

FRIDAY: Requests...Others-focused

Read: Psalm 51:13-17 ¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Reflect:

Based on God's mercy (v1) David seems confident of his pardoning. Yet notice it isn't solely for his benefit (as earlier verses seem to indicate); he desires to "teach transgressors" the ways of God. It's a shame when we think our faith is only between us and God.

Again, David makes no excuse for his actions. He knows the blood of Uriah is on his hands (v14; cf. 2Sam12:9). Legally, Uriah's family had a claim to David's life (e.g., Deut19:11-13).

Verses 16-17 call into question what seems to be the common Christian understanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Apparently David knows God was never content with, nor did He intend to be on the receiving end of people simply "going through the motions."

Respond:

What are some ways that your sin holds you back from serving God?

Confess to God if you are struggling in your relationship with Him (He desires our lives to be fulfilling...not simply a mindless path we wander to make it through to the next day.).

Again, there was no sacrifice for willfully committed sins (cf. Numb15:22-31), this is why we must cast ourselves on God's mercy...He is faithful even when we're not.

Pray: Pray for the purity of NLCC – so we can continue to reach others for Jesus. Pray for God's word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1). Tell God of your desire to serve Him; ask for His help. Thank God that He never turns us away.

SATURDAY: An Eye to the Future

Read: Psalm 51:18-19 ¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; ¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Reflect:

These verses seem a bit out of place. It is possible that they were added during or after a time of exile due to national sin (i.e., practically everyone turning away from God). If that is so, taking these verses literally makes sense.

However, if David still wrote these verses, then apparently he is speaking more figuratively. David knew the law (cf. Deut17:14-20) and he would've known the national history of Israel...and how there needed to be strong leaders for God's people. Again we see an awareness of personal sin and its effects others.

Tomorrow a new sermon series, focusing on the NCD material, will begin. The topic tomorrow will be Empowering Leadership. In addition to having the privilege of listening to Kevin Ingram, the President of Manhattan Christian College, we will also learn about an institution we support with some of our missions money.

Respond:

Does it bother you that there's a possibility of David not having written vs18-19? There are (it certainly seems) other instances of additions – basically editorial comments – in the Bible (e.g., Numb12:3; Deut1:2)

Walls were for physical protection. They were also a sign of civilization. Yet they served a spiritual purpose as well (protection from pagan nations so godly people could live and prosper). Where are some areas of your life that your "walls" may need reinforced?

Pray: Pray for the wrap-up of a weeks worth of VBS activities tonight – thank God for His faithfulness. Pray for all the worship services taking place tomorrow – pray God is glorified and lives continue to change for His glory.

Remorse...or Repentance

June 8 – June 14

Our culture wages war upon our souls. We are all aware of this...yet I don't think any of us are aware to the extent at which this happens.

A rather common distinction between "remorse" and "repentance" is whether or not the repentant person shows a change in their life. Some use analogies between being "sorry" or simply "sorry they got caught" to illustrate the difference.

- If a person gets a speeding ticket...are they truly sorry they were disobeying the laws of the land? Or, are they merely sorry they got caught and will do better not to get caught next time?
- When a child breaks curfew are they truly sorry they disobeyed their parents request – and quite possibly damaged the trust in the relationship? Or, are they merely sorry they tripped over that stupid pair of shoes and made a noise, thus waking up their parents?

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians...

- ⁸ For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it— though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹ As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰ For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

Our culture would rather say "sorry" and move on in life rather than face the implications of what has been done. That only leads to a repetition of offenses, which will in time lead to "death" – separation from God for all eternity.

It's very likely that after Psalm 23 (the depiction of YHWH being our shepherd) Psalm 51 is one of the most well known writings of the Psalter. The event that precipitated Psalm 51 is also well known, the adulterous relationship between David and Bathsheba (cf. 2Sam11-12).

Is David's life a good one to follow? Is he a "good example" at which we can point when talking about our shortcomings while realizing God can still use us? That's another sermon. Yet, his words in Psalm 51 are marvelous. Not only does he say the right things (confession, etc.) he also expresses the right motives (reaching others). Our faith is not as intensely private as we often make it out to be. Yet again, our culture has won major battles in that area as well...

Monday: Help!

Read: Psalm 51:1-2 ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

Reflect:

Who hasn't been in a position similar to this? Any follower of Jesus has been acutely aware of sin in their lives at one point or another. Yet I wonder, do we merely see our sin as an inconvenience (we wish it weren't sinful – because we want to continue it...), or does our sin pierce our heart (we trust God's word that it's harmful) because we've done wrong?

The word "transgressions" indicates sins committed in a conscious act of rebellion against God. It's a breach of the covenant with the faithful and almighty God. The frightening thing about this admission is that nowhere in the Bible will you find a remedy for deliberately committed sins.

