

Restore Me

Favorite Psalms Part 15

Psalm 51:8-19 3-18-2012

Summary: Step 4 is to seek restoration of the inner man, which includes 1) restored joy (for praise), which is how you know He has forgiven, 2) a clean heart (fit for God's presence, producing pure things), 3) steadfastness (so you do not revert back to the sin), and 4) willingness (positive delight in righteousness, not just resisting evil). Step 5 is ministry, for the sake of generating still more praise.

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. 5 Behold, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. 14 Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. 18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Introduction: What Needs to be Restored?

When we sin against God, what is it that we lose? When we pray for restoration, we are asking God to restore that which was destroyed by the sin, but what is that? You will seek to be restored to whatever it is that you think you lost. Those who prize respectability will think that is the main thing that was lost in their sin, so when they seek to be restored they will do so by striving to regain their respectability. Those who live off their own self-esteem will strive to get back to feeling good about themselves. Those whose religion is that of trying to impress God with their excellent behavior will mainly focus on trying to get on a better track of behavior in the future.

But for David, the man after God's own heart, the main thing he lost was not his reputation or respectability or self-esteem or any of that. It was the closeness of his relationship with God. That is the most important thing that needs to be restored. That is what we are asking for when we say the words, "Forgive me."

And we found last time that receiving forgiveness from God is step 3 in the process of restoration. When you sin against God, step 1 in your restoration is brokenness and contrition before God. Step 2 is to turn your attention upwards to God and His attributes - rather than turning inward with either self-justification or self-condemnation. And step 3 is to ask God to forgive you, which means asking Him to repair your relationship with Him. Ask Him to turn His attention away from that sin so it no longer

has any impact on how God feels about you, so that you are now clean in His sight and fit to be in His presence. That is where we left off last week. We have two more steps before we are finished. One of the prayer cards last week said, "I'm stuck at step 3." It would not surprise me if more than half the people in this room would put themselves in that category - stuck on constantly asking forgiveness, but never feeling forgiven. You confess your sin to God, you ask forgiveness, but guilt feelings just continue to linger like a low-grade fever in your soul. It is not the crushing, debilitating guilt that keeps you awake all night. It is just a nagging, background sense that God is mostly disappointed in you. In many cases that happens because the person does not have any idea how to know when forgiveness has come. They will say, "I don't feel forgiven," but if you press them and ask, "What would it feel like?" they have no idea. I think most of the time the reason people get stuck on step 3 is because they do not understand step 4. They ask God, "Please forgive me," and then they do not know where to go from there.

We understand that forgiveness comes in response to our repentance, but what if your repentance is inadequate? There is such a thing as inadequate repentance. If your spouse committed adultery and all they said to you was, "Oops, sorry," and then went on their way - that probably would not be enough to really restore what was damaged in your marriage. David's repentance in Psalm 51 is a major ordeal. It is not a ten-second, "God, I'm so sorry please forgive me. And please help me to do better." I do not know how long it took him to write this psalm, but if you just read it, and read Psalm 32, you get the sense that his repentance went on over an extended period of time. In some cases it might be appropriate, after you have confessed your sin to God, to continue in that posture of grief and sorrow and repentance for a period of time - until you reach the point of adequate contrition and brokenness. But how do you know when you have reached that point? You know God has answered your prayers for forgiveness in step 3 when He answers your prayers for restoration in step 4.

Step 4: Restore My Inner Man

If you were not here the last two weeks:

Step 1 after you sin is contrition - sorrow and brokenness before God.

Step 2, focus on God's attributes instead of just on your sin.

Step 3, seek forgiveness, which is the repair of what was damaged in your relationship with God.

But we saw last week that your relationship with God is not the only thing that was damaged by the sin. The other thing that was damaged and that needs to be repaired is your inner man. Sin does serious damage to your desires, inclinations, attitudes, cravings, thoughts, emotions, etc.

Psalm 41:4 O Lord, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you.

