

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

True Confession

Scripture: Psalm 51

Code: 1232

As we prepare our hearts tonight to share together in the Lord's table, I would draw your attention in the Bible to Psalm 51, and it's with a great deal of prayer and anticipation that I share with you tonight the thoughts from this marvelous Psalm, Psalm 51. If you don't have a Bible along with you, why we invite you to grab one in the pew racks or the chair racks between you and follow along with us. Psalm 51, of course, is a great Psalm, very familiar to the church. Any of you who come from liturgical backgrounds, a more formal church, would remember that many of the parts of Psalm 51 appear in the liturgy of the church 'cause of it's very content. It's very beautiful, very poignant, very powerful. The theme of it is true confession. True confession. And we'll be looking at that as we bring our hearts before the Lord.

You know, the Apostle Paul said that, before we partake of the table, we should be careful to examine ourselves. He said, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup, for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Before we can actually celebrate the cross, there needs to be a time of confession. There needs to be a time of heart searching. How could we possibly celebrate the cross which takes away our sin if there is unconfessed and entertained sin in our lives? That would be hypocrisy, wouldn't it? And Paul says we would bring upon ourselves chastisement. And so we must examine ourselves.

Well, there's no better mirror to examine my heart in than Psalm 51, and yours, as well. I suppose that the church is probably the one and only organization where members meet together regularly to describe themselves as miserable sinners. But that's true, isn't it? Somebody said, "Well, I don't go to church because there are so many hypocrites there. There's so many sinners there." Well, one thing about the church, we're not a society of perfect people. This is kind of a hospital, and at least we recognize we're all sick...We know where the healing is, don't we? And I suppose some people would say of us, particularly, that we're rather obsessed with sin, that we're always talking about it. And that's true, but that's because the Bible seems obsessed with sin, as well. How could it be any other way when the Bible chronicles human history and experience, and the most conclusive fact in human experience is sin. If the Bible deals with truth, it'll deal with sin. And if we deal with the Bible, we'll deal with sin, too. A man with any moral sense, certainly a man who knows God, is gonna be troubled. He's gonna be unnerved over his sin.

David was such a man, and he wrote Psalm 51. And the Psalm bears the mark of deep inner guilt, and it presents the character of true confession. The whole subject, I think, of confession of sin is much discussed today. And I think it needs to be seen in its Biblical perspective. But it is ever and always the pattern of the Christian's life to be confessing sin. First John 1:9 says, "If we are the ones confessing our sins, He is the one faithful and just to keep on forgiving our sin." In other words, the characteristic of a Christian is to be confessing, and God is continuing to forgive. Yes, the Christian deals with sin...

What do you say when you say "confess"? What do you mean by that? Do you mean beg for forgiveness? No, we've talked about that, haven't we? When we say we confess our sin, it doesn't mean that we beg God to forgive us. You say, "Why not?" Because He already forgave us. When Jesus died on the cross, He bore in His body our sins, did He not? All of them. And so it is not a question of forgiveness with which we deal at all. I have no unforgiven sin in my life. Neither do you as a Christian. For forgiveness occurred at the cross. "My little children," 1 John 2:12 says, "He has forgiven you all your trespasses for His namesake." There is no such thing in the life of a believer as an unforgiven sin.

I reflect back to the interview I heard on television. I think I told you about it. Where the lady called up and said, "If I sin and the Rapture happens before I can ask for forgiveness, what happens to me? I'm a Christian." The answer was, "You'll go to hell, 'cause your sin is unforgiven." Not so. All your sins are forgiven at the cross. You say, "John, what is confession then?" Confession is two things. The word in the Greek is homologeō, to say the same thing. It's agreeing with God that you sinned, and it's turning from it. It isn't asking to be forgiven. It is saying, "God, I've sinned. I thank You for already forgiving me, and I turn from it." True confession involves repentance. And repentance means turning away. You haven't really, honestly confessed your sin until you stop doing it. You know, for a person to say, "Lord, I'm so sorry. I confess. I confess," and keep doing it, that's not confession. That's not true confession.

Listen to 2 Corinthians 7:8, "Though I made you sorry with a letter, I don't repent...Paul says....though I did repent. I did feel badly about it. I perceive the same epistle made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance. Godly sorrow...he says in the next verse...worketh repentance." True confession is, "Lord, I have sinned. I agree with Your estimate of myself. I'm a sinner, and I turn from it." That's true confession. The "please forgive me thing" is extraneous, superfluous. If I'm to confess my sin, I must agree with God that I am a sinner. I must see it as He sees it...Confession isn't just saying, "I did it. I did it. I agree." It's, "I did it. I don't wanna do it again." Turning from it. True confession, then, is a brokenness, not a verbalizing. It's a true brokenness that changes the behavior.

