The Lord’s grace and mercy to you.

So very often, when we are told to do something, we want to know why. If we aren’t told, our tendency is to not do it. That is our human-nature (especially as Americans). When those commands come from God, it is our *fallen* human-nature to resist. We don’t like being told what to do, especially if we aren’t given what we consider a good reason.

As Christians, we need to do our very best to be obedient to Jesus, even if we don’t understand why. Christianity is based on faith: Faith in Jesus as our Saviour; faith that the Bible is the very word of God. Our faith is not blindly believing in these things. God has given us enough evidence in His word and the witness of the Holy Spirit. If we obey the commands of God and Jesus, we show that our faith is real. Our obedience is the evidence of our faith.

Part of our faith is believing that any command from Jesus is good whether we understand it or not. Here is where we chose to submit to Christ entirely; we lay aside our own will and follow His. When we follow the Lord, (or even when we don’t), a time will come when we understand. Understand or not, obedience is how we show our love for our Saviour.

“*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*.”

John 14:15

*Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter*.”

John 13:7

In Christ’s love

John

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8-30-20

Psalm 51 (2)

We continue now with our look at Psalm 51 as a model for repentance and asking God for forgiveness. As Christians, we still fail in our faithfulness to God; when this happens, we need to seek God’s forgiveness so that we can be in fellowship with Him. Jesus died for all of our sins and once we accept Him as Saviour, all our sins are atoned for. But it is still necessary to confess and ask for mercy during our lives to keep open communication with God and to avoid resisting the Holy Spirit.

This Psalm is a prayer offered by King David asking forgiveness for committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering Uriah. Hopefully, we don’t have to deal with sins such as these; but it is important to remember that any and all sin is repulsive to God. No matter how small we might consider a sin, God will not look upon it. He is completely holy. Living as fallen creatures, living so much in sin, it can be hard for us to understand the holiness of God and His refusal to accept any kind of sin. But even if we can’t understand, we must accept this as true, and act accordingly.

Last week, we considered that David did not offer any excuse for his sin, nor did he try to blame someone else. He did not try to offer some reason, such as his own good works, that he should be forgiven. Instead, David threw himself entirely on the mercy of God. This is the only basis any of us has for asking forgiveness. Nothing but God’s mercy through Jesus Christ can get rid of our sin and take away our guilt.

David realized that although he had done wrong to Bathsheba and Uriah, he had sinned against God. Sometimes, when we do wrong to another, we can do something to right that wrong; we can make up for it. But when it comes to sinning against God, there is nothing we can do to right the wrong; God’s mercy is our only hope.

David came to the realization that he was sinful from the moment of his conception; and that goes for all of us too. We have inherited a sin nature from Adam and none of us can be pleasing to God until we accept Jesus; until we believe in Him, in His work on the cross, and make Him Lord of our lives. People in Old Testament times were forgiven of sin by their faith in God; but it wasn’t until the sacrifice of Jesus that their guilt was removed.

This brings us to verse 6: *Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom*. As in verse 5, ‘*behold*’ here is a strong word. David is not asking God to behold; God already knows. It is David’s way of saying how important this is; of him expressing that he has had a sudden realization of how deeply vital this is to God. The Almighty wants truth; and He wants it to be foundational in the innermost being of His people. There are many who are good at expressing what is truthful on the outside with the words they use; they say the right things around the right people to give the appearance of godliness. They can fool us; but God has no interest in these displays of holiness. He demands that our holiness is truly from our hearts.

No man can accomplish this operating in the flesh and God knows this; that is why He offers us the Holy Spirit. This is how the second part of the verse is achieved. God, by His Holy Spirit, gives us wisdom in our hearts; which leads to holiness and truth within. Notice that God does not chastise for lacking wisdom; He takes it upon Himself to provide it for His people. As Christians, we must make sure we are not putting on a show for others, God can see through it, our truth must reside deep within us as part of our character. God is happy to give us wisdom as we see in James 1:5,

“*But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him*.”

Paul goes deep into the idea of inward truth and the spiritual changes that take place through Jesus Christ. In Romans 2:28-29, “*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God*.” There were many Jews of Paul’s day who were outwardly holy in the performance of rituals and works; but their hearts were far from God. There are many Christians today who try to do the same thing; they are active in church and community, but their hearts are far from God.

Paul address all these people here. While outward acts and works can be good, they are only good if they spring from a holy heart. One who is a Christian inwardly is one who’s heart has been circumcised; in other words, made new. This can only be done by the Holy Spirit when a person has believed on Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Now we are spiritual children of Abraham and part of God’s promise to Abraham to give him a vast multitude of offspring. With our new heart and identity, we can now be pleasing to God.

In verse 7, David again states his desire to be clean; purified; have all the pollution of sin removed from him. *Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*. In this verse, David goes back to the Law. Hyssop shows up several times being used in a purifying cleansing. And without saying so directly, David is making reference to leprosy.