When we sin we have to seek not only forgiveness, but also healing because of the damage sin does to the inner man. I am not going to take the time today to go through the numerous different ways that sin damages your inner man. For the sake of time let's just restrict our study to the areas David mentions in this psalm. As I see it, David speaks of four areas that need restoration: joy, purity, steadfastness, and willingness.

Joy

The biggest emphasis is on joy. This section of the psalm (vv.8-12) begins and ends that same request:

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation

Sin Kills Joy

Isn't it ironic that the primary affect David's sin had on his heart was that his joy was destroyed? Sin kills happiness in the heart, and I say that is ironic because why do we sin? Isn't it so we will be happy? Isn't that why people commit adultery? Isn't that why people lie - because they think being exposed would take away their happiness? We sin to get joy, and then afterward we find ourselves saying with David, "Oh God, restore unto me the joy." Sinning to get happiness is like eating Big Macs to lose weight. The primary result is the opposite of the desired result.

If allowed to continue, sin will take every good thing in your life away from you. It will take your health, your wealth, your family, your mind, your peace, your joy - it will take everything from you and give you nothing in return but a short, momentary, superficial thrill.

A Huge Request

So, from the bottom of the pit of despair, David requests fullness of joy. David does not ask God for small things. Most people who are depressed - all they want is for there to be a little bit less pain. They just want some relief, or to get back on an even keel. Joy is not even on the radar. They just want their misery to be mitigated a little bit. They might pray for survival or the ability to cope, or even emotional healing - but to go all the way and ask for joy and gladness and rejoicing? That just seems so far-fetched that they do not even ask for that.

And it is far-fetched. The prayer for exuberant rejoicing when you are in the pit of sorrow is a ridiculous prayer - anywhere but before the throne of grace. And it is ridiculous there most of all if not for the blood of the one who came to take the guilt of our sin upon Himself so we could be *totally* forgiven. But because of how much the Father loves Jesus Christ, there is no limit to how much favor you can request from God if you are in Christ by faith. The prodigal need not merely ask to be a slave in the household. He is welcomed back as a son with celebration and rejoicing.

The Importance of Joy

So David does not hesitate to ask for joy, because he knows it is available, but much more importantly, because David understands how important joy in the Lord is. This request is not just a matter of David's emotional wellbeing. It is a matter of the glory of God. What glorifies God more than our joy in Him? That is our greatest avenue of honoring God - even more than obeying Him. Think about it - which would honor you more: if your spouse said, "I'm not going to divorce you because the Bible says divorce isn't allowed," or "I'm not going to divorce you because I love being with you and being married to you fills my heart with delight"? The greatest way to honor someone is by delighting in that person. So our joy in the Lord is of cosmic importance. The very glory of God is at stake.

Joy is for Praise

One reason many Christians fail to strive for joy is they think it is not very important. It is icing on the cake of their emotional wellbeing, but not really crucial in their effort to glorify God. And what those people need to understand is the purpose of joy. The purpose of joy is praise. The reason David wants joy is because the result of joy in the believer is praise.

14 Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

The main reason David wanted joy was because He wanted God to be praised by his lips, and you need joy to do that. Praise is the verbal expression of joy in the Lord. So if you do not have joy, you cannot praise. And praise-less lips was an intolerable condition for David. "God, I want You to be praised, so give me the ingredients to do it."

David understands that praise is not something he can just decide to do. Sure, he could sing one of his psalms - but without joy it would not be true praise. So he has a problem. Those lips that had uttered some of the greatest praise ever known were now sealed by sorrow. A heart broken that severely cannot sing for joy. And so he says, "God, pry open my lips with the crowbar of joy."

And David has no doubt that God can do it.

14 ... my tongue will sing of your righteousness. 15 ... my mouth will declare your praise.

He has no doubt that when God acts, the joy will come - which is an amazing thing, because no other treasure in existence can promise that. No earthly pleasure can give you true joy from the pit of despair and depression. Money, fame, possessions, sex, food - things that seem to be such great pleasures, in times of bone-crushing sorrow, are powerless to bring forth songs from despairing lips. Only God's presence is delightful enough to guarantee that, if it is experienced, it will bring joy greater than any suffering.