And as we look at Psalm 51, we're gonna see a beautiful pattern of the character of true confession, and I think it'll open up to you very clearly. Now, true confession involves a right view of three things.

A right view of sin, God, and self. And true confession can only occur when you see God truly, when you see sin for what it is, and when you see yourself for what you are.

Lemme give you a little background to Psalm 51. David was a ladies' man, and I mean he was really a ladies' man. When he wanted a lady, he took her and didn't matter to him who she belonged to. He saw one he liked, he just took her. At the height of his power, he became infatuated with the wife of one of his military officers, whose name was Bathsheba, and he made her pregnant...And he needed, really, to do something about the problem that he had imposed upon her, so he decided that he would solve his problem by arranging for her husband to lead a suicide squad into the midst of a battle, and he did and was killed. Then conveniently forgetting his intrigue, he gave the man a military funeral and proceeded to marry his pregnant wife...But, you know, he just couldn't get rid of the guilt. And David became obsessed with his sin. He couldn't get away from the sin. It became the...the tragic point of discipline, which cost him the rest of his life. David became, then, obsessed with his sin. And out of that obsession, he writes Psalm 51. He can't get his sin out of his heart. He can't get it out of his mind. He can't get it out of the thoughts that run through his head night and day.

And, really, in the totality of the Psalm, he prays for four things. Sin has made him dirty, and he asks to be clean. Guilt has made him physically sick, and he asks to be healed. Iniquity has broken his friendship with God, and he asks to be restored. But mostly, mostly, he asks for pardon and mercy. And so it's a Psalm of confession. Let's look at it.

First of all, we notice that a...true confession demands a right view of sin. Verses 1 to 5, "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. For I acknowledge my transgressions, 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. Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Now, there you have David's view of sin, and there are several features that I want you to notice. And I think it worth your while to note these for future reference. To begin with, a right view of sin means that I recognize several thing. Now, watch what David recognizes. First of all, he recognizes that sin deserves judgment. A right view of sin means that I recognize that sin deserves judgment. Verse 1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgression." Notice, David does plead for mercy. The fact that he pleads for mercy is an admission that he does not deserve to be acquitted, or he would've pled for justice...Mercy, tender mercies, "Please God, don't give me what I deserve." Sin deserves judgment, beginning with. In true confession, there must be a recognition that we do not deserve to be exonerated. We do not deserve to be forgiven. We deserve judgment. And so the only thing that

David can appeal to is what? Mercy. And mercy is after the fact of a guilt verdict...

Lemme quote a couple of other verses that may give another insight or so into this thought. In Psalm 103 verse 10, listen. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Aren't you glad for that? You see, He didn't give us what we deserve. "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy." Praise God for mercy. And that's what David appeals to. He says, "God, please, don't give me what I deserve." Notice, he recognizes that sin deserves judgment, and he asks that God spare him that judgment.

In Psalm 130 verse 3, "If Thou Lord shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Lord, if You start giving people what they deserve in terms of sin, nobody will survive. Nobody...And so he pleads for mercy. Backing up to a couple of other passages just to open up this thought. Ezra chapter 9 verse 13, "After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great trespass, seeing that Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break Thy commandments and join in affinity with the people of these abominations?" He says, "God, because of all the mercy You gave us in the past, and You did not punish us according to our iniquities, but You gave us less than our iniquities deserved, should we sin again? Should we tread on such mercy? Such grace?"

Notice, the confession in each of these Scriptures, that sin deserved the judgment. But that God's mercy stayed the hand of judgment. Nehemiah talks about the revival. And, of course, one of the keys was in chapter 9 verse 3, when the people stood up and for one-fourth part of the day, they confessed their sin. And having confessed, of course, they pleaded for mercy. Now, you see, one of the things that a Christian has to recognize is that he deserves judgment. True confession is the recognition that sin deserves judgment. Job 11:6, beautiful statement, "Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." Isn't that beautiful? God requires less than your sin deserves.

