

Needless Losses

Psalm 51

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 5-26-2013

Introduction – David no longer hides his sin and finds renewed blessings that had been needlessly lost (Ps. 6,32,38,51,103)

There are a number of passages that speak of potential blessings that we can get and potential blessings that have been lost. And it can be hard to wrap your brain around such contingencies when all things have been foreordained. How can both be true? But I think Luke 19:41 illustrates both sides of the equation. Jesus said, “**If you had known** [there's the contingency - "If you had known..."], **even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.**” (Luke 19:42) Contingency and sovereignty. They had needless losses in one sense, even though God’s plan was not overturned.

Haggai 1:6-9 says that if the post-exilic church hadn’t been so selfish, God would have increased their income, clothed them, and given them plenty of food. But since they selfishly refused to work on the temple, God withheld those things, and even took away some prosperity. Let me read that. He said,

You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes... Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! Go to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the LORD. You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?... Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

Withheld blessing. And God makes clear that those lost blessings were needlessly lost, and they were regained as soon as Israel made the needed corrections. Hosea 2 speaks of God hedging up an adulterous woman’s way so that she could not prosper. It says that she had the needless loss of corn, wine, oil, silver, and gold. When I read through Deuteronomy chapters 27-29 I cannot help but wonder what blessings could have landed on the church in America if the church had been faithful.

So today we are going to look at needless losses. It is obviously not the only message of Psalm 51, but because we touched on the other aspects of this Psalm as we went through 2 Samuel 12, my emphasis today will

simply be to look at the needless losses that David had during the nine months that he hid his sin.

And each one of the Psalms that he wrote during this week highlights the incredible joy and blessings that were restored when he confessed his sin. The title of Psalm 38 is, “A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.” And when you see what was being brought to remembrance in that Psalm (including his venereal disease), you would think that David would cringe. But it was worth it; and it was worth it because of all the restored blessings. The title to Psalm 6 is similar – the Psalm was given to the chief musician, meaning that the Chief Musician would lead the entire congregation in singing about David’s sins. And look at the title here in Psalm 51: “To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” There is David again being transparent. And His transparency restored some, but not all of what was lost. So we are going to look at seven needless losses.

I. The loss of daily mercies (v. 1)

The first needless loss was God’s daily mercies. Verse 1 says,

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

David had experienced the multitude of God’s tender mercies before, and He wanted them again. And remember that previously we had seen that love covers a multitude of sins. If a multitude of sins are covered you have a multitude of mercies. And when our sins are covered over by God, we can get on with life and find joy in life. But when God chooses to pick on every sin, life is miserable. And Matthew 18 has an incredible word picture that speaks to how many mercies we receive on a daily basis and how those can be taken away. It’s the parable of the servant who was forgiven of a debt of ten thousand talents. And remember that this parable is talking about a forgiven, justified believer.

Just to give you an idea of the *lowest* amount of money that this servant was forgiven of, we will assume that it was 10,000 talents of *silver* that he owed, not 10,000 talents of gold. Each talent of silver was worth 6,000 denarii. One denarius was one day’s wages, so just one talent would be equivalent to 20 year’s wages for the average worker. But this man had been forgiven 10,000 talents, which equals 60 million denarii, which would be the equivalent of 20,000 year’s wages for the average worker. 20,000 year’s worth of wages – that’s a lot of money to be forgiven of. But it *is* all

forgiven and overlooked. That's a lot of daily mercies. But that servant finds a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii, or about 1/3 of one year's worth of wages. That's still a lot of money, but nothing compared to 20,000 year's worth of labor. But that servant would not forgive his fellow servant the 1/3 of a year's worth of debt, but threw him into prison. And Jesus concludes his parable this way:

Matthew 18:32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

Matthew 18:33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"

Matthew 18:34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

Matthew 18:35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

He's talking to believers here. He is saying that if you don't forgive each other and display a love towards others that covers a multitude of sins, God will show you what it is like to have the loss of a multitude of mercies in your life. He will start picking on every little sin, and He will allow demons to start picking on you. And the word "torturer" in the text is an appropriate word there since it is a synonym for demons (who can by the way, torment true believers if God allows them to), and that word can also describe the psychological state of many people – they are tortured inside. They aren't experiencing the abundance of mercies and bounties from God's hand. I have seen Christians absolutely miserable because they are like that servant. And it is so needless. All it would take is the humility to admit they were wrong and to confess their sins to one other and to forgive one another. Needless losses.

II. The loss of feeling clean (vv. 2-3,7-10)

The second loss that David experienced was a loss of feeling clean. Now, that may not seem like such a significant loss - until you have experienced it yourself. Though David was a justified man and headed for heaven, and though he was secure in his salvation, he felt yucky inside and could not get rid of that unclean feeling. Verses 2-3.

Psalms 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

Psalms 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin *is* always before me.

Prior to finally confessing and praying this Psalm, David just could not get rid of that sense of being unclean. It didn't matter what he was doing,

he was thinking about that sin. He was like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, both of whom were trying to wash their hands and could not get rid of the sense of blood guiltiness. And they couldn't do it. They just keep washing, and washing, and washing their hands. It's a powerful image of this sense of uncleanness. Well, for David it was absolute misery. I've experienced that before. And you have probably experienced it as well - that "my sin is always before me." And David continues in verses 7-10

Psalms 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Psalms 51:8 Make me hear joy and gladness, *That* the bones You have broken may rejoice.

