

Whiter Than Snow

Radio Broadcast

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Bible Text: Psalm 51:7

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Welcome to the Grace Abounding broadcast brought to you by the congregation of the Shreveport Grace Church that meets at 2970 Baird Road in Shreveport, LA. My name is Ken Wimer and it is my privilege to bring to you today a message that seeks to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious person and finished work of salvation accomplished for sinners at the cross. Please stay tuned.

Have you stopped lately to consider the things that are of most concern to you? I know some might say, "Well, it's the economy," or "It is the uncertainty of the future," or it has to do perhaps, with health or something else that concerns our temporal lives. And I have to admit right along with you that these are things that if I let my mind dwell on them, they certainly can also give me great cause for concern. But as I read the Scriptures and I pray that if you do not read the word that the Lord would direct you to procure a copy of the Bible. I recommend the King James Version because of its carefulness in translation of the original text, but take and begin to read it and I pray the Lord would give you that desire to consider the word of God. And as I do, consider what is written in his word, I find my thoughts are turned to the Lord Jesus Christ. And why are they turned to him? Because I know myself to be a sinner. A sinner worthy of condemnation and that were it not for the Lord Jesus Christ and his shed blood and that righteousness that he came and worked out in a body, as a man, I could have no hope and neither would you.

In Psalm 51, we find King David writing these words, yes they are inspired of the Spirit and yet they describe the heart of one who has been taught of the Spirit of God. He cries out,

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness:
according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my
transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me
from my sin."

You see what was uppermost in his mind and heart. You say, "Well, he was a king, he had everything," and yet here we find majesty and misery, we find a king in a repentant state of mind, we find a monarch of the earth at the very footstool of mercy. And one thing and one thing only, for which he asks, and that is cleansing from his sin.

And he says in verse 3 of Psalm 51,

“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 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.”

Here to me is the evidence of the work of the Spirit of God in a sinner's heart. I don't know if you have experienced this or can identify with it but I can, where the Spirit of God in his grace and mercy, showed me what I am before a holy God, nothing but sin. My sin is ever before me. Its one thing when the Lord shows you your sin, but it's another to see that it is really sin before a holy God. And he confesses in verse 5,

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.”

It wasn't that he was born with a clean slate as some believe and then later sin made its mark on that slate. He says I was shapen in iniquity, that word shapen refers to the coming together, the forming of the fetus while even in the womb. Can anything pure come of a woman? You see, when Adam fell in the beginning, we all fell in him and so David recognizes that he came forth from the womb as a sinner. People like to talk about innocent babies, there are none. All have sinned, all did sin when Adam fell and have come short of the glory of God.

And he says in sin did my mother conceive me. That word conceive has to do with, again, what took place in the womb. People try to make as if fetuses in the womb are not persons but here David clearly acknowledges that even before he had any knowledge of his own existence he was in existence.

“I was shapen in iniquity,” he said, “and in sin did my mother conceive me,” and yet even in the womb that fetus, that life about to be born is nothing but sinfulness before a holy God. It could be no other because ever since Adam's fall every one of his seed, of his race, is born in that fallen state.

In verse 6 he says,

“Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”

Here is where the Lord begins to deal with a sinner, it's in his heart. And when it says God desires truth in the inward parts, David is speaking there of where he puts that truth, where he reveals that truth. If God desired it, then he accomplished it, and it is him who makes sinners such as we are to know wisdom.

What is wisdom? Well, according to the Scriptures it's Christ. Christ is the wisdom of God, Christ the power of God. And so, it's God's good pleasure to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ in the sinner's heart and therefore David cries in verse 7,

“ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

What is hyssop? Well, hyssop is a small plant about 12 to 15 inches tall at its biggest point and some say that it is of the mint family but it was a bush that was used in the sacrifices that God required of Israel in the Old Testament. We find it mentioned in the Passover feast back in Exodus 12 where it was to be part of the Passover that God ordained. The Passover being the slaying of the lamb, that the blood was to be taken and put on the doorposts and the lintels of the door and God seeing the blood, passed by and passed over the children of Israel. Could it be that David was thinking of this when he said purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean? I believe so. But also, it would have been forward looking because we find in John 19, in verse 29, that when our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the cross and was about to lay down his life, give up the ghost, no man took it from him the Scriptures say but he laid it down of himself and took it up again of himself. That was the commandment that he had received of the father. And it says that they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop and put it to his mouth, and when Jesus therefore had received the vinegar he said, “It is finished.” And he bowed, he literally pillowed, is what that word means, his head and gave up the ghost.

