

Series Title: **'Refreshed and Restored: A Summer in the Psalms'**

Message Title: **'There is Forgiveness for You'**

Scripture Source: **Psalm 51**

Date: Sunday, August 3, 2014

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Plagued

Few burdens are harder to bear than that of a guilty conscience. We want to shake the guilt but it sticks to us stubbornly. Try as we may, the feeling of guilt clings...and over time corrodes and depletes our soul. We feel weary, anxious, and unsure of how to deal with the nagging guilt. How do you deal with the plague of guilt? Illustrate: 84 year old German citizen turned himself in the police for an infraction committed decades earlier. "He had been tormented by guilt ever since." We smile at the story and yet in our honest moments feel something of the pain he suffered. We have been that man at different times. How have you dealt with the plague of guilt?

Futile Attempts

We try to outrun our guilt, or somehow justify or explain it away or medicate the pain we suffer. Or we trash talk ourselves mercilessly. We punish ourselves hoping the guilt will go away. How have those attempts worked out in your life?

David's Story: Psalm 51

One of the most hope-infusing passages of Scripture we can turn to when plagued by guilt. What can we learn about experiencing personal soul cleansing from his sordid story? What do we learn about ourselves and God? What truths can we build faith and perspective upon?

Background: 2 Samuel 11&12. A brief synopsis...David has been king of Israel for years. He became king in 1010 B.C. He is now about 50 years old, flush with material prosperity and a strong hold on the leadership of Israel. He is highly respected by the masses. And he is vulnerable to a catastrophic misstep. When the other kings are at war, David stays home. He indulges a hunger for pleasure when he should have been steeling himself on the battle field. One evening, his eye catches sight of a beautiful woman. He ends up sleeping with her and is guilty of adultery. She sends word after a time that she is pregnant and David sets in motion a plan to have her husband killed on the battlefield. Seriously, David stoops to such deceitful schemes, all intended to cover up his growing list of sins against God and against others. The man is blind with fear and pride. David takes Bathsheba to be his wife. I encourage you to read the account thoughtfully. It is gripping and instructive. Months pass and God sends a prophet named Nathan to confront David with the seriousness of his sin and consequences that will follow, including the death of the child born to Bathsheba. Conviction of sin breaks David. He can't outrun, outwit, or out maneuver God. He is guilty as charged and he knows it. What is his next move?

What is your move when faced with the fact of your sin? What can you and I learn from David?

A Desperate Plea and a Genuine Confession: Psalm 51:1-9

This psalm is one of 7 psalms titled the 'Penitential Psalms'. These writings express brokenness over sin and a yearning for God's mercy and grace. The other psalms in this category are: 6,32,38,102,130,and 143.

Vss.1-2 David yearns... for mercy and grace. He has nothing good to offer God except an honest, desperate and broken heart/life. He is completely dependent on the grace of God for forgiveness of sins and a fresh start. The imagery he uses is so down to earth and engaging. He yearns to be scrubbed clean from the inside out. He acknowledges his crookedness, his waywardness and his rebellious ways in the words he uses to describe his sins.

Vss. 3-4 David acknowledges...his wrongdoing and the righteousness of God's judgment. He stops trying to defend himself. 'Guilty as charged.'

Vss.5-6 David discerns...that he was born with a 'bent to badness.' This was not a rare, completely out of character incident. The capacity for such evil has always been there. He recognises that God is looking for truth and integrity, from the inside out.

Vss. 7-9 David pleads... anew for cleansing and a fresh experience of God's love and joy. "hyssop...alludes to the cleansing of the leper, sprinkled 7 times with the sacrificial blood into which the bunch of hyssop was dipped as a sprinkler (Leviticus 14:6), 'purge' means to de-sin Lev 14:49." "Let me hear joy and gladness...pictures the outcasts return to society, greeted by sounds of welcome and festivity." (Kidner commentary) David gratefully receives God's gracious forgiveness. A life restoring gift is received and believed to be true and for him. That makes a profound difference in his life.

Future Realities: Vss. 10-19

David shifts his focus from a singular preoccupation on his past to looking ahead to the future. He yearns for change of heart and way of living. He recognises that only God can give him a righteous heart and the strength to live in a way that honours God and serves others. **Vss. 10-12**

"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." What a mammoth request of God! David knows that to experience first –hand refreshment and restoration, God's powerful work must be active in his heart and life. He must know of God's Spirit empowering and enlightening him. He fears God removing His Spirit from him as He did with King Saul. 1 Samuel 16:14

Vss. 13-19 He is excited about being able to help others find their way back to God, back to the grace of God and the promise of cleansing. He gets that God isn't impressed with religious activities; He is moved by humility, confession, and the hunger for change, from the inside out. He also yearns to see God's people experiencing the grace and power of God in their midst.

David experienced soul cleansing, and was given a future rich with purpose. As can you and me.

You, Forgiveness, and God's Grace

What action/attitude do you need to adopt from David and make your own? Is it being DESPERATE with God about the need for mercy? Is it being HONEST with God about sin and guilt in specifics?

Is it ADMITTING that you are 'guilty as charged' in the sight of a righteous God? Remember, we are talking about violating God's standards, not someone's preferences that may not have a moral or ethical element.

Is it DISCERNING that within you a 'bent to badness' lives? This doesn't mean you are an awful person, without worth, not at all. You are made in God's image, yet that image has been marred and disfigured because of sin. Because of choosing to do our own thing.

Is it YEARNING to experience God's love and power in a fresh way?

Is it ASKING for the strength of God's Spirit to be realised in your life? Understanding that the Spirit of God lives permanently in the soul of a Christ follower. Different than in David's day.

Is it BELIEVING that when we do confess and turn from our sins, we are forgiven on the basis of what Jesus has achieved on the cross? Do we RECEIVE this gift of forgiveness and a restored relationship with God? Proverbs 28:13

Is it that we HELP others experience God's love and power as we SHARE our personal stories?

We can experience forgiveness today. We can experience God's help to live with some hard consequences that may never be taken away. Yet, the fact of a future with purpose and hope is offered to us. What will you do with this amazing offer? Starting today.