Sin deserves judgment. This we know. We deserve hell. This we know...But God is a God of mercy, and, of course, we who are Christians, we know that all is forgiven. We know that all is under the blood of Jesus Christ at the cross, and that mercy is ours. It's marvelous, marvelous promise. But recognize it, folks, when God gives you mercy, it isn't what you deserve. It isn't what I deserve. Sin deserves judgment...There's no other appeal for a Christian to make than to appeal to mercy. There is no other appeal. The Book of Romans, over and over and over, the Apostle Paul says, "The only appeal is to grace. The only appeal is to mercy." Just thinking of a passage in Romans that comes to mind, I think it's 11:32, "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all." The point there is that God is eager to extend mercy.

Ephesians 2, "God who is rich in mercy. For His great love, wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ. By grace are you saved through faith, that

not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." It all comes out of mercy. What do we learn about sin then? It deserves judgment. Secondly, it appeals to mercy. Sin has to appeal to mercy. There is no other appeal that it can make. And that's exactly what David does in Psalm 51. He cries out that God would extend to him tender mercy and blot out his admitted transgression.

Lemme give you another thing. A third little feature of the right view of sin. First it deserved judgment. Second, it appeals to mercy. Thirdly, it demands cleansing. Because God, according to Habakkuk 1, is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon iniquity. God demands that sin be cleansed. Psalm 51 verse 2, listen. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Wash me. David uses terms that speak of a cleaner used on a foul garment. Clean me. He uses a word for sin that is a general word. "Every kind of uncleanness, every form of evil, wash out of my life. Purify me." For one whose sin leaves a deep, deep stain, only total cleansing can suffice. In Jesus Christ, our forgiveness is described, I think most aptly, in John 13, a passage we looked at this morning, but didn't quite get into this section. John 13, Jesus talking to Peter said, "Peter, he that is washed needs not except to wash his feet, but is entirely clean, and you are clean, but not all of you." And He referred to Judas. He says, "Look, once you've had a bath, Peter, and you go about doing what you do, you don't need a bath again. You just need to get your feet washed off."

You know, the beautiful picture of that? At the cross. Jesus Christ gave us the bath. He totally cleansed us, and day by day by day, He just keeps washing off, by His extended mercy, the dust that we gather as we walk in the world. We don't need to be re-saved again. We just need to have the dirt that we gather from the world cleansed day by day by day. And that's the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is still righteous to keep on cleansing us from all sin...I'm so glad for that forgiveness. So glad for that cleansing.

So true confession recognizes that sin deserves judgment. Sin appeals to mercy, and sin needs cleansing. Another thing about true confession, when it looks at sin, is, fourthly, it accepts full responsibility. You know, true confession accepts total responsibility for sin. Look at verse 3. This is so important. "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." Now, friends, this is a very important statement, and...and I want you to see this again. It is critical that here we find David does not blame anybody but whom? Himself. Have we seen this? Remember Achan in Joshua 7:19, and Joshua said to him, "Give glory to God and confess your sin." God is honored when you take the responsibility for your sin. You can blame all kinds of things. You can blame God, for example. That's what Adam did. Sure, when God said, "Why'd you do that, Adam?" He said, "The woman You gave me. I mean you started from scratch up there, God. You coulda done anyone you wanted. Why her?" So he blamed God...Or maybe he even blamed the woman partially. "The woman You gave me."

And then there are people who blame Satan. The devil makes 'em do it. David says, "I did it." I like the prodigal son in Luke 15. He came over and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, before God and before you." Period. I did it. You see, true confession accepts total responsibility. True confession accepts full liability for sin. As long as your confession is, "Lord, I know I did this, but why'd You let me get in that circumstance to do that? You're sovereign, Lord, why'd You bring her across my path if You didn't want me to get in trouble? Why'd You let that deal come up, Lord? You could've prevented that, and it got me in that mess. You knew I was weak there." No, no, no, no, no. You start impugning your sin on God, and you're violating His holiness, and you've sinned doubly... Don't beg off your sins. I like the thief on the cross. He looked over at the other thief, and he said, "Hey, we indeed suffer justly. This Man hasn't done anything." He accepted the responsibility for his sin. Confession demands responsibility.

Notice verse 4. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest." He's really simply saying, "God, I exonerate You. It's myself that have done it. I've done it against You, the only God. I have sinned. You are justified. You are clear. I don't hold You responsible....It's my sin." Boy, you've really reached a mature place in your life when you take the responsibility for your own sin.

Lemme give you a fifth thought. Finally, in true confession, as it looks at sin, there's the recognition that it proceeds from your nature. "For I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." We believe the Bible teaches that life begins at conception...and at very conception, the sin principle is operative. And David admits this. "I was shaped in iniquity. In sin was I conceived." You say, "Do you believe in depravity and the total depravity of man?" Absolutely, I believe in congenital depravity. That it's passed on from generation to generation at the time of conception.

