's not always be finding fault. Let's not always be looking at others, thinking that they should change when we're the ones needing the touch of the Lord. We should be praying, "O God, create in *me*, give *me*, place within *me*, a right spirit."

Do you ever feel you need your batteries recharged or renewed? I've a business friend in Atlanta who told me the other day, "If I can just make it to 2 o'clock Wednesday afternoon, then I've got the week licked. I'm closer to Friday than I am to Monday." What he had in mind was the fact that it seems too long between Monday morning and Friday afternoon with the anticipation of the weekend and two days without pressure. Maybe life has become a thing of drudgery for you.

A few years ago I read an interesting comment in the "Dear Abby" column. It seems an individual had written, perhaps rather facetiously, to inquire, "How can one get the sparkle back in his eye so that he can enjoy again some of the experiences of earlier youthful days?" "Dear Abby"

thoughtfully wrote back, perhaps not fully realizing what she was suggesting, and pointed out, "Why, to get the sparkle back in your eye, you'd have to be born again, going back and starting life all over again." Well, she was right, although she may not have realized the spiritual truth in her statement. We need to have God create, to go back and make out of nothing once again, that clean heart. You can be sure, He's not going to make over an old one.

Asking For That "Right Spirit" In Our Hearts

Modern science is very adept at implanting heart pacemakers, by-pass valves and even transplanting hearts. We're thankful for these advancements and achievements, but no development is nearly as good as the original heart with which we were born. So, the picture is that sin has destroyed this perfect relationship with God. We've got to call on the Creator, who originally made things out of nothing, that He might once again put that right spirit within our hearts.

Do you have a right spirit? That simply means, are you able to evaluate things for what they really are? In the original Hebrew, the word for "right" here means that which is erect, that which is made to stand up. We all realize that there are certain things today which aren't correct or upright. They aren't straight! The lines are crooked and the involvement of people who have steadfastly proclaimed things to be correct has actually been shown to be erroneous, and many times grossly so. This is why we need to have this renewal, and it's the renewal God has graciously promised to us. Sometimes there's no way to make restitution. David's sin, you remember, caused him literally to put Uriah to death. It was murder! After the deed was done, there was no way David could make restitution to Bathsheba's husband. He was dead. You just can't unscramble a scrambled egg! So here, he has to ask for the creation of what was not there at

all or what may have been only in a sadly feeble state. And remember, God's the only one who can do it.

Fellowship With God Depends On Confession

Perhaps one of the greatest problems facing people with mental difficulties is the terrible feeling of loneliness. This comes not only to those who are up in years, but also to young people as well. Life has tricked them, as it were, and they have the impression that they've been left out of the mainstream. In verse 11, David prays, "Cast me not away. . ." Literally, he's saying, "Don't reject me." There is a realization that the only way to find contentment and satisfaction in life is to be made in union with God. And that can only be consummated when we come as believers, confessing our sins and seeking the cleansing which God alone can give.

Being "cast away" suggests a coldness and a finality. It bothers us when it happens in our own lives, and yet how often we treat the Lord this same way. See how desperately alone we would be if first of all God had cast us away from His presence. What if He didn't want to see us any more, and even went so far as removing the Holy Spirit from our presence?

Fellowship With God Cannot Take Place In A "Dirty House"

First of all, don't ask of the Lord to dwell in your life if your house on the inside is dirty. I remember some of the houses we've been in over the years through Bible conference ministries, particularly up and down the Pacific coast. Some of them are very beautiful, but I can remember several where it was evident that the household wasn't really concerned about how things appeared.

First things must come first. David had come asking for cleansing. And now he comes for the assurance that he'll not experience loneliness — even being in a crowd of people, even

as the monarch of Israel—by losing that perfect fellowship with the Lord God.

Notice, too, in this verse, that we have a reference to the Holy Spirit. We should underscore the word *holy* because that's exactly what He is. He cannot dwell and give us victory if our lives are impure.

This is the first Psalm in which the Holy Spirit is referred to. I don't believe any Christian today needs to pray this prayer, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." In John 14:16 we have a very beautiful promise concerning the constant presence of God's Holy Spirit. What tremendous blessing from Christ's promise, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that He may abide with you *forever*." More than this, in the epistle to the Ephesian believers, there's a certain testimony, too, of the continuing presence of God's Holy Spirit. We're told in Ephesians 4:30, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed until the day of redemption."