So, you can see David here in saying “purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” He is speaking of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to which he looked. Here was David, that miserable sinner who looted with some very serious and some complicated crimes of adultery. Remember that this is written on the heels of his going into Bathsheba and knowing her even though she was the wife of one his generals and then aggravating that crime with murder, having put his general in a position to where in battle David caused his troops to withdraw and the general was killed, Bathsheba’s husband and yet, even as dark and as sinister is that particular plot may have been, we find David looking nowhere else but to the blood of the lamb and pleading for mercy and grace because of that blood. Had you now asked David what he thought of the pleasures of sin, he would have read the most affecting lecture of its exceeding sinfulness and the exceeding distress and terror and horror that it brought upon his soul. Here was the king of kings as far as the earth was concerned, there was no other king like him in his day that God prospered and yet we find him in deep distress over his sin.

There are many today that profess to be the Lord’s in Christendom so-called, and yet they’ve never been made to know their sin. They were taught that it’s just simply a matter of saying a prayer or walking down an aisle and you’re in but those that we read of in the Scriptures, dear friend, we find that the Lord first of all, shows them how lost they are and gives them just a small picture of just how sinful they are and how deserving they are of God’s wrath and condemnation. And yet, even as a king here, David could not command away the terrors from his mind nor his burden from his conscience nor its pollution from his soul. He was living what was said by Solomon years later, in Ecclesiastes 10:8, where we read, “Whoso breaketh through a hedge a serpent shall bite

him.” Here David had broken through the hedge of God’s law and that old serpent, Satan, had tempted him and now stings and torments him.

And over in 2 Samuel 12:13, we find the story behind Psalm 51 where the Lord did not leave David alone. He sent him one of his prophets, Nathan, to speak unto him concerning what he had done to Uriah, the general, not only taking his wife but killing him and as Nathan spoke to him of the consequences of that sin, I’ll begin reading in 2 Samuel 12:9 where he said, “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.” In other words, out in the open in public. “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD.”

As you can see, the words of David here are those expressed in Psalm 51:4, against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. And you might think that Nathan upon hearing that would have put some sort of conditions on David to require him to do something in order to make this right before the Lord and yet here is all we read in 2 Samuel 12:13, “And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” Now, here is David before Christ has shed his blood and we read here the Lord also hath put away thy sin. When you go back to the original, and look at that word “put away” we know that sins were not put away fully, completely and finally until the cross, until the Lord Jesus Christ had laid down his life. And so, as you look carefully at these words, every detail is important because here the word that is used for “put away” is that of a covering. David’s sin was covered before the Lord’s eyes. How? Well, through the sacrifices that were being offered, that’s why they were called an atonement. Those sacrifices of animals could not actually put away sin but they were a covering. Just as when Adam and Eve fell, God took the skins of animals and clothed them. Their salvation was not in those animals that died but those animals that died typified and represented the one who would come thousands of years later, the Lord Jesus Christ and actually lay down his life and put away that sin.

But at this time it could be said, thou shalt not die. There was a reprieve given to David because of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ that he would come and accomplish thousands of years later and so this was what David was looking to and this is the context of the psalm that he wrote. And here in this Psalm, there are actually two thoughts that I want to bring out for you: one is in the negative and the other in the positive. He says here, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. First of all, note that though sin is put away by the Lord in the court of heaven, nonetheless, the poor sinner may not enjoy the comfort of this in his own conscience. You see, that’s the negative. I don’t know in my heart and mind whether the Lord Jesus Christ ever died for you but I do know this that if he did in the fullness of time, in the

Lord's time, he's going to cause his Spirit to teach you of your sinfulness and cause you to cry out to him for mercy and grace and look to the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

And yet, many times even though I may be a child of God and even though I know that my sins have been complete, fully, and freely put away and I have been justified before a holy God based upon that finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ yet in my heart and in my mind, I may not at all times fully enjoy the comfort that that truth brings. In other words, my thought is upon my sin rather than being upon the Savior. We need the Spirit of God, we need him to turn our heart and mind away from ourself to the remedy. You see that's were David quickly looked: to the remedy, Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

So, that brings me to the positive: faith describes the utmost efficacy. Efficacy means what gets the job done. Faith describes it to one thing, one person and that is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Purge me with hyssop. He didn't try to purge himself, but he prayed that God would be pleased to purge him and if so, he says, I shall be clean. There's the positive, I shall, that's a certainty, be clean. He looks forward to that time when the Lord Jesus Christ would come and would put away his sin once and for all.