Leprosy shows up often in the Bible. It is associated with uncleanness and causing one to be excluded from fellowship. Likewise, sin causes spiritual uncleanness and keeps us from fellowship with God. Lepers had to follow very strict guidelines: they had to stay away from everyone else and had to keep shouting “unclean” everywhere they went so no one would be near them. To touch a leper was to become unclean. A leper who was healed could come to the priests and go through a ritual that would purify them so they could be a member of the society again. This is the significance of Jesus being willing to touch a leper to heal him; Jesus is the One who could actually purify someone. Not only of leprosy, but of actual sin.

In Leviticus 14 are the laws for dealing with leprosy. Hyssop was used in the purification process. In Numbers 19, hyssop was used to sprinkle cleansing water on those who had come in contact with a corpse. David is asking for that cleansing and purification that can only come from God. David knows that to be washed by God will make him whiter than snow. Why “whiter”?

The answer to this is found in 2 Kings 5. This is the story of Naaman the Syrian who had leprosy and went to the prophet Elisha. Elisha told him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River; he did so and was healed of his leprosy and even became a follower of Yahweh. Naaman offered Elisha much treasure but he refused. After Naaman left, Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, went after him to get some of the treasure. Of course, Elisha knew about it and God punished Gehazi by transferring the leprosy to him. In verse 27 we are told that Gehazi was “*white as snow*”.

Someone can be white as snow and still be a leper; still be unclean. Again, those who look good on the outside but are still impure on the inside. David wanted to be “*whiter than snow*”; he wanted to be clean on the inside.

Often times the Bible refers to our sins being like scarlet; it is very difficult to make something scarlet white again. But when the scarlet blood of our Saviour is applied to our scarlet sins, we are made whiter than snow. We are perfectly purified, which is the way we must be, to be in the presence of God.

David next wants to hear joy and gladness. When our souls are weighed down by guilt, even joyful noises are painful to us. Even happy news cannot make us glad. When we turn back to the Lord in confession and repentance, He is faithful to remove that heaviness. He restores our ability to hear what is joyful and to receive good news. God wants to give us good things. When you sin, turn to Him; don’t let satan keep you from God by making you believe that He doesn’t want to hear from you. God very much wants to hear your confession so He can bring you back into fellowship and bless you.

David has a very good way of describing the way he feels. God sent Nathan the prophet to confront him about his sin. In doing so, the full impact of what he had done against the gracious and loving God came upon him. The Holy Spirit gave David an understanding of the gravity of his sin. He felt as if all his bones had been broken. Terrible as this is, it is a blessing from the Lord. When we feel a great remorse for sin, we are more likely to hurry to God, depending on His grace, and earnestly seeking His mercy. By this, our communion with God is restored.

In verse 9, David once again asks God to blot out his iniquities. To completely erase them. This time David says “*all*” his sins. He has shifted his focus to the fact that he has many sins, not just the ones he is confessing. He said earlier that his sins were before him; between him and God. Now he asks God to not look; to turn away from his sin. This is what God does for us in Jesus; our sins are taken from us and God remembers them no more.

Notice that some time had passed between David’s sin and Nathan coming to him. If left to himself, David would not have thought about his sin; he would have simply believed he had gotten by with it. The reckoning would have come when David died and stood before the throne of God: it would have not been a good reckoning. In His mercy, God afflicted his conscience. In His mercy, God afflicts our conscience too, by the Holy Spirit. He will move and remind us of Who we have sinned against and what we have lost in the process. Sometimes, as He did with David, God may even work through another Christian to point out grievous sin, so that we seek God’s forgiveness.

Sometimes, it is good for us who are Christians, to look back to make sure that there is no grievous sin in our lives that has been unconfessed. We are able to bury these things because bringing them up is painful. But it is so necessary, in our walk with the Lord, to be sure we are clean. We need to be sure that there is no buried sin, no unforgiveness toward others, that lies dormant within us. If there is, we must confess it to God on the basis of His mercy in the blood of Jesus Christ; this will give us a clean slate. There is no sin you can commit that is beyond God’s forgiveness. Here is the wonderful thing: He wants to forgive you. You just need to repent and ask.

At the same time, we must be careful to watch for what satan is doing. He will bring up past sins that you have confessed and try to make you feel guilty all over again. Don’t let him do this; it is one of his attacks. Once we have confessed and cleared things up with God, He never brings it back up again. He throws that sin into the sea of forgetfulness. God promises forgiveness in Jesus if we ask; to keep asking forgiveness for the same sins is to disbelieve God’s word.

Our God is holy and good and loves us in Jesus Christ. He is willing to forgive; He wants to forgive; all we have to do is ask.

Prayer

Almighty God, it is truly wonderous that the Holy One has made a way for His sinful creation to be reconciled to Himself. In the face of our complete rebellion and rejection of You, You sent Your Son and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He satisfied Your justice so that we can receive Your mercy. We worship You.

May Your Holy Spirit wound us Lord, make our conscience to suffer, anytime we offend You. May He give us the wisdom to turn immediately and seek reconciliation. We desire this Lord, so that our relationship with You can be made whole again; but even more importantly, because You have been sinned against and deserve our humble sorrow.

Thank You for Your mercy; thank You for the salvation You have provided for us; thank You for adopting us as Your sons and daughters. Keep us free from sin that we may serve You. Keep us on that path to everlasting life.

In Jesus’ name we pray

Amen