May you experience God’s love for you.

No matter what is going on in this life, God has it under control and it will all work out according to His plan. It is hard for us when we see so much going on in the world that is against God and is simply against reason.

Our portion is to trust God through Jesus Christ. He will care for us and see us through all the challenges of life. If we persevere, our life in eternity will see no more unrighteousness, no more unreasonableness, and nothing but purity. Stick with God, He’s got you.

*Nevertheless I am continually with You;  
You have taken hold of my right hand.  
With Your counsel You will guide me,  
And afterward receive me to glory.*

Psalm 73:23-24

In Christ’s love

John

P.O. Box 315

Capon Bridge WV 26711

(304) 856-2925 home

(304) 790-3114 cell/text

[thatismyplan@yahoo.com](mailto:thatismyplan@yahoo.com) personal e-mail

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Psalm 51

A couple weeks ago, we looked at sin. As Christians, we must be careful that we don’t take the forgiveness of sins for granted. In fact, what Jesus went through for us on the cross ought to make us even more aware of sin and give us an even stronger desire to avoid it. Our God hates sin, and sin needs to be abhorrent to us also.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour, lots of wonderful things happen: two of them are the rebirth of our own spirit and the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. In spite of these things, our sinful nature remains. And so, a war begins. The rest of our life is a battle between our natural fleshly desires and our new spiritual desire to please God.

God has His reasons for leaving our sin nature intact temporarily; that is, during this life. In the same way He left some of the Canaanite people in the promised land so His people would learn how to fight, He leaves our sin nature so we learn how to engage in spiritual warfare. As He left the Canaanites to test His people, He leaves the sin to test us. As we fight sin, we become more and more like Jesus; we become sanctified. This battle will not be over in our lifetimes; God will purify us completely once this life is over. But that is no reason to slack; it is all the more reason to resolve, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, to resist sin to the glory of God.

Last week, we considered some to satan’s tactics to temp us to sin. Satan is a liar and a murderer; he will do anything he can to trip us up in our walk with Christ. Remember that before you became a Christian, satan hated you. Now that you are a Christian, satan considers you his enemy. By means of his spiritual forces, demons, he will do whatever he can to make you ineffective in your ministry for Jesus. These spiritual forces hang around you, they see what you do during your life. They know what your weaknesses are; they know what to temp you with.

This is why it is so very dangerous to play with sin. We must know our own weaknesses and avoid these things. It is tempting for us to get close to sin; pride convinces us that we can play with it but that we are strong enough to walk away before it’s too late. Just like an alcoholic might walk into a bar thinking he will just have a coke, eventually he will succumb to the temptation to have just one beer. There is no shame in running away from a situation you know yourself to be weak in. Just like Joseph ran away from Potiphar’s wife; it is wiser to accept the consequences of running away than to deal with the consequences of succumbing to sin.

In spite of our desire to avoid sin; in spite of our desire to please and glorify God; we will fail. Hopefully, as we continue in our Christian walk, we won’t fail as often or as badly; but there can be no doubt that we will. When we fail, we don’t just shrug it off and continue on; we must repent. Repentance is not something we do one time. Repentance is an important part of our *daily* walk with Christ. Yes, we mess up that often. God has made provision for us: 1 John 1:9,

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

Part of confessing our sins is the resolve to avoid committing them again; to walk in the opposite direction from them. This is repentance. Jesus has paid the price for all our sins, but when we sin now, it gets in the way of our relationship with God. By confessing, that relationship is restored. God is faithful; He will not change His mind about forgiveness. He is righteous; our sin has been punished and He will not punish us again. He will forgive us and make us clean; the guilt and stain of sin will be gone as if it never happened.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm of confession and plea for God’s mercy. David had messed up big time: He had committed adultery with Bathsheba. When he found out that she was pregnant, he had her husband, Uriah, brought home from battle hoping that he would spend time with his wife and think the baby was his. But Uriah was loyal to his king, nation, and fellow soldiers: he would not spend time in the comfort of his home while the other men in the army were suffering on the battlefield. So, King David sent Uriah back to the battle and sent orders that he be placed in a situation where he would be killed. David committed adultery and then murder to cover it up.

May none of us ever face sins such as these, but bear in mind that all sin separates us from our creator. Therefore, all sin must be dealt with. This Psalm shows us much in how to deal with sin so it will be a good one for us to study.

In verse 1 David says, “*Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions*.” David asks for his sin to be done away with entirely; to blot out means to erase it completely so that no trace is left. Notice what basis he asks for this forgiveness: it’s entirely on the mercy of God.

Remember what Adam and Eve did when confronted by God regarding their sin: they immediately blamed someone else. This has multiplied so much in the world, no one wants to accept responsibility for anything (unless they receive praise for it). Another example is King Saul. Before going into battle, he was supposed to wait for Samuel to offer sacrifice. Saul became impatient and offered the sacrifice himself; this was not something that God allowed the kings to do. Additionally, when fighting the Amalekites, Saul was to destroy everything. Instead he kept some things alive intending to offer them as sacrifices to the LORD. In both cases, he was disobedient. In both cases he had an excuse for his disobedience. There is no excuse for disobedience to God; it is sin.