Brokenness Increases Joy

David makes this outrageous, massive request. He is lying there on the ground with crushed bones and a devastated spirit that groans all day and all night long and he asks for nothing less than gladness, joy, and rejoicing. That is a big request to say, "Let the bones you have crushed rejoice." But you know, I think it might be an even bigger request for someone to say, "Let the bones You *haven't* crushed rejoice." The crushing of the bones is what enables the greatness of the joy. If you have ever been rescued by God out of a deep, dark pit then you know what I am talking about. I never experienced greater joy in my life than I did in 2006, and that was also the most painful year of my life by far. When life is smooth and easy we are prone to assign all the good that is happening to circumstances. And that handcuffs our spirit's ability to rejoice in Him. Being deeply crushed brings us to the point of realizing that nothing but the presence of God will be enough to restore joy. When times are good and there is not a lot of pain, we tend to settle for the cheap, shallow, fleeting pleasures of this world. But in the depths of sorrow we are driven to settle for nothing less than the experience of the presence of God. The highest peaks of joy are only accessible by way of the deepest valleys of darkness. If you fall over in the waves in waist-deep water and the life guard grabs you, you might say, "thanks," and be on your way. But if you are in the middle of the ocean and your boat sank and the water is freezing, and it is the middle of the night and no one knows your location, and you tread water as long as you can and finally your hypothermia sets in and you start to go under and right then someone rescues you - now you know real joy. The more desperate your condition the greater the joy when you are delivered from it.

How Do You Know when You are Forgiven?

So step 4, after you seek forgiveness, is to seek restoration of what was damaged in your inner man, starting with your joy. And when that prayer is answered, then you know your prayer for forgiveness has been answered. You know God's displeasure has lifted, and He has turned His eyes away from your sin.

I gave an illustration last time about a child who asks his father to forgive him, and the father says, "Yes, I forgive you," and after that the child no longer has to hang his head in shame around his father. But God does not say, "I forgive you," out loud. After you reconcile with a friend, and that friend then tells you, "Hey, don't worry about it. We're good" - then you know the relationship has been restored. But how does God communicate that "We're good" to you? The way God says that is by opening up the door to His presence once again. You are once again able to delight in His Word. You are able to see insights about Him, and those insights are a joy to you. You are once again able to enjoy the pleasures of life as samples of His goodness. You are able to see what is beautiful and glorious about God in ways that really *seem* beautiful and glorious to you, and the effect it has on your heart are things like inner peace, satisfaction, courage, strength, insight, contentment, zeal, and joy.

That is how you know He has turned His eyes away from your sin and has re-opened the door back to His presence.

Other Things Can Keep You from God's Presence

Now, that standard is complicated by the fact that there are other things besides God's displeasure that can shut you out of God's presence. For example:

- 1) Lack of wholeheartedness in seeking His presence
- 2) Dwelling on hardship, and misinterpreting suffering as a sign of God's displeasure when it isn't
- 3) Preferring some other source of comfort rather than waiting for Him
- 4) Ignorance about how to approach God's presence

All of those can disrupt your fellowship with God so that your ability to experience His presence is hindered even though on his end the door is wide open.

Another possibility is that you actually are experiencing His presence, but you are failing to recognize it for what it is. And there can be a number of causes there.

- 1) Again - ignorance about what the presence of God means and what the effects are.
- 2) Ignoring His gestures of love - failure to interpret the countless blessings you experience each day as direct expressions of His delight in you.
- 3) Failure to understand that all glimmers of joy and ability to enjoy life are experiences of His presence
- 4) Lack of willingness to believe what He says about forgiveness and His delight in His people - God is saying, "We're good," and you are saying, "No way - It can't be."
- 5) Self-pity - When we allow our thoughts to be consumed with self-pity, we are blinded to God's glory because we are so focused on ourselves.
- 6) Listening to yourself instead of preaching to yourself - Letting the flesh dictate all your thoughts, and using your feelings to determine what is true rather than God's Word.