Some Bible teachers hold that in Old Testament times the Holy Spirit could be withdrawn from an individual. We do have the illustration of how the Spirit of God left Saul. Perhaps this view is true. However, I think David is more or less suggesting the fact that his life would be completely in shambles and in ruins if, for some reason, the Holy Spirit would be removed from him. It's like the wife who tells her husband, "Don't ever leave me." Now she knows that he won't, but she's stressing the importance of the union and the relationship they have together in this fashion. So, David realizes, too, that he's praying here for the assurance given in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Now, if the Spirit of God could be removed at certain times for various reasons from the saints of Old Testament times, think how much greater the privilege and responsibility we have in this age of grace. Since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been given to every believer, never to be taken away again.

The Holy Spirit's Ministry Of Deterrence

There's another important aspect to the ministry of the Holy Spirit today. I am convinced, *thoroughly* convinced, that the only real deterrent in the world today is not the United Nations, nor is it NATO nor is it the Strategic Air Command. But rather, it's the Holy Spirit indwelling believers. When He is finally taken away, when His restraint is removed from believers, because they'll have been raptured to Glory, then this world will see tribulation such as no mind could possibly fully conjecture.

Speaking of the Rapture, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, "Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day (that is the day of Great Tribulation) shall not come except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." And then in verse seven of the second chapter we read that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only He who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." This refers to the Holy Spirit who will no longer keep His restraining hand of righteousness upon this old world. This will certainly usher in the terrible time of tribulation upon the earth.

Walk In The Spirit

Now, we have some tremendous responsibilities as believers. God has given us the Holy Spirit, but He hasn't done so frivolously or without some directive purpose. Galatians 5:16 reminds us that we are to walk in the Spirit so that we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Again, in Ephesians 5, there's a similar testimony which reminds us that we are not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but we are to be filled with the Spirit of God. And this is the privilege each of us has as believers.

Let us not be cast away. God isn't going to remove His Holy Spirit from us if, by faith, we have received Jesus Christ as Savior. But we can be put on the shelf. We can grieve the Spirit of God. We can certainly quench Him so that His influence is diminished and minimized. At times perhaps we can feel the ultimate coldness in our own spirits with our individual relationship to the Lord. This is why David goes on to pray in the 12th verse, one of the most familiar petitions of the entire chapter, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit."

Now those words, "free Spirit" could perhaps be best translated a "willing spirit." We'll talk more about that a little later. Think for a moment about this aspect of restoration. It means to go back to the starting point. I've been interested to see how nostalgia seems to be back in and so popular. People are saving old Coke bottles and even posters 30 or 40 years old. There is a great interest in the revival of old radio programs. Just think of all the things being brought back again. Old cars are certainly in. My wife told me that some of the clothes she kept in her closet long enough, she can now wear again. (I like that.) Furniture, antiques are coming back in. In fact, it's hard to find qualified people willing to restore them, there are so many people interested in antiques. It's even popular to try restoring our physiques. But of all the products on the market intended for restoring these different things, there's absolutely nothing which can restore our souls. That is, other and apart from the prayer of confession and cleansing which David offers here.

Notice that he's saying, "Restore unto me the *joy* of Thy salvation." He's not talking about the *assurance* of salvation. He is not talking about the *understanding* of salvation, but rather the *satisfaction* that comes from it. No doubt, the majority of those in our listening audience know and love Jesus Christ as Savior. But, what about your personal relationship to Him? I wonder, has the sparkle gone out? Is the joy missing? You know, if you truly received the Lord by faith, then

God will never take away His Holy Spirit from you. Doubtless you have the realization of salvation and are eternally secure in that confident understanding. But, still, joy can be missing in your life. When you get right down to it, joy is the one commodity Christians uniquely possess and should show to the outside world. It's one dimension that the world is lacking.

Joy Will Not Come Before Forgiveness

Make no mistake; you can never have joy without first of all having forgiveness. The one absolutely cannot precede the other. There's no other order to be experienced whatsoever. It's forgiveness first. So, if you need joy in your life, follow the pattern God, through His Holy Spirit gave to David. This came as a result of his great sins of murder and adultery. If he could be forgiven of those, so can you find cleansing and release from your guilt and shame.