Listen to Psalm 58:3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb. They are estranged from God from the time they're in the womb, and they go astray as soon as they are born." Yes...it goes even further back into the Old Testament, does this pattern of depravity. It appears in Genesis 8:21. "The Lord smelled a sweet savor, and the Lord said in His heart, 'I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. From the very beginning man is evil.'"

In Job 14 verse 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" No one. No one. You see, you have to recognize several things in this area of true confession. Several things about sin. One, sin deserves judgment. Two, it appeals to mercy. Three, it demands cleansing. Four, it accepts full responsibility, and five, it proceeds from your nature. You can't help it. You're a sinner. And, you know, some people aren't willing to recognize this. They don't like to hear that they're sinners.

It's like the Jews in Romans 2. Why, they were so proud of their supposed spirituality, that Paul had to go through this whole argument in chapter 2 and 3 to shoot 'em down. They thought they were great and holy people, because they were Jews. Paul said to them, "You're just piling up wrath against the day of wrath. You're kidding yourselves. God's gonna judge the secret things of a man's heart, and you're gonna be exposed." Chapter 2 and chapter 3, he confirms the whole world dead in sin. You have to recognize, beloved, that you're born a sinner. True confession starts there.

Second thing I wanna share with you from Psalm 51, true confession not only demands a right view of sin, but a right view of God. Having recognized the sin in your life, you gotta move to God and recognize Him. And you have to see some attributes. Lemme show them to you in verses, well, 6 to 12. The first thing you recognize about God in true confession is His holiness. His holiness. And there are several features regarding this. Let's look at verse 6. "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part, Thou shalt make me know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing Spirit."

Now, here, David admits the holiness of God, verse 6. "Behold, Thou desirest truth...where?...in the inward parts." Did you get it? "And in the hidden." You know, you learn one thing about God right there in that verse, and that is this: God is not concerned with external behavior. He is concerned with what's going on where? Inside. "You desire not truth on the outside, truth on the inside." True holiness. Listen. What is David's context? He's saying, "God, I know You don't desire the processes of exterior ceremonial purification that every Jew is so used to. God, I know that isn't what You're after. What You want is truth on the inside."

God is holy. True confession recognizes that God doesn't care how many times you go to church. God doesn't care how many Christian books you own. God doesn't care about all the exterior. God is after the inside. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks where? On the heart. And so the first thing David recognizes as he takes his view toward God, is that God is concerned with the inside. And you can mask it, and you can play games on the outside, and you can go through religious folderol, but that doesn't get to the issue...True confession takes into account the fact that God, an absolutely holy God, demands holiness in the life of an individual. Clean the inside. Get to the real issue. Not what you did...watch this...no, no, not what you did, but the dirt of your heart that made you do what you did. Because you can see what's in a man's heart by what he does. David says, "I know, God, it isn't so important what happened on the outside. You're concerned with what on the inside made that happen." Get to the inside. So confession begins by taking stock of the absolute holiness of God and what he requires in the inward parts.

Then David's right view of God considers also, not only God's holiness, but His power. Look at verse 7. "Purge me hyssop." And hyssop was a little scrub kind of a bush. And hyssop was used, you remember, to dip in the blood, to place the ceremonial blood, the time of celebration, to apply both the blood and water in purification ceremonies. So he says, "Purge me with hyssop. I shall be clean." Do you like that? That's confidence in the power of God. He says, "God, if You clean me, I'll be...what?...clean." That's power. "You wash me, and I'll be fairly white." That what he said? What? Whiter than snow. "You'll make me hear joy and gladness." Don't you see what he's saying? He's saying, "God, I recognize not only Your holiness, You want the inside, but I recognize Your power. You can change me." Beloved, this is important. Some Christians don't believe God can change their sinful habits. I believe He can.

You know, sometimes you get to the place where you wonder if He can, because some people keep doing the same things. The same vile habits. And you say, "God, what's going on? Can't You do this?" And then you go back to this, and you know the confidence of the Word of God that if God does purge you, you shall be, what? Clean. But you have to be like David. You have to come with a broken heart. You have to come with a contrite spirit. Notice the confidence of verse 7. Then notice verse 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

"Do me all over again," he says, "start from scratch. I want more than cleansing, God. I want a new creation. I want a new attitude, new heart." You see, true confession recognizes, one, God's holiness, that He demands internal purity; and, two, God's power, that He can change your pride. That He can clean you. I'm amazed how many people just really don't trust God in those areas and don't commit themselves totally to that.