All those things can make you feel like you are shut out from His presence when you are really not.

So if you are burdened with guilt feelings, and you feel like you are shut out of the presence of God, how can you find out if it is because God is still displeased and your brokenness and contrition and sorrow need to become more serious, or if God has forgiven you and the problem lies in some other area? It may not be easy to figure out which it is. You may need some help from a wise counselor. You may need to spend some considerable time in prayer and study of God's Word, but I can assure you - having a reconciled relationship with you is a HUGE priority for God. He gave the life of His Son to purchase it - that is how important it is to Him. So you had better believe He will not hold it up out of your reach.

I will resist the temptation to preach a whole sermon on this subject. For now I will just say this - after your repentance, if you are not sure if it is enough and if God has said, "OK, we're good" yet, if you are not sure if your inability to experience the presence of God is due to the sin or something else, then pray the closing verses of Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

"God, if there is something that is still standing between me and You - expose it. Show me. Let me see it, so I can confess it and forsake it and return to You. And if my repentance is inadequate, show me that. Show me what I need to do differently. Show me whatever I need to see to be right with You again."

God will answer that prayer. If you would like more detail on that I would refer you to the book, *What's So Great about God?* and the sermon series, "Loving God with all Your Heart."

A Clean Heart

So as David comes out after the dust settles after the nuclear bomb of his sin and makes his assessment of the damage in his inner man, the biggest casualty was his joy. So he asks for that first. But then in verse 10 he moves on to another casualty.

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God

David uses the word “**create**,” not “repair.” Instead of saying, “God, please patch up my damaged heart,” he says, “God, call into existence something that doesn’t currently exist.” That is what “create” means. And the entity that does not exist that David wants God to call into existence is **a pure heart**. The word **pure** here is the word clean - the same word used to describe clean and unclean foods, clean and unclean animals - ceremonial cleanness. In the Temple system, you could not approach God in worship if you were unclean. So a clean heart is a heart that is fit to draw near to God.

That is crucial because the **heart** is the source of everything that comes out of you - your actions, words, thoughts, desires, etc. The reason David committed sinful, unclean acts was because he had a sinful, unclean heart producing the thoughts and desires that led to those unclean acts. So David looks inside and sees that everything he does and says is flowing out from a poisoned spring. And so he asks God for a spring transplant. “Call into existence a whole new heart that produces clean things instead of unclean things.”

Steadfastness

The third area of devastation that needs to be repaired is in the second half of verse 10.

10 ...renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Steadfastness. 1 Peter 2:11 warns us about the passions of the flesh that war against our soul. There are constant forces acting on us. False doctrine, bad teaching, powerful temptations, friends or family who take us by the hand and pull us along in wrong directions. TV shows, movies, magazines, websites - all pulling and tugging and shoving and dragging us off the path. And the only anchor that can keep us from being knocked off course every time is this virtue that David asks for: steadfastness, or perseverance. Without steadfastness, all our resolutions to change become useless. All our plans and efforts to do what is right fall apart. All the wonderful things we learn from sermons or books or our own Bible study and reading - it all goes out the window when some powerful force is exerted on us. Coming to church and learning things every week, if you do not have perseverance, is kind of like working really hard at a good-paying job and putting all the money in some unsafe place where it keeps getting lost. When you gain something spiritually, you need to take some steps to secure it. Get it in a vault where you won’t lose it.

Only from God

Once again, that is what the 1:25 groups are all about. James 1:25 teaches that one of the main reasons we tend to lack perseverance is because of the problem of forgetting. So those groups help us engrain the principles of God’s Word deep inside our conscious thinking so that it cannot easily slip away.