Now we see here the joy of Thy salvation. It's not *my* salvation, my church's, my mother's or my wife's salvation, but it's God's salvation and His alone that can bring joy and satisfaction. There are so many things on every hand that can depress us. Just look about anywhere in the world and see the multitude of perplexing problems facing every aspect and avenue of our existence. The thing in mind, however, is does the knowledge of salvation excite you and bring you true and lasting contentment? It can if you look to the Lord for the blessed truth.

How can God restore that which He didn't take away? Oh, He does it by His Spirit in love and faithfulness. And the only way to have comforting evidence that we *are* His children is by doing that which we know to be pleasing to Him. This is why David prayed, "And uphold me with a willing spirit." Now, that we *need* to be upheld shows a definite weakness. Even the strongest of us experiences times of being overwhelmed. Let's not be so quick to condemn David for

what he did. To be sure, his deeds were terribly horrendous and, humanly speaking, unforgiveable. But the New Testament says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Any of us has the capability and potential for doing the same things.

There Is Joy In Following God's Will

Here, the forgiven Psalmist, the sweet singer of Israel, prays, "Give me a will that wants me to do what *You* want me to do, even though I may struggle with it at times." Don't wait simply for a feeling that you've been forgiven. God said it and that settles it. In Jude, verses 24 and 25, we read some of the most precious words in all the Bible, the great paean of praise, "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, by glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and evermore." You see, there's great joy available and total understanding when we do His will and thereby find that perfect peace.

The Austrian composer, Franz Joseph Hayden, was once asked why his sacred music always seemed to be so joyful. He simply answered, "Because God is so very, very good to me." Why, do you know, he even set the 51st Psalm in allegro. (That very word, allegro, suggests a song of joy and blessing.)

So here David prays, "Let a free spirit sustain me. Let me not be enslaved as I have been in the past by my sinful passions." You see, it's right and proper to be content with what we have, although we don't need to be content with what we are, as far as our spiritual growth and development are concerned. You may be sure that a Christian's sense of security may be lost if he lets the world come between him and the Lord. When David sinned there's no question but that he experienced the darkness that troubles and plagues every backslidden child of God. There is the terrible guilt which is

so often completely overwhelming. In his distress he cried out, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation." The wonderful and assuring part of it is that God never despises a contrite heart. If you come to Him in this manner, He'll never turn you aside.

There's Restoration For the Backslidden

Robert Robinson, author of the hymn "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" fell into sin. It wasn't long before he lost the happy communion with the Savior which he had once enjoyed. The very song he had penned became distasteful to him. In his declining years he wandered into even deeper byways of iniquity. But you can't keep going in this direction without a day of accounting. Robinson, as a result, became deeply troubled in spirit. Hoping in some way to relieve his mind, he decided to travel.

In the course of his almost aimless wandering he became acquainted with a woman who was a dedicated Christian. As they talked, she soon realized he was extremely well informed on spiritual matters. Hoping to help him out of his morose despondency, she showed him a copy of her favorite hymn and asked what he thought of its message. To his utter astonishment he found the song to be none other than his own composition. Bitterness again welled up in his heart. He tried to evade her question, but she continued to press for a response. Suddenly, he broke down and began to weep. With tears of remorse, built up over the years, streaming down his cheeks, he explained, "I'm the man who wrote that hymn many years ago. I'd give anything to experience again the joy I knew then." Although greatly surprised, the faithful Christian counseled and assured him that the streams of mercy so prominently mentioned in his song, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing," were still flowing in abundance. He was deeply touched, and as history records, Robert Robinson turned his wandering heart back to the Lord.

This is exactly what each one of us must do to find a restoration of joy and full fellowship in our necessary communion with the Lord. If you are a broken-hearted backslider, voice this same prayer—God will definitely give back to you the joy of your salvation!

Just consider the words to that song which Mr. Robinson penned, “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, O take and seal it, Seal it for Thy courts above.” Isn’t that beautiful?