But a right view of God also not only involves His holiness and His power, but you have to recognize His chastisement. Yes. Look at verse 8. "Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones...watch this...which Thou hast...what?...broken may rejoice."...Do you know what shepherds used to do with wayward sheep? When a shepherd had a real wayward sheep, he'd take that little sheep, take its leg and break it. And then you know what he'd do? He'd set it, and then he'd have to carry that little sheep...and during the time that he carried that sheep, that little sheep would begin to love that shepherd. And then when the leg was better, he'd set the little sheep on the ground and guess who followed the shepherd everywhere?...David says, "Lord, I had my legs broken. You broke 'em. I got the message. I'm ready to follow." And you know what? This sin in the life of David was the great catalyst of his holiness. Was a time of reformation for him. "Make me hear joy and gladness again, that the bones which You've broke may rejoice."

You see, you have to recognize that you deserve chastisement. And not only do you deserve it, but mercy doesn't eliminate it. God says, "I love ya. I forgive ya. Bend over. Take that." It's important. And I like what David says. He doesn't want negative peace. He wants active joy. He doesn't say,

"God, help me to make it, will ya, God? Help me to just endure." He says, "I wanna be happy." He knows he got what he deserved. He says, "I've repented, Lord, and now I wanna be joyous again." Verse 12, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and lift me up with a willingness, a willing Spirit." You see what chastisement is to do? You wanna know what chastisement in your life is to do? You sin against God, and He chastises you. You know why? To bring you to Psalm 51 verses 8 and 12. To bring you to the place where you say, "God, I got the message. You broke my leg. Now I want my joy and gladness back."

So a right view of God recognizes His holiness. He expects inward holiness. His power, He can change your life if you commit it to Him, even as a Christian. You can change your sin habits. Thirdly, a right view extends to the view of His chastisement. "I see what He's doing to conform me to Himself. I repent. I want restoration." Fourthly, beautiful thought. A right view of God recognizes His forgiveness. David recognized it. Verse 9, "Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." Verse 11, "Cast me not away from Thy presence. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." You know what David believes from that verse, verse 9? He believes God is a pardoning God. He wouldn't ask if he didn't believe it. "God," he says, "hide Your face from my sin. Blot out my iniquity." He says, "I know You're a forgiving God." And He is.

The prophets give us such great words regarding God's forgiving character. Isaiah 43:25, love this. Listen. "I, even I...this is God. I like it...am He who blots out thy transgression for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." You says, "For His sake He does that? Not even for my sake?" You say, "Why does He do it for His sake?" So you'll know He is a merciful God, 'cause it reveals His nature...

Ahhhhh, I think the passage I love most of all in the Old Testament is Micah 7:18. Listen. "Who is a God like unto Thee, who pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage. He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy...Listen...He will turn again. He will have compassion on us. He will subdue our iniquities and Thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." True confession recognizes God's holiness, God's power, God's chastisement, and God's forgiveness.

Well, last view. True confession not only involves the right view of sin and the right view of God, but the right view of self. Verses 13 to 19. I must see myself. I must focus on myself. And the view that I must have of myself is this: I must be holy. I must be godly. I must live for God. Give you three thoughts. Number one, for the sake of sinners, that's the first one. For the sake of sinners. Verse 13, "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." Oh, listen to what he says. In verse 12 he says, "God, if You'll just give me back the joy of my salvation, then I will convert sinners to Thee." You see what he's saying? "I must be holy for the sake of sinners. Am I any good to God as an evangel if I'm not holy?" No, I told you that this morning, didn't I? First Peter 2:9. "We're a holy nation for the proclamation."

I'll tell ya, when you have some sin in your life that is eating away, and it piles up guilt, a sense of guilt will lock your jaw. You know that, don't you? You have nothing to say. Verse 14, "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and then my tongue shall...what?...sing aloud of Thy righteousness." You see, where there is guilt, there is never the release to be able to really witness to His righteousness. "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." And you know why he couldn't open his mouth? Because he never had a sense of forgiveness. He never had a sense of being clean. He never had a sense of holiness. I'll tell ya, beloved, guilt will shut your mouth...and I'm sure there are many Christians who have nothing to say because they cannot avow the righteousness of God out of the context of a vile, unrighteous life. So you must be holy for the sake of sinners who need to hear, because then will sinners be converted.