Those groups are one thing you can do to help gain the virtue of steadfastness, and there are other things we can and should do along that line. But no matter what we do, the virtue will only come when God grants it. He is more likely to grant it if we are striving hard after it, but all the striving in the world will not do anything if He does not give it to us. So David cries out to the only one who can make a hard steadfast and says, “Do that work in me, Lord.” What good will it do for me to say, I sinned, please forgive me, I’m so sorry, blot out my sin, let me draw near to You again,” if it is only going to last a week and then I go right back to the way I was? So David is saying, “Give me that grace that teaches me how to consistently say no.”

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age

Oh, what a priceless treasure is the virtue of steadfastness!

Willingness

So, restore my joy, create a clean heart in me, give me steadfastness and perseverance, and then one more...

12 ...grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Willingness refers to desire. David is saying, "Don't let me just resist sin. Give me a positive desire for righteousness. Let me do what is right not just because I have to, but because I *want* to." Make righteousness feel like gain to me, not loss. When you are fighting against a sin, and saying no to temptation, it feels to you like a loss - like you are missing out on something - you will never have much victory. David is asking God to restore proper functioning in his inner man so that after resisting a temptation he walks away feeling like he just gained something rather than having a sense that he is missing out on something.

Step 5 - Ministry

So what do you do when you sin?

Step 1 - Contrition

Step 2 - Turn your attention to the attributes of God.

Step 3 - Seek forgiveness - the restoration of your relationship to God.

Step 4 - Seek restoration for the devastation in your inner man. Restore my joy, give me a clean heart, grant me steadfastness, and give me willingness. And you might think that is the end of it, but it isn't. There is one last step.

Then I will Teach and Sing

13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

Step 5 is restoration of ministry. When God restores us after we have sinned, one of His reasons for doing that is so that we will be in a position to help others.

Luke 22:31 Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Peter thought he would never deny Christ, and Jesus told him that Satan was going to work him over and he would indeed fall. But that fall will not be permanent. Peter's faith would remain intact, and after his fall he would be restored to ministry. And it would be a ministry of strengthening his brothers. That is the privilege David is asking for.

Now - please do not misunderstand this and take it as some kind of repayment. David is not saying, "God, if You forgive me and restore me, I'll pay you back by serving You." When we serve God and tell people about Him we are not doing God a favor. He is doing us a favor. The staggering privilege of being allowed to serve God and speak for God is just as much a gift of grace as forgiveness or anything else we ask for. We do not deserve to be in God's service after having rebelled against Him. It is an amazing thing to be able to stand before the King after you have committed a capital crime and say, "Instead of cutting off my head, give me a cabinet position. Let me be an ambassador who speaks as a representative of the king." An audacious thing to ask, if God did not tell

us that it is OK to ask it. But He does tell us to ask, because when we ask for those gifts and He grants them, that puts His great mercy on display.

The Goal of Teaching: More Praise

God is delighted to grant these gifts - if we are seeking them for the sake of His glory. And that is exactly what David was doing. The reason David wants to be in a teaching ministry is not so he can be respected or honored or looked up to. He desires it because he has a heart after God's own heart and He wants God to be worshipped. He wants to help people get past whatever is hindering their worship so that God can receive more honor. That is what David cares about. That is why he ends the psalm this way:

18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

He says, "God, restore my joy so that You will receive praise from me, restore my ministry so You will receive praise from other saints, and prosper Zion so that You will receive praise from the whole nation.

And God was willing to grant those requests to put on display His infinite mercy and to bring about greater numbers of people rejoicing in Him and praising His name. This is one problem I see with those who believe in permanent disqualification from ministry after certain sins. If you get divorced or you commit this sin or that sin, you can never be restored to your previous ministry - especially if it is teaching. It seems to me the people who teach that have a low view of God's ability or willingness to restore. They track with David right up through verse 12, but then choke on verse 13, where David wants to be restored to a teaching ministry.

But God did not choke on that. David's request was granted, and you can read about that in the second half of Psalm 32. David asked God to restore His broken relationship with God, his inner man, and his ministry. And God did all three.

