

The Repentant Heart: A Heart Pleading for Restoration & Renewal, 2

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The Repentant Heart
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Let us open God's word this morning to the book of Psalms as we turn to Psalm 51 and we continue with our series on Psalm 51, and we continue with our attention on this third section of the Psalm that's found in verses 7 through 12. Our concentration this morning will be on verse 10 but let us begin our reading and read all the way through verse 12 this morning. This is God's word for our good.

1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight--That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Thus ends the reading of God's word this morning from Psalm 51. May God bless the reading and especially the preaching of his word to the hearts of his people.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we look to You. We do not approach Your word presumptuously but, Father, we look to You to do Your work by Your Spirit in applying the word to each of our hearts. You know each of our hearts, You know each of our hearts better than we

know our own hearts and so, Father, we pray that You would apply Your word, Your word as salve to the wounds of Your people. May You apply Your word as the water to the plant that needs nourishment, apply Your word, Father, so as to encourage the souls of Your people, and my You, Father, apply Your word by Your Spirit to shape and mold and form our hearts, our affections, our wills so that they accord with You. Father, cause our chief delight to be that which You delight in. We love You and we pray these things with confidence with dependence upon Your Spirit in the name of Your dearly Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

You may be seated.

Well, we continue with our consideration of this Psalm of David that gives us insight into "The Repentant Heart" which is the title of our series, very appropriately titled for this particular Psalm. You may recall from our first message in this series that the subject of repentance in our day and age has become a tertiary issue. If you recall, tertiary means "of third rank; or third in a line of three." If one is composing an academic paper, for instance, one might have primary sources, secondary sources, and tertiary sources. Primary sources, of course, provide information in the raw, such as an autobiography. Secondary sources will provide a description or an explanation or analysis of primary sources, like a biography. But a tertiary source is one that summarizes or even repackages ideas like Wikipedia or like a pamphlet, for instance, that is not substantive at all. It's not a reliable source from which to get information. It's not a source that you would want to use as a foundation of a defense. It's not even a source of second rank, it's a source of third rank. It's tertiary. Indeed, repentance has become in our day one that is not a primary issue, nor is repentance in our day one of even as being a secondary issue, but it's a tertiary issue. It's of third rank. It's a matter worth giving our consideration and attention maybe from time to time, or merely touch upon it, or maybe it's something that we shouldn't give consideration to at all.

So it's a subject largely avoided in one's thoughts and even in one's conversation, but there is a reason for this. It is because it addresses the heart of a person. It hits on those secret hidden places that nobody sees except you and God, found underneath the surface. It requires a wrestling in places where one would rather not wrestle but leave things just as they are, just kind of leave them as the status quo of my life. It's avoided, this matter of repentance, because it requires facing God as God and facing sin as sin. That's the reason why it's often avoided, because it hits at the heart, you see, the heart of a man.

To accommodate for this, many people will simply gravitate to or embrace a religion that will avoid it and that's very convenient. On the one hand, one will embrace the view that religion is merely a matter of cleaning up one's life, turning over one new leaf after another. It's to correct one's bad behavior and replace it with good behavior. It's an attempt to be a good person by pursuing a moral life. This person's religion could be deemed moralism. On the other hand, one might seek out a religion that provides whatever necessary ritual or necessary ceremony is needed to calm my conscience regarding my wrongdoings. So long as a religious leader can tell me what religious act to do or ritual to perform, then I won't really have to be much concerned about this matter of

sin, and that person's religion could be deemed ritualism. But whether one embraces moralism or ritualism, in the end these false religions are simply different ways of avoiding the repentant heart, a truly repentant heart.

Now you might say, "Well, I'm a Christian whose religion is found only in the pages of sacred Scripture and has as its center a living and vital relationship with God through a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't have a problem with moralism and I don't have a problem with ritualism." Yet brothers and sisters, our hearts are prone to tending in one of these directions when we are struggling with having true repentance in our hearts. They'll tend in one of those directions.

The flesh, the world and the devil can so easily set our attention on behavioral change just to avoid the heart. The world, the flesh and the devil will so easily set our attention on ritual just to avoid the heart. But in our text this morning in Psalm 51, we find that the truly repentant heart pleads not for a change without but for a change within. It wants the heart to be changed, truly changed, and so it pleads for renewal within. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." Within me.

Let us look more closely at these words this morning in verse 10. It's important for us to notice a shift in this Psalm at this point. Notice that what has dominated David's focus up to this point in this Psalm. All the way leading up to verse 10, what David has taken up as the attention that he's giving to the reader is confession of sin as sin in relation to God as God, and this confession is sandwiched between, as we saw last week, his plea for mercy and forgiveness.