He says, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. You see, there may be true faith in the blood of the lamb that cleanses from all sin and yet, the soul is left to cry out under the pollution of sin. That's a mercy. I think about times where the Lord has been gracious in showing me my sin. Not just sins committed, but my sin, my sinfulness even now. Some may ask, "Well, aren't you a preacher? Aren't you a leader of people?" Yes, but just like David, I own my sin before the Lord and there is one place that I look and that is to the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. A soul that has been regenerated by the Spirit of God is as much concerned to be cleansed from the pollution of sin as to be comforted with the pardon of sin. I believe based upon this word, that God has graciously pardoned my sin through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet, that doesn't mean that I take my sin lightly, it is ever before me even as David said. And so, true faith manifests itself in the heart. How? By turning away from everything else, and turning to the one blessed remedy and hope that has been open for sin and uncleanness.

One of the old hymn writers wrote the hymn

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee,
Let the water and the blood,
From thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Safe from wrath and make me pure."

Where was this writer's hope but in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and his person. But he goes on in the second verse to say,

“Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not redeem,
Thou must save and thou alone,
In my hand no price I bring
Simply to thy cross I cling.”

That’s where David was looking, that’s where I look, and by God’s grace I pray that’s where you would be caused to look. It’s not your tears of repentance that will cleanse you. No, it’s the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the Lamb of God, that alone can wash you. What a precious word.

In 1 John 1:7 and here is one of the apostles who leaned upon our Savior’s breast and heard the word from him and was taught of him and he writes here after the Lord has ascended and in his advanced years in 1 John 1:7, he says, “If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” When the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood all for whom he died were cleansed from their sin. But now in time, as the Spirit of God calls and draws those from whom Christ died, he draws them to himself. We see that the fellowship, one with another, is in the truth that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son continues to cleanse, that’s why it’s in the present tense, cleanseth us from all sin, continues to cleanse from all sin. That’s our only hope. That’s our only remedy. And so you can see how faith ascribes the utmost efficacy to the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. If you’ve ever seen a clear snowfall on a winter day, when that snow first falls it’s one of the cleanest types of water. You wonder sometimes how anything with such a polluted world, as far as the air is concerned, could come on this earth and especially when the sun shines on it, how bright it is and yet David says wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Here is a cleansing because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that is whiter than anything that our minds can even imagine. Pure because it is that blood and righteousness that makes the sinner for whom Christ died to be just as holy and just as righteous as God himself. He’s saying here I shall be whiter than snow, I shall be as free and as spare from the least stain of sin in God’s sight as if I had never sinned.

Over in Ephesians 5:27, the Apostle Paul speaks of it as being without spot, or wrinkle and then he adds, or any such thing. That’s how the Lord Jesus Christ presents those for whom he died before the Father. It says that he might present it to himself “a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” I have these shirts that they say are to be wrinkle free and some depending on the fabric, are actually a little better than others after you have washed and dried them but I have yet to find one that is perfectly wrinkle free. I still have to get out the iron and smooth it over to make it look good before I put on my suit. But here it is speaking of a work that’s completed, and nothing has to be added to it, it is wrinkle free, it is without spot and that because the Lord Jesus Christ did it.

So here are some lessons that I would have you take away from what I've just said, three things in particular before I close: first, as you value the sense of God's love and peace of conscience do beware of sin. This is not a message that takes sin for granted. I know sometimes I'm accused of that. When men hear me they say, "Well, you're always preaching the grace of God. You're always preaching that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has put away sin. Doesn't that make those that hear you want to live in licentiousness?" And my answer is no, not those who truly hear this message, those that have been given ears to hear. They are always mindful of their sin even though they're just as mindful of God's love, and that piece of conscience because of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, as much as I value the sense of God's love and peace of conscience, yes, I am aware of sin, myself being that sinner. But secondly, I would have you to consider that when you sin, I know some say "if you sin," but I would say "when you sin" because we sin moment by moment, flee instantly to the Lamb who has shed his blood. If your heart is not drawn there, dear friend, you have no remedy. It is only in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That man, that God man, who came over 2,000 years ago and laid down his life that God, the holy God, might be just to declare righteous, justify everyone for whom he died.

Then, thirdly, I would say: believe the word and wait on the Lord. There is no power that can forgive sin or cleanse you from it except the Lord Jesus Christ that has accomplished that work already and he's the very one against whom the sin has been committed and yet, he is the one who has the pardon in his hand. Scripture says, "When we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Who is he faithful and just to? Well, God is faithful and just to his Son. He will not first punish his Son and then punish again those for whom Christ died. That would be double jeopardy. No, the cleansing, the forgiveness, the washing is all in the blood of the Lamb. Look to the Lamb, dear friend.

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