Forgiveness Leads To Expressions Of Gratitude

In verse 13, the natural result follows in David’s upward spiritual progression. He avows, “Then (because of this experience of confession, cleansing and forgiveness) will I teach transgressors Thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” This shows us very clearly the Psalmist’s true expression of gratitude. I wonder, are we really thankful to the Lord for that which He has done for us in the cleansing of our sins? Not just at the moment of salvation, but through each day’s experiences.

Dr. S. D. Gordon many years ago prayed, “O Lord, we may not be able to hold very much, but we can overflow lots.” And, you know, this is our responsibility. We, too, are to teach transgressors the way of the Lord. Literally, that word “teach” in Hebrew means to disciple. In II Timothy 2:2 we read that we are to be ready to teach others who can win still others to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It’s not just a ministry of addition, but rather one of multiplication. *But the imperative thing is, don’t try to teach someone else until this joy or restoration of this satisfying experience is real in your own salvation.* You see, you can only teach what you personally have experienced.

I remember some years ago I really had no intimate understanding of the subject of death. I knew it meant the cessation of physical life, but it wasn’t until my father passed

away in 1950 that I was truly able to have compassion with others in the similar loss of their loved ones. And this is what the Bible means when it assures us that God wants to comfort us in all our tribulations so that we may in turn comfort others in the future who may have to go through similar difficult trials and hard experiences.

Is God's Truth Apparent In Your Life

You know, there may be one reason to explain why some people don't become Christians today. I think it's simply because the teaching of God's truth so often isn't being related out of true personal experience. Perhaps you've heard of the very pious substitute Sunday school teacher whom most people in the church knew to be nothing more than a hypocrite. The class was his *one* opportunity to show off his questionable knowledge. During the course of the lesson he asked, "Boys, why do you suppose people say I'm a Christian?" There was obvious silence. Finally, one little fellow who probably didn't realize what he was saying responded by declaring, "Well, sir, maybe it's because they don't really know you." Would this be an evaluation others could make of us?

What has God brought us as a vital experience in our lives? We're to teach God's ways, not our ways. Too often we may get the erroneous idea that the experience of discipling others belongs to the preacher, the evangelist, the Bible teacher or the Sunday school leaders. The greatest blessing for any life, and certainly the greatest joy that can come to heaven, are when transgressors have seen the light of God's truth.

God Can Bring Victory From Defeat

Now notice the abundance of personal as well as divine pronouns. *I* want to teach *Thy* ways. Throughout the entire chapter we find this situation of personal, intimate fellowship

to be true. David committed adultery and murder, two of the grossest sins. From a human standpoint we're perhaps quite justified in asking the pertinent question, "Can any good come from David's sin?" With the prescription the Lord has given for confession and cleansing, then even in this experience God will bring victory. Now that certainly doesn't mean that we should sin to make God's grace abound. That's not it whatsoever. But even when we have done our worst, God will still bring victory from defeat. It is His consuming passion that all men should be saved. He's not willing that *any* one should perish. His desire is that sinners should be converted to the truth.

Billy Graham relates an interesting experience he had while traveling on an airplane. A man who obviously had a few drinks before he got aboard, and then a few more when the jet was airborne, recognized the well-known evangelist. It must have been an embarrassing encounter as the drunk thickly and with a loud voice announced, "Dr. Graham, I'm one of your converts." With a slight chuckle, the wise man of God gently responded, "Yes sir, you certainly must be. It's certainly obvious that you're not one of the Lord's converts." This is why we're to teach God's ways. Our whole goal and purpose is that people may be converted, not through us, or to us, but that they might come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Himself.

A friend of ours, Charles Swindoll, pastor of the First Evangelical Free Church of Fullerton, recently pointed out to his members the importance of discipling others. He suggested that if each one of us would tell someone else the truth of God's love and grace, then soon the world would be evangelized. He illustrated that exciting possibility in this fashion. "If you told just one other person during the course of 1982 about the Lord, so that he became converted, and then the two of you next year (1983) each told one, and we continued this process in pyramid fashion for a period of 30 years, then by the time a single generation had passed,

536,870,912 people would be reached for Christ.” Can you imagine it? That’s more than half a billion! And keep in mind, that’s if just one person did it to one other person and the force was multiplied in that way as souls were won to Christ. Think what would happen if 10 of us did it, or 50, or even 100. This is discipleship not by addition, but by multiplication. That’s the only way the job can get done.