We even saw an almost identical phrase that he starts with in verse 1 that he ends with at the close of verse 9. Look at the text in verse 1. How does he begin here in verse 1? He says, "Blot out my transgressions." And now look at the end of verse 9, "blot out all of my iniquities." It's as if David is bookending this portion of the Psalm, as it were, with a desire to have his iniquities and transgressions blotted out. Last week we found David pleading for restoration like a leper that pleads for restoration, crying out, "Purge me with hyssop and I will be clean," but watch what he does in verse 10, we find that David's desire is not only that he be cleansed positionally before God, restored by mercy, but he now cries out for a clean heart, "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

So brethren, listen, not only does he want a clean record but we find that David wants a clean soul. He wants not only for his sin to be made clean, whiter than snow, a slate that is clean, a record of sin that's erased out of the sight of God, but he wants a heart that's made clean, you see. David knows where sin has come from and it's far from some behavioral mess-up. It hasn't come from some behavioral habit on the exterior, but he knows that the sin that has manifest itself on the outside has ultimately come from the wellspring of his heart on the inside. He knows that's where it's come from. He knows that this is where the real business of repentance takes place, right in here.

The corrupted actions that he's carried out in killing Uriah and engaging in adultery with Bathsheba have all come from a corruption within. The impure actions have sprung for

an impure heart and David wants God to work on there in his heart, the very opposite of where the world wants to focus attention. Change up your life. Clean it up. Work on the outside. Change your behaviors. Turn over a new leaf. David says, "No, never. No." Therefore David pleads and his plea to God encompasses not only that of restoration but it also encompasses that of renewal. Renewal. "I need a clean pure heart, O God." Do you hear his plea? It's anything but exterior behavioral change. "Create in me a clean heart, Lord, create in me a pure heart. That's what I need. I need a pure heart so that I won't sin against Thee the way that I have so grossly."

You see, what David's doing, brethren, is he's moving from remission to renovation. Much of his attention so far in Psalm 51 has dealt with this wiping clean his sin, blotting out his transgression, this idea of remission of sin, but now he's shifting a bit and he's talking about renovation, God coming and tearing out things, renovating things. He's calling out for a positive disposition so that he might avoid sin in the future. This is a truly repentant man. Not only does he have deep regret from his sin but he doesn't want to sin anymore. He's calling out for a clean pure heart that longs for holiness, that beats for God's pleasure, that has affections for godliness. That's what he wants, not just remission but renovation.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God." As one author put it, we cannot find words better suited to express a desire after holiness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Is that where your heart is this morning? Is that how your heart deals with sin, with true repentance, crying out for purity within? But David goes further in this parallel line that comes thereafter. David, you see, once knew what it was like to have his inward parts upright. He once knew what it was like to have his inwardmost being fixed and established, for it was fixed and established in his relationship with his God. He knew what that was like.

It's like looking at a large tree. It was mentioned this morning that someone has a tree hundreds of years old out in the yard like we have in Louisiana, right? Those big live oak. It's a large tree with deep roots and wide stretching roots. It's a tree that is firm. It's rooted. You can even feel its anchor as you look at it. It's well-established. And David knew what that was like, to be fixed and firm and rooted and established and that's the word that David invokes here in our text where he writes, "Renew a steadfast spirit within me. Renew within me that firm, fixed and established spirit, Lord." This is how David remembers his heart being when it was upright, walking in the fear of God, trusting in the Lord, delighting in what pleases God, and he wants his spirit again renewed to such a firmly established position. "O God, renew that steadfast spirit within me, please. Please renew it." He senses that things are not firm and fixed and established like that thick tree and so he calls upon the Lord and says, "Renew this steadfast spirit within me."

You know, it's the same word that's used elsewhere in the Psalter. For instance in Psalm 65, we read this, "By God's strength He established the mountains." Okay, so let's forget about the tree a minute and let's imagine a massive mountain. Can you think of something that is more fixed and firm and rooted and established than a massive

mountain? Or if mountains are not enough imagery for us, consider another passage from the Psalter that speaks about the immovable throne of God in Psalm 9, "The Lord sits enthroned forever. He has established His throne for justice." Can you think of anything more fixed and established and rooted than the throne of Almighty God? And David, you see, uses that very word and he pleads that his spirit would be like the mountain or like the throne of God, as it were, firm in its trust of the Lord, immovable in its devotion to God Almighty, a spirit that stays the course. "O God, renew a steadfast spirit within me."