David offered neither blame nor excuse. He asked for forgiveness on the only basis any of us have: God’s mercy. When we sin, it is offensive to God to try to shift the blame or try to excuse our behavior. This only adds to our sin. Instead, don’t try to make a sin less than it is, God already knows all about it. Confess and ask for mercy. We don’t deserve any good thing; we don’t deserve forgiveness. Our only hope, and it is a sure hope, is to depend on God’s grace, His lovingkindness, and His compassion.

Look what David asks God to do in verse 2: “*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin*.” Sin makes us spiritually filthy. David is asking for a good scrubbing. We can never be acceptable to God while any of the guilt and stain of sin clings to us. Notice that David is not concerned about how uncomfortable the cleansing might be; he only wants to be restored to God. We like to think that cleansing might not be painful; but sin has consequences. David’s kingdom was always at war while he reigned; his family was in turmoil; and the child he had with Bathsheba died. Surely, he wished he hadn’t sinned, but it was more important to be right with God.

Next David says, “*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me*.” David had put the thought of his sins behind him until the prophet Nathan confronted him about what he had done. Nathan had become David’s conscience. As Christians, our conscience will point out our transgressions and bring our guilt to mind. We should be bothered by these things and desire to be rid of these feelings and the knowledge that we have sinned against our good creator. Our sin is in front of us, standing between God and ourselves, hindering our relationship. Our conscience is a blessing; it makes us want to get things right with God once more.

Verse 4 begins, “*Against You, You only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight*.” This can be difficult for us. It would seem that he has sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah also. We don’t know to what extent Bathsheba went along with the adultery, but David murdered her husband. And Uriah never knew that the king he was entirely faithful and loyal to, took his wife and had him killed.

It comes down to the meaning of the words. David did wrong to Bathsheba and Uriah. When we do wrong to others, we need to seek reconciliation. It is up to us to apologize, ask forgiveness, and if possible, make up for what we have done. The word “sin” is reserved for God. Sin is rebellion against God or any of His commands. Any time we do wrong to another person, we sin against God. When we sin against God, we can apologize, ask forgiveness, and repent; but we can never make up for what we’ve done. For us to make up for any sin against the infinite God would require an eternity in hell. That is why we have to accept the gift that Jesus offers, of making up for our sins in our place.

So, David admits that he has sinned against God and no one else, because He is the only God. Also, the evil was done in His sight. God is all seeing and all-knowing; David realizes that everything he did was right there in front of God Himself. Uriah never saw any of the evil that David did against him; but God saw it all. David deeply mourns what he has done. All of us should deeply mourn for anything done against our loving God.

The verse continues with “*So that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge*.” This almost goes without saying. It would be ridiculous for us to question God’s justice and judgement. But what David is doing is letting God know that he understands his own position: David can answer nothing to anything God decides, and he has no choice but to accept His verdict. David is guilty. When we sin, we are guilty and whatever God decides is right. Again, we must throw ourselves on His mercy; the blood of Jesus is our only defense.

Whatever righteousness David may have thought he had is gone. With this sin, the full reality of his natural sinfulness falls upon him. *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*. This is not saying that his mother somehow did something wrong by conceiving David and giving birth to him. His parents were no worse sinners than any of the rest of us. What David has a concept of here is original sin.

Original sin does not refer to the first sin of Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Original sin refers to the sin we have because we are descended from Adam. Another way to look at it is “inherited sin”. We have inherited sin from Adam; we are guilty from the moment of conception. Our first response is “That’s not fair.” In the same way then, it’s not fair that we inherit righteousness and forgiveness from the last Adam, Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15:22, *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive*.

This should help us to understand the depth of our depravity as it did David. We are inclined to evil from our very beginning and our spirits are without life. We are all capable of the very worst acts we can imagine; it is the grace of God that has kept us from the worst. All this can only be changed through belief in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Our spirit is reborn and made alive; we are covered with the righteousness of Christ; we are forgiven of all our sins and cleansed of our guilt. We can stand before God.

Next week we will continue, Lord willing, to look at Psalm 51 and dealing with our own sin.

Prayer

Lord God, we praise You for Your mercy. Each of us are born with sinful hearts; our minds are only inclined toward evil. We count You as an enemy and rebel against You. What a foolish way of life, for You are only good and kind and loving; yet You are all-powerful and just.

By Your great mercy, You sent Your only begotten Son, Jesus, who took the punishment for our sins. You have given us a wonderful chance that we don’t deserve: salvation by simply believing on Him. It is hard for us to contemplate, that we would sin against One such as You.

Thank You for forgiveness. We admit our sin against You. With the help of Your Holy Spirit, may we resist the lusts of our hearts, the call of the world to pursue vain glories, and satan’s lies and treachery. May it become our heart’s utmost desire to bring joy to You through our obedience.

We ask in Jesus’ name

Amen