

Teen Challenge Sunday 2018

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.
And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,
and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God
among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:7–8 ESV)*

*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
(Psalms 51:3 ESV)*

The Sinner's Guide

Teen Challenge Sunday

April 15th, 2018

Psalm 51

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning! I'd like to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Psalm 51; that's on page 474 in the pew Bible. This Psalm is often called "The Sinner's Guide". The ascription tells us that it is a Psalm of David that he composed after Nathan the Prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Meaning that this is the Psalm David wrote as he was recovering from the greatest moral and spiritual disaster of his life. That's why it is called "The Sinner's Guide". David was a great sinner, but thanks be to God, he was also a great repenter and therefore there is much that we can learn from his example.

Hear now the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 1.

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!

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.

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.

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.

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.

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. (Psalms 51:1–19 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

Well just as David's journey into sin can serve as a useful warning to us, so too can his journey out of sin. From it we learn at least 5 things about how to recover from a major moral and spiritual disaster.

How To Recover From A Major Moral And Spiritual Disaster:

The first thing we learn is this:

1. We have to deal honestly with God

In the first 5 verses of this Psalm David uses just about every possible word for sin in the Hebrew language. He doesn't attempt to sugar coat things or to minimize what he has done.

In verse one he uses the word "*pasha*" which is translated in your Bible as "transgressions" and it means literally to rebel against authority – either human or divine.¹

David admits that he is a rebel. David understands full well that that he had to cross a number of lines – lines that God had drawn - in order to do the wicked things that he did. He had to break at least 5 commandments by my count.

He broke the 10th commandment first:

¹ KM Hebrew Dictionary, Accordance Version, H7322.

“you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife” (Exodus 20:17 ESV)

Then he broke the 7th commandment:

“You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14 ESV)

In breaking the 7th he also broke the 8th:

“You shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15 ESV)

And then to cover it all up he had to break two more. First he broke the 6th:

“You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13 ESV)

And then he broke the 9th:

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16 ESV)

That’s a lot of transgression.

That’s a lot of arrogance!

That’s a lot of rebellion!

But thanks be to God – he OWNED IT. He said – I am a rebel. I transgressed the lines that God had drawn. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.

And he wasn’t done there. In verse 2 he used the Hebrew word *aon* which is translated as “iniquity”. It means guilt and by using that word David acknowledged that he deserved punishment. I did it – David says – and I deserve whatever unpleasant consequences I will experience.

I am not a victim here – I am a perpetrator.

The system didn’t do it. My parents didn’t do it. My environment didn’t do it. I did it and I

deserve to face the whole wrath of God. That's what David says.

In verse 2 he also uses another word, the word *khatta'ah* which is translated in some of your Bibles as "sin"; it literally means "evil".

David says – I am evil. I did EVIL THINGS.

Are you hearing that?

David uses GROWN UP WORDS – BIBLE WORDS - to describe his own sin. Hear what he doesn't say. He doesn't say: "I made a mistake". No, no. Putting two cups of sugar into your muffin mix instead of one is a mistake. Raping your neighbor and killing her husband and lying about it – that's evil.

That's evil!

So if you do it – YOU BETTER OWN IT – and David does.

He uses big boy words because he has done big boy sin. You see, when a grown up confesses they must not minimize their sin with the words that they use – whether they are confessing to God or other people. You have to call sin what it is. You have to call it REBELLION; you have to admit that YOU ARE GUILTY and you have to confess that what you have done is EVIL; it is wrong; it is wicked.

Because until you are in that place – until you can speak that way – honestly - then you aren't ready to do business with God. You're still rebelling – you're still lying – you're still covering up. And in that case – you are still on your own.

But thanks be to God – David got there. He was ready to be honest about who he was and what he had done and he was ready now to speak to God.

And so he did.

He told God what he did and he told God who he was and he begged for mercy.

He said:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. (Psalms 51:1 ESV)

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalms 51:4–7 ESV)

You can't ask like David asked unless you are willing to confess like David confessed. He told God who he was and what he had done and what he deserved and he begged for mercy.

That's good repenting. That's how you need to talk to God if you want to come back from a major moral failure. And that leads to our second lesson learned from David's Guide For Sinners. The second thing we see here is that:

2. We have to submit to a process of total renewal and restoration

David knew that forgiveness was just the first part of the process. He asked for it – he begged for it – but he knew that it was going to take more than just wiping the slate clean – David knew that he needed to be rebuilt from the ground up.

Listen to what he says in verses 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. (Psalms 51:10–12 ESV)

David uses the Hebrew word *bara* in verse 10 – translated as “create”; as in Genesis 1:1:

In the beginning, God **created** the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

David is saying here: “I need to be rebuilt from the ground up. If I am capable of doing the things I have done; I don't counselling, I need re-creation!”

W.S. Plumer says here:

“Its use shows that David was not asking to have his nature improved, but renewed; not amended, but created anew.”²

Listen friends what you do tells the truth about who you are. David already admitted that. He said:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalms 51:5 ESV)

David says – I am a sinner and I have been a sinner since the womb! There is something deeply wrong with me. There is some wickedness BAKED into my DNA. I don’t need a facelift – I need a resurrection. I need to be born again and taught again how to walk in the ways of life.

That’s the sort of SELF HONESTY that you need to have if you want to recover from a major moral and spiritual disaster. You have to go for the ROOT ISSUE and the ROOT ISSUE is the human heart.