So the repentant heart is a pleading heart, pleading for both restoration and renewal. The repentant heart craves purity within and a spirit again firmly rooted. The repentant heart not only desires forgiveness but it desires a positive disposition of spiritual health in the inward parts. That's the beating heart that is repentant. It not only wants mercy and forgiveness but wants a positive bill of health within in the deepest most being. Is that where your desire is, brothers and sisters? Is that how our hearts beat with repentance?

Well, how is this pure heart and established spirit gonna come about? That's where we need to land this morning. How is this going to happen? Here is a reality that set in for David that needs to set in for us, it comes about the same way that mercy and forgiveness comes about. Let us look at something here. Look at verse 1. Look at the way David begins. "Have mercy upon me, O God." He invokes this "O God" phrase to stress that the mercy that I need can come from nobody but you. You're the only one that can grant mercy, hence the remainder of verse 1, "According to Your lovingkindness; According to Your tender mercies." Do you see his accent? "I need mercy and only You can give it."

Now look at verse 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Here he invokes the "O God" language again in Psalm 51. Why? To stress that he is wholly dependent upon God to do this work in his heart. It's not a pull one's self up by their bootstrap. No, he's looking to the same God he looked to for mercy, it's the same God he's looking to to perform this work of renewal and perhaps that's the reason that David even goes further, he invokes even stronger language because he uses this Hebrew word "bara" which is "create," and do you know where you find the word "create," this same word? All throughout Genesis 1. He uses this word "create, Create in me a clean heart, O God. Lord, just as creation did not just come about on its own, just as creation didn't come about by its own power or strength, neither will this heart of mine produce on its own strength pure holy affections unto You. So I plead to You to create it. Create it, Lord, because it's not there. I need purity within but it only can come from Thee." So there he not only says, "Create in me a clean heart," but he says, "O God" just like he did at the start. "The mercy that I need can only come from Thee and the pure heart pumping with pure affections for Your glory will only come from You. So I'm looking to You to create it."

Listen to this man, David, and this is a Psalm intended for the whole congregation so it should reflect all of our hearts. "Lord, create the affections for holiness, the longings for godliness, the cravings for purity. Create it. O God, You create in me a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit in me." Do you hear that attention? Hear that plea for renewal? That's the repentant heart.

Brothers and sisters, if you haven't had this already take place as we've gone through Psalm 51 so far, I hope that it sets in today. Aren't you so thankful that the Lord God does not whitewash the heroes of the Bible? Aren't you glad? Aren't you glad? Oh, this is David. David, a man after God's own heart. If there ever was a "hero of the Bible," I think David would probably fit in. But look what God does for us, he doesn't whitewash the heroes of the Bible, he shows a man like David to be a man that's broken by sin, who's a product of the fall. David was a fallen man who knew God but who sinned against his Lord and sinned greatly. David was a fallen man who knew God but needed repentance the same way you and I need repentance. David was a fallen man who knew God but had to wrestle deep within his soul, laying himself and his sin bare before God, helpless and hopeless apart from God's mercy just like you and me. David had to depend on God alone not only for mercy but for renewal and, brothers and sisters, that's you and me. That's you and me. God can reach down into that gutter where there's grime and filth and he can bring renewal into your heart and into mine just like he did for David.

God doesn't whitewash the heroes of the Bible for we all ultimately have the same problem and ultimately need the same thing, we need the same thing David needed. We are all a people that need a Savior, a Savior whose salvation is thorough and complete and comprehensive and David's addressing God as a comprehensive God with a comprehensive salvation. We need a Savior whose person and work not only is sufficient for making our records clean but is sufficient for making our hearts clean as well, one whose salvation addresses the whole person including that sanctifying, renovating work of the Spirit of Christ. That's what we need and as we call upon the Lord through Christ Jesus, we can be confident that he not only is able but he delights to create in the penitent a clean pure heart, and he delights to renew in the repentant a steadfast, well-rooted, well-established spirit within. What a God. What a God. Praise be to the "O God" to whom we raise our plea.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for the person and work of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins and through whom You by the operation of the Spirit of Christ, renew us within so that we have affections that accord with godliness, desires and cravings that accord with holiness and, Father, that's our cry, that's our plea, our plea not only for restoration but our plea for renewal within. O Father, create what's not even there, create pure affections. Renew us deep within to be like that mountain that's firmly fixed and established and upright and strong. O Father, we desire this within so, Lord, we call upon You for it. We call upon You, O God, to bring it about and, oh, how we are so grateful, we're so grateful that you delight to create and renew that within us. We pray all of this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well, brothers and sisters, look up and receive the benediction from the throne of God to the people of God. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the fellowship and enabling power of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen and amen.