The greatest danger facing us today is that because of sin, men turn away from Christ. Nathan had to tell David, you remember, as recorded in II Samuel 12:14, “By this deed (the evil deed of taking Bathsheba and having Uriah killed) you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme His name.” The greatest detraction of the gospel actually comes from Christians who live sub-normal spiritual lives. Are we really willing to teach God’s truth to those who need to know the way of righteousness?

God Must Exact Judgment For Sin

Verse 14 pleads, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.” Now the allusion here is to the guilt of sin. It clearly shows the necessity of shedding blood or taking innocent life to atone for iniquity.

In Genesis 9:5, 6 the law of capital punishment is firmly established. I’m surprised how many people say that capital punishment is contrary to God’s law. It’s not whatsoever. It predates the Ten Commandments and has never been set aside by the Lord. I think we’ve taken too light a view of sin. Consequently there may be a conscious or subconscious desire to overlook the penalty. Maybe we’re like the unknowing old dowager who said she believed in capital punishment, just as long as it wasn’t too severe. Listen and mark it down well, God must exact judgment for sin.

Years ago, Albert Barnes wrote these words, “We cannot indeed by penitence recall those whom we have murdered. We cannot restore purity to those whom we have seduced.

We cannot restore faith to the young man whom we may have made a skeptic. But we may do much to restrain others from sin, and much to benefit the world even when we have been guilty of wrongs that cannot be repaired.”

Do you remember when Carol Fulgate was paroled from prison? She was involved, according to the court record, with Charles Starkweather in a slaughter of human life without rhyme, reason or sense. In the intervening years, although she had maintained her innocence, Carol Fulgate came to know Jesus Christ as Savior. On television, she told reporters she wants to spend the rest of her life giving a positive testimony for the Lord. She’s literally prayed this petition, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness. My tongue, as a result, shall sing aloud Thy righteousness.”

Have you ever stopped to realize that some of us have killed other people? We’re actually murderers, not perhaps with any specific physical deeds by some instrument or implement of death, but we *have* killed others, at least with our words. And as a result we need to have this definite bloodguiltiness removed from our lives.

A Desire To Praise The Lord

Will you notice in this verse the result of being delivered from this sin? There’s an almost spontaneous desire to sing the praises of the Lord. You see, praise is only a natural expression when the sense of sin is completely removed by the Lord. Paul testified, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Notice the pronouns here because they tell the story. It’s *my* tongue and *my* lips, but it’s *Thy* righteousness and *Thy* praise which I’m to sing.

And I’m also to do it aloud. The reason for this is so that all may hear. It’s very easy for some people to excuse themselves from personal evangelism by declaring, “Well, I am a silent witness for the Lord.” But that’s not what David’s saying here. He affirms, “I want to sing aloud.” And you know, we generally sing of our most recent experiences.

It's sometimes very easy to catch ourselves singing some of the clever little ditties that the world puts forth in commercials, or the popular tunes of the day. With these you're never going to be able to magnify the righteousness of the Lord. It's not in this manner that you can praise Him. The only way this can be done is by making sure that our lives are constantly in a right relationship with the Savior. We're to sing aloud His righteousness. The Bible says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt, but of him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justified the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. For it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."

There's something else, too. I like the use of the subject of tongues in this verse. James, the third chapter, really contains the high point of biblical discussion concerning personal speech. As an example, we read in the fifth verse, "The tongue is a little member, but boasteth great things." Now, that word "member" in the original Greek is the word from which we get our beautiful term "melody." You see, God originally created the tongue to be a means of providing harmonious music to boast about the great things of God. There's nothing wrong with boasting, so long as we're able to say, "My boast is in the Lord."

Verse 15 follows these thoughts rather closely. The Psalmist rightly asks, "O Lord, open now my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." A spiritually instructed and mature Christian will never call attention to himself. He is always interested in glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith certainly grows by the exercise of prayer and praise, as is suggested here by the Psalmist David.

What Is Most Prominent In Your Conversation?

A teen-age girl recently told us that she was distressed by her Christian mother because she seemed to be more

interested in telling people about her accomplishments and taking off about twenty pounds through Weight Watchers, than she was in talking about the Lord.