Second, you must be holy for the sake of God, not only sinners, but for God's sake. Verse 16, "For Thou desirest not sacrifice...not externals...else would I give it...if all You wanted was that...Thou delightest not in burnt offering. O, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." He says, "I must be holy because it pleases You, God. You're not concerned with externals. You're concerned with inside, inward holiness." You wanna bring joy to God? You ever thought about that? You know, we take the joy He gives us. Wanna make God happy? Wanna make the heart of God glad? Wanna bring joy to God? Be holy. Yes, God desires that, a broken spirit, a broken and a penitent heart, a heart broken over sin, a heart grieving over sin pleases God. So I must be holy for sinners' sake, for God's sake.

Lastly, I must be holy for the sake of the saints, too. Verse 18, "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and a whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar." Here David's praying for others. "Rebuild all of Jerusalem, God. Restore all of it. Bring them all back to righteousness." ...He's praying for others. You see, by the time he gets to verse 18, he's back on holy ground again, and he starts to pray for others.

You know, you can't really pray to God unless there's purity in your life. Lemme give you a classic illustration of that. Your prayers are really fouled up unless there's true holiness. Listen, 1 Peter 3, talking about marriage here. "In like manner, you husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge. Give honor unto the wife as the weaker vessel, being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Do you realize that if things aren't right between you and the little lady at home, gentlemen, your prayers are hindered. See, where there is unholiness, the channel is blocked.

Well, David says, "I gotta confess my sin, Lord." Pours out his heart, sets for us a pattern, sets for us a pattern for all time, even regarding the ministry we have to other people. Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart...what?...the Lord won't hear me." What is true confession then? True

confession means I have a right view of sin, a right view of God, and not only a right view of God, but a right view of my own self, my own life, that I must holy for the sake of sinners, for God's sake, that I might be on ground to pray for the saints.

My prayer tonight is, as we go to the Lord's table, that we might go there with a broken and a contrite spirit. A broken and contrite heart pleases the Lord. Let's bow in prayer....

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, tonight we come to the place of pardon, and it isn't a throne. It isn't a palace. It's a cross on a lonely hill, but it's the place of pardon, and it was here that God displayed His mercy. It's on that hill that we stand looking at the cross...for our forgiveness...Celebrating the Lord's table is celebrating that death for us. Oh, what joy is ours to do that. But before we do it, lemme me say this. I'm confident there's some folks with us tonight...and like the little song said, "Your sins are air before you, your heart with sorrow breaks."...Maybe you've come to the end of the rope, as it were, in terms of sin, and you wanna unbear your heart to Jesus Christ tonight and ask for mercy and give your heart to Him. If you do that right now, silently where you sit, just invite Jesus Christ into your life. Say, "God, I've sinned, and I turned from my sin, and I invite Jesus Christ, who pardons my sin, whose sacrifice paid the penalty to become my Lord and Savior." Just do it right in your heart right now. Invite Him in. And He shall wash, make you clean...And you shall be as white as snow...

And then you can participate in the Lord's table. It isn't just for people who go to Grace Church. It's for people who've committed themselves to Jesus Christ and who stand at the foot of His cross. And then some of you are Christians, most of you. But there's sin in your life...could be the sin of immorality, either in deed or in thought. Could be lying, cheating, stealing, coveting, lusting after the things of the world, failing to pray, failing to read the Word, failing to grow, selfishness, pride...Could be many things. Overindulgence in one form or another...and I say to you what Paul said, "Let a man examine himself." Perhaps we should take a moment for some true confession. Consider your sin. Consider your God. Consider the import of your own holiness toward the sinners and the saints, as well as God Himself. Let the Holy Spirit reveal those areas to you as we bow together in silent prayer. Let's pray...

Our Father, we recognize that...we have no good thing in us. All our righteousness is filthy rags...We can offer Thee nothing worth redeeming except the restoration of the divine image in Jesus Christ, which You gave us to begin with...Father, we do acknowledge that, like David, our sins just rise before us. Sometimes we feel we are beset by them...We ask that You would, as You have so promised and continue every day to do, continue in Your marvelous grace to keep us clean. Don't let us ever tread on that full and free forgiveness. May we always count the cost that You paid to redeem us and so live in accord with that price. Father, if there are some in our midst who've never received Jesus Christ, may this be the moment right now when they invite Him to come into their lives, when they are transformed...As we gather at this table, lift up the Son, dear Lord, and may He

be honored and glorified in our midst. We pray in His blessed, wonderful name. Amen.

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