Conclusion: Ask Big for God's Glory

When you sin against God, ask for pardon, but do not just ask for pardon. Ask for pardon, and then go on to ask God for all of His choicest gifts. That is proper. It is appropriate for us, after we have committed treason, to go to the king and ask for the most lavish treasures in His entire kingdom. He instructs treasonous rebels to do that so he can put on display his infinite mercy.

Do you realize how amazing that is? Sometimes we miss this because we think God just owes us all these things - especially forgiveness. There are a lot of people who have the attitude that if we ask God to forgive us, He is obligated to forgive. We think that because that is true about people. If you sin against me and then repent, I am obligated to forgive you because God's Word requires me to. But God is not obligated. He does not have to forgive just because someone asks for it. He is not obligated to show mercy. It would be perfectly appropriate for God to say, "No, I won't forgive you or have mercy on you."

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge

God is perfectly justified in judging. He has every right to throw the book at us, and we are in no position to demand forgiveness.

And please notice that in verse 1 David does not offer anything in himself as a basis for his request for mercy. He does not say, "Have mercy on me, God, according to my record of service to You." He does not say, "Have mercy on me, Lord - after all, think of all the things I've done for You. I've honored Your name, led Your people into battle, defeated Your enemies..." None of that. David

knows God owes him nothing, and all he can say is, "Have mercy on me according to Your great compassion." This disproves the whole Roman Catholic system of merit - where some people are so good that they earn merit before God so they deserve God's favor. If anyone could gain merit before God and earn favor from God it would be David. David was no doubt the best man in the world - one of the best men who ever lived, and still, unless God has mercy on him he is finished.

David had committed two sins for which there was no sacrifice in the Law. God had made provision for most things in the sacrificial system, but not for murder or adultery. The solution to those two sins was to simply put the person to death. So David's situation had no remedy in the law. And really, no sin did. The sacrificial system illustrated principles about sin and forgiveness, but the ceremonies themselves did not do anything about the problem of sin. And David was not the only person who understood that.

Micah 6:7 Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

You could offer God all the cattle on the planet and everything that is most precious to you and it would not erase a single sin.

That is why it is so amazing that God tells us, "Go ahead and ask Me to forgive. Ask for mercy - in fact ask for all the mercy you want. After you sin against Me, ask for grace, ask for gifts, ask for benefits, ask for blessing, ask for restoration, ask for the honor of serving Me in ministry - ask for all the greatest treasures in My kingdom."

Benediction: Ephesians 1:3-7 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins

Application Questions:

- 1) When you fall into sin, the greatest loss you suffer is a loss of closeness with God. Is that how it feels to you? Or do you feel something else as the primary loss (loss of respectability, loss of self-respect, loss of a track record to be proud of, or loss of closeness with God)?
- 2) When you are broken over your sin, do you feel hesitant to ask God for joy and rejoicing? If so, why? What change could you make so that your prayers of repentance would be more like Psalm 51?
- 3) Of the various things that can prevent drawing near to God even when the door is wide open, which is mostly likely to be a problem in your life?

Other Things Can Keep You from God's Presence

- 1) Lack of wholeheartedness in seeking His presence
- 2) Dwelling on hardship, and misinterpreting suffering as a sign of God's displeasure when it isn't

- 3) Preferring some other source of comfort rather than waiting for Him
- 4) Ignorance about how to approach God's presence

All of those can disrupt your fellowship with God so that your ability to experience His presence is hindered even though on his end the door is wide open.

Things that Can Keep You from Appreciating God's Presence

1) Ignorance about what the presence of God means and what the effects are.

2) Ignoring His gestures of love

Failure to interpret the countless blessings you experience each day as direct expressions of His delight in you.

3) Failure to understand that all glimmers of joy and ability to enjoy life are experiences of His presence

4) Lack of willingness to believe what He says about forgiveness and His delight in His people

5) Self-pity

6) Listening to yourself instead of preaching to yourself

Letting the flesh dictate all your thoughts, and using your feelings to determine what is true rather than God's Word.