I remember something I read on my mother's phone book. She had penciled it on the cover, perhaps as a thought someone had given to her or she'd heard. The lines went, "Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff; and nudge me when I've said enough." Let's not be so interested in ourselves that we overlook the opportunity of speaking a word in season for the Lord.

You know, it's been pointed out that a bore is someone who, when you ask him how he is, he proceeds to tell you. Then again, a bore is someone who tells you what he wants when you really wanted to tell him about yourself and your own involvements. Vance Havner illustrated this by suggesting, there should be two signs made for most people. The one, 'Opened by Mistake' would then be put over their mouths, and the other sign, 'Closed for Repairs' fastened around their minds in some manner.

On the contrary, our praise is to be of the Lord, and not anything of ourselves. There's a great danger when we simply talk about ourselves rather than about the Savior.

Reporters recorded that in the House of Representatives, the chaplain recently prayed, "O Lord, make our words gracious and tender, because we may have to eat them tomorrow." He was right and that's a very practical petition.

Obedience, Not Sacrifice

Verse 16 is the correct admission, "For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offerings." You remember that Samuel had to come to Saul to tell him that because of disobedience he had failed as king of Israel. God had given him specific instructions to utterly destroy the enemy. That included not only the human beings,

but also all of their animals. It was too much for Saul who foolishly took it upon himself to disobey. He decided to spare the king, Agag, and also the best of the animals. Then, when faced with his sins, he tried to excuse himself by piously pretending that he would use the animals for sacrifices. Samuel came to this wicked king, who had given in to ungodly ideas, to point out, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

David, I think, as we look at him here, is so afraid of himself because of his sins, that he wants to commit his whole life and being to God's divine care. You certainly can't go wrong in doing this! This provides us a perfect golden text. It's a beautiful petition for any preacher, Sunday school teacher or Christian worker. For example, if you're involved in any way in the Lord's service, perhaps with Christian Women's Club or Christian Businessmen or whatever, this is the greatest prayer you could possibly offer. Underline it in your mind, if not directly in your Bible. "For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offering." You see, God doesn't want to have your pocketbook until first of all He has you. He doesn't need your money.

Some churches, I'm afraid, become expert in producing spiritual corpses which they then proceed to try to beautify. I remember visiting a funeral chapel several years ago to see the body of a friend of our family. This woman, I declare, looked far better dead than she did when she was alive. They had performed some marvelous things with her as far as cosmetology was concerned. Now, the church may be able to beautify people and tell them how great they are, but just going to church, just giving money or just trying to live up to certain earthly principles is definitely not enough. God doesn't want a sacrifice of what you have until first of all you've given Him yourself.

Giving A Costly Gift

A missionary tells the story of meeting a woman who was standing at the banks of the Ganges River, obviously in turmoil and distress. She held an anemic-looking child by the hand. The little boy, obviously diseased, couldn't possibly have too much longer to live. In her arms she nursed a lovely fat little baby. The missionary seeing this scene wondered what was going through the woman's mind, afraid that it might possibly be thoughts of destruction. When he came back an hour or so later, he found the woman with the sick child still there. The fat baby was gone however, and the mother was in tears. The Christian asked what she had done. The woman responded, "I threw him in the river. You see, it's part of our religion." The missionary was horrified as he pressed further, "But why did you do that? Why wouldn't you have kept the healthy one?" Through her tears, the woman responded from a religion of fear and superstition, "Our gods deserve the very best!" Too often, we're willing to sacrifice, so long as it doesn't cost us anything.

There recently came to my attention a publication by a certain Christian organization. They had lavish charts indicating that if you were in a certain tax bracket then you could afford, for instance, to give \$100 contribution since it would only cost you \$50. Listen, we should never be motivated to give simply in order to get a tax receipt for it. This was exactly the comment of the Psalmist who avowed, "I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing." God deserves our very best.

Bruises Will Bring Forth Sweetness

David goes on to explain in verse 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Anything that's crushed and contains a fragrance, such as a rose, has to go through the experience of being pulverized so that the lovely perfume may

fill the air. Listen, God wants your heart, my friend, but He'll take it broken.