This is why the psalmist asks for his sins to be "blotted out" – to have his slate wiped clean. It's almost like it never happened. The word for "iniquity" indicates a twisting of moral standards. This type of shortcoming can have an impact on an entire nation (e.g., Lev26:39), as well as future generations (e.g., Exod20:5).

Respond:

What is a sin with which you struggle that you wish simply "didn't matter" if it was right or wrong?

While God's grace is enormous, how does the 2nd paragraph to the left influence the thought process of "God will forgive me anyway?"

Is there a sinful pattern in your life that you don't want to pass on to future generations? What can you do?

Pray: Pray for VBS, the kids start coming tonight for the rest of the week. Pray for a heart and mind that is intolerant of sin in your own life. Thank God for our time of celebration at the building yesterday, pray our lives continue to be changed for His glory.

Tuesday: Fessing Up

Read: Psalm 51:3-6 ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Reflect:

What a blessing it is to know what God requires of us. In the Ancient Near East (ANE) individuals frequently claimed they were stumped as to how they may have offended a deity. Sometimes what pleased one god would displease another. Also, the gods themselves were not known to be consistent in their actions, or requirements.

David was aware of his sin with Bathsheba for at least nine months (cf. 2Sam11:27). Even though he didn't face it for such a long period, when confronted with it (and its consequences) there was no shifting of the blame or excuses offered (cf. 2Sam12:13).

Notice in v5 David speaks of himself, not others (no "original sin" doctrine here). He's simply saying he is weak and sin has plagued his life. This is why he asks for God's instruction; he knows he needs help because God desires "truth," not "sin" in the "inward being."

Respond:

Have you ever experienced a time of not facing the fact that what you've done, or not done, was sinful? How did that affect you?

Another way of translating v4b is "thus you are justified..." meaning God is righteous in whatever pronouncement He places upon David (cf. 2Sam12:20-23).

Are you quick to admit personal responsibility for your sins, or do you lay blame elsewhere?

Pray: Continue to pray for VBS all this week – thank God for the volunteers who are helping to make it a possibility. Confess to God your sins from today (both of omission and commission). Thank God that He is a forgiving God. Pray for workers for God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

WEDNESDAY: Cleansing

Read: Psalm 51:7-9 ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Reflect:

The hyssop plant was used to mark the doorframes of the Hebrews during the initial Passover meal (Exod12:22). It was also used in the ritual cleansing of a leper (Lev14:1ff). This all points to the fact that David sees himself as unclean. He desires to be pure again (7b).

Not only does David desire to be pure again, he also misses the time when he was more lighthearted. Sin can and does weigh us down (e.g., Heb12:1-2), we should do our best to rid our lives of it.

Again David asks God to "blot out" his sinful acts. However, this time it is a more general word for "sin" – not just those done as an act of rebellion (cf. v1). David is concerned that none of his sins are held against him.

Respond:

What are two recent examples of how sin has affected your life?

Read Romans 8. While sin is serious, we must always remember it doesn't separate us from God!

When are you most at peace with God? How can you have that more often?

Pray: Thank God for His faithfulness to us and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Pray for open ears, hearts, and minds for the children coming to VBS – as well as the workers. Thank God for Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. Pray for boldness (Acts4:29) to speak about it.

THURSDAY: Requests...

Read: Psalm 51:10-12 ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Reflect:

David wants a heart that is "clean," a word that speaks of the utmost purity. It is often used in contrast to what is "unclean" or "defiled" in the Old Testament (e.g., Lev14:57). Yet David knows only God can "create" this heart. It's a verb used only of God (cf. Gen1:1; Exod34:10).

David had the Spirit of YHWH on him (1Sam16:13) since he was a youth. The thought of losing that presence was almost too much. Yet notice that David doesn't say "accept me back into your presence" nor "give me back your Holy Spirit." Again, sin hinders, but it doesn't separate the believer from God.

Also notice that David knows he's in need of God's grace to continue to walk in a right relationship with Him. Our desire has to come first, but we can't do it on our own. Fortunately God is willing to help.

Respond:

How would your life look differently if you had a "clean heart" from God (e.g., How would you treat your neighbors? Where would more of your time be spent?)?

A "right spirit" is a firm, committed, loyal spirit. To what are you most committed in your life?

A "willing" spirit is one that will seek to do God's will. Does this characterize you?

Pray: Continue to pray for the leaders of NLCC – pray for their desire to have a clean heart and right spirit. Thank God for His life changing activity in and through VBS this week. Continue to pray for NLCC's Children's Church. Pray for open doors to share the gospel (Col4:2-6).