Jesus said that. He said:

“What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” (Mark 7:20–23 ESV)

Do you see that? It isn’t what you put in your body that ruins your life – its what’s already inside you that reaches out for things that will that will ruin your life. Do you see that? The drugs are a symptom. Sex is a symptom. Violence is a symptom. The disease is in your heart.

So you cannot settle for surface solutions!

Strategies.

Terminology.

Environment.

² W.S. Plumer, *Psalms* (Edinburgh: The Banner Of Truth Trust, 2016), 558.

Those things are secondary. Those things are incidental. Focusing on things like that is like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

You have to go for the heart.

That's what David does. He says:

Create in me a clean heart (Psalms 51:10 ESV)

I need to be rebuilt from the ground up – from the INSIDE OUT – that's the issue. And that is what you have to commit to if you want to recover from a major moral and spiritual failure.

And then thirdly, David reminds us here that we have to get our own feet underneath us before we attempt to minister to and help other people.

3. We have to get our feet beneath us before we attempt to minister to others

Look at verse 13 – but maybe its best to see that after reading verses 10-12 – let me give you the whole package.

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.

13 ***Then*** I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. (Psalms 51:10–13 ESV)

Do you hear that? Do you hear the wisdom in that? Listen my friends David knew that his own recovery was going to take a while. David knew that it was going to require months and years of his own dedicated focus and attention. You don't blow up your life, pray a nice prayer and then lead an AA meeting the next weekend – you don't do that. You can't do that. You need time to recover.

And you need to be honest about how long that will take and how weak you will be throughout the entirety of the process.

I want you to hear a little bit about what the Bible says about what sin does to men and women.

1. It disrupts our intimacy with God (Gen 3:8)
2. It makes us feel ugly and unpresentable (Gen 3:7)
3. It causes us to be suspicious of other people (Gen 3:12)
4. It robs us of joy, vigour and vitality (Psalm 31:10)
5. It hinders our prayers (Psalm 66:18)
6. It perverts our desires (Proverbs 7:6-23)
7. It weakens our discipline in other areas (Proverbs 25:28)

That's what sin does to you and so obviously when you are in the thick of your own process you can't help other people until your feet are planted firmly and consistently on solid ground. Then you can teach transgressors the ways of God – and so you should.

That leads to our fourth lesson. After God has saved us and restored us – after he lifts us up out of the miry clay and sets our feet upon the rock THEN we need to tell other people what God, in Christ has done for us.

4. We need to tell other people what God has done for us

David looks forward to doing that – when it is the right time he will do it. After God has given him a new heart and right Spirit, he says:

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. (Psalms 51:13 ESV)

I will tell people what you did for me and I will point them in the ways of eternal life. I love what Matthew Henry says here, he says:

Penitents should be preachers.³

Can I tell you something? Most of the people who go into ministry do so because they have experienced the unwarranted mercy of God and the unexpected power of God in rescuing sinners from their sins. Restored addicts make the best spokespersons for the mercy and power of God.

You will know of what you speak as I know of what I speak.

A person who has felt the power of sin and who has sampled the darkness of his or her own heart – and then who has known MERCY and GRACE and FORGIVENESS and POWER – such a person can teach transgressors the way of God. It is hard to commend what you have never experienced.

So there is a future for you – and for all who have struggled with their sins – because penitents make good preachers - thanks be to God!

And that leads us nicely to our fifth and final lesson learned from David's Guide For Sinners. The text reminds us that:

5. We need to maintain a broken and contrite spirit

Look at verse 17:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalms 51:17 ESV)

That's an interesting thing to say, isn't it? David wanted to be healed – he wanted to be forgiven and restored – but he was not looking to be strong – no – because being strong is what got him into trouble in the first place.

³Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible (Unabridged), Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), paragraph 14991.

When David was STRONG – when he was feeling his POWER and AUTHORITY and AUTONOMY – that’s when everything went wrong. That’s when the bottom fell out and it was being BROKEN that brought him back.

That’s what he says and he says it again and again and again. He says it here in Psalm 51 and he says it twice in Psalm 119:

Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word. (Psalms 119:67 ESV)

It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. (Psalms 119:71 ESV)

It is good that God broke me – its good that he allowed me to fall onto the rocks of my own sin and stupid – because now as a broken man I am humble. I know my limitations. I know what I’m capable of and as a result I walk very closely with the Lord. I stay right on his heal, I hang on every word and I treat every boundary as a matter of life and death – because I’ve been there. I’ve gone over the cliff so now I’m sticking to the middle of the road.

And that’s good.

That’s a good place to be.

David knows that better than anyone. He says in Psalm 34:

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. (Psalms 34:18 ESV)

That’s the same word used in Psalm 51:17 – translated there as “contrite”. David literally says: “A broken and crushed heart – O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Its good. Its good that I was broken. Its good that my pride was crushed. Its good that I made a fool of myself. Because now I am ready to walk with the Lord. I’m ready to do it his way. I’m ready to take his Word at face value. I’m ready to let him lead the way.

That my friends, is the place of salvation.

That is where the Lord meets us and that is where the Lord keeps us.

By his grace and for his glory – thanks be to God!

Let's pray together.

Note To Worship Leader: I will probably lead in a prayer of repentance and faith at this point and invite people to go to the Lord for mercy and salvation through Christ.