About the first of November this past year, I bought a half-bushel of oranges. We thoroughly enjoy having fresh orange juice as many mornings as possible. The man who sold me the citrus explained, "Now remember, you'll find these oranges are plenty juicy, but they're not yet the sweetest in the world. You'll just have to wait until after the first cold snap. Then the sweetness will be put into them." That's a strange but real quirk of nature. It may be that right now there's a cold snap in your life. There may be bitterness, anger, malice or any number of difficult things. Let the warmth of God's love drive away the coldness and bring the sweetness of His Holy Spirit. David prays that he may understand what God wants. Our spirit has to be broken and contrite to be filled by His Spirit. Literally that means crushed and subdued.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon penned, "When the heart mourns because of sin, Thou O Lord art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe." This is exactly what David's talking about.

Broken Walls Need To Be Rebuilt

In verse 18, we find a prayer not only for the Psalmist himself, but also for others, "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." David realized again as king, his sin had affected the entire empire.

The walls here are symbolic of the security of the land. David is praying that his favorite place, the city in which he hoped to build a temple, might find God's love and blessing upon it. I can only ask, has there been in your life (or mine), some walls broken down because of sin? Maybe with your involvement it has affected others in your family, your home, your neighborhood, your church, your school. These walls need to be rebuilt. Ask that God's good pleasure may be

established. You may be assured that His good pleasure is that not anyone should perish. Those four words are really the focal issue of all we do and say. Underscore them, "In Thy good pleasure."

Now, verse 19, states "Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar." No longer is it just a ritual or a perfunctory habit of going to church, attending Sunday school and prayer meetings, helping on visitation programs or participating through stewardship. Look at it this way, every person is a king over some certain rulership. We each hold some specific sphere of influence. It may be our family, friends, neighbors, workers or fellow students. When sin reigns unchallenged in our lives, things begin to fall apart. This is what happened to David.

In a home, for instance, this same tragic thing can take place. In I Peter 3, the apostle warns husbands and wives how they should get along together. He cautions them that if they don't work harmoniously in the things of Christ, then their prayers would be hindered. Now in the Greek, literally, that word "hindered" means that they might be "cut off."

Oh, David experienced some great heartaches as did Bathsheba, too. She bore David four sons, including Solomon and Nathan. Her first child, the one who issued from this illicit union, died. On the other hand, as a result of David's coming for confession and cleansing, Solomon and Nathan had the privilege of being in the ancestral line of the Lord Jesus Christ. (This is shown in Matthew 1:6 and Luke 3:31.)

God's Way, Not Our Own

An architect friend of mine told me recently, and in a rather complaining vein, that all too many of his clients who ask him to design a house for them, have already made

elaborate plans in their own minds. In exasperation he explained, "What they really want is simply my sanction for their plans." Listen, that won't work with the Lord. Only as we go God's way can we know God's will. He said,

"I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. And be not conformed of this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

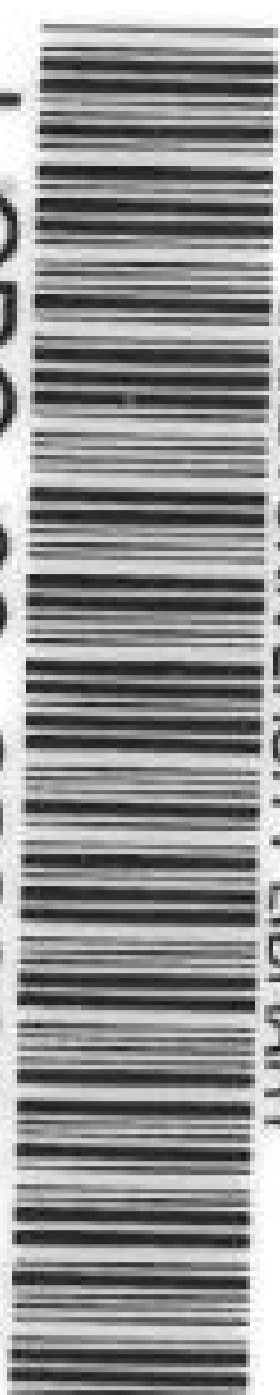
May the Lord help us to see the challenge of how to get rid of guilt and how to find a blessed restoration in fellowship through our daily experiences in the glory of our blessed Lord. Amen.



BIOLOGIA UNIVERSITY

This page has been left blank to allow for proper page turns.

BIOLA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



I CBC 00 0383361 Y