Psalms 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

When David confessed his sins, he felt like a new man. He felt clean. The yuckiness was gone. His preoccupation was now on the joys of worship in God's presence rather than hiding his soul from God's gaze. And it is such a blessing, that hiding our sins is simply not worth it. If you have lost the wonder and joy of being totally transparent and clean in God's presence, it is a needless loss.

III. The loss of divine fellowship (v. 11)

The third loss was divine fellowship. Verse 11 says,

Psalms 51:11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

He was not talking about the loss of salvation. We have already seen in previous sermons that he felt totally secure in his salvation. But he wanted a restoration of the Holy Spirit's fellowship and empowering. When King Saul lost the Holy Spirit's anointing, he lost all power for his work and he lost all joy in his relationship with God. And when you lose the empowering and fellowship and joy of the Holy Spirit in your ministry, your ministry can become draining. Several years ago Chuck Colson told the story of Pat Novak, a Protestant chaplain. He says,

Pat was making his rounds one summer morning when he was called to visit a patient admitted with an undiagnosed ailment. John, a man in his sixties, had not responded to any treatment; medical tests showed nothing; psychological tests were inconclusive. Yet he was wasting away; he had not even been able to swallow for two weeks. The nurses tried everything. Finally they called the chaplain's office.

When Pat walked into the room, John was sitting limply in his bed, strung with IV tubes, staring listlessly at the wall. He was a tall, grandfatherly man, balding a little, but his sallow skin hung loosely on his face, neck, and arms where the weight had dropped from his frame. His eyes were hollow.

Pat was terrified; he had no idea what to do. But John seemed to brighten a bit as soon as he saw Pat's chaplain badge and invited him to sit down. As they talked, Pat sensed that God was urging him to do something specific: He knew he was to ask John if he wanted to take Communion. Chaplain interns were not encouraged to ask this type of thing in this public hospital, but Pat did.

At that John broke down. "I can't!" he cried. "I've sinned and can't be forgiven."

Pat paused a moment, knowing he was about to break policy again. Then he told John about 1 Corinthians 11 and Paul's admonition that whoever takes Communion in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself. And he asked John if he wanted to confess his sin. John nodded gratefully. To this day Pat can't remember the particular sin John confessed, nor would he say if he did, but he recalls that it did not strike him as particularly egregious. Yet it had been draining the life from this man. John wept as he confessed, and Pat laid hands on him, hugged him, and told John his sins were forgiven.

Then Pat got the second urging from the Holy Spirit: Ask him if he wants to take Communion. He did. Pat gave John a Bible and told him he would be back later. Already John was sitting up straighter, with a flicker of light in his eyes.

Pat visited a few more patients and then ate some lunch in the hospital cafeteria. When he left he wrapped an extra piece of bread in a napkin and borrowed a coffee cup from the cafeteria. He ran out to a shop a few blocks away and bought a container of grape juice. Then he returned to John's room with the elements and celebrated Communion with him, again reciting 1 Corinthians 11. John took the bread and chewed it slowly. It was the first time in weeks he had been able to take solid food in his mouth. He took the cup and swallowed. He had been set free.

Within three days John walked out of that hospital. The nurses were so amazed they called the newspaper, which later featured the story of John and Pat, appropriately, in its "LIFE" section.¹

There is nothing so debilitating to a true Christian as the sense that he no longer has God's presence and power. When God has seemed to be absent in my own life, the vitality has been completely drained. But it is such a needless loss when God has promised, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In John 10:10 Jesus said, "**I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**" You don't want to lose the abundance that can be had when you are walking in fellowship with God.

¹ Charles W. Colson, The Body, 1992, Word Publishing, pp. 139-140.

IV. The loss of joy (v. 12)

And of course, that leads to point IV – the needless loss of joy. Verse 12 says,

Psalms 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.

He didn't lose his salvation; he lost the *joy* of his salvation. But David was not a fool. When he lost that joy, he knew where to get it back. He did not look to creation to replace that joy. That's our temptation – rather than repenting and receiving back our joy from the Lord, we try to find joy by pursuing things on earth, don't we? *Turning Point* Magazine listed all the miserable failed attempts to restore joy, and found that joy is not found in...

... Unbelief -- Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in Pleasure -- Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."

Not in Money -- Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Nor can we generate joy ourselves. At a conference held in Omaha at a Presbyterian church (and I won't tell you which one), everyone was handed helium filled balloons and told that when they felt like expressing the joy that was in their hearts, they were supposed to release their balloons. Bruce Larson says that at the end of the service, one third of the balloons were not released. While I personally think that was a silly exercise, I want to use it as an illustration that there are things that rob us of our joy and anchor it down. And it is so needless. 1 Peter 1:8 speaks of joy inexpressible and full of glory that Christians can have even in the midst of loss and persecution. If we have lost our joy, maybe we ought to study 1 Peter to see what gave them that joy. In John 15:11 Jesus said, "**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**" If that joy is not remaining in you, you may want to read John 15. By saying, "**that My joy may remain in you**" He was implying that it is easy for that joy to evaporate. But He is also saying that it is a needless loss. As we abide in Christ, that joy need never depart. 1 John 1:4 says, "**And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.**" If your joy is not full, I strongly recommend that you read and reread the book of 1 John. Prayerfully read it and ask God to conform you to it. He wrote that book so that you could have your cup of joy full to overflowing. But people avoid 1 John because it brings the same message that Psalm 51 does – the message of repentance and cleansing and walking in the light.

V. The loss of power and passion in witness (v. 13)

The fifth needless loss was the loss of power and passion in witness. Verse 13 says,

Psalms 51:13 *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

Satan will tempt you to think the exact opposite – that if unbelievers find out about your sins like they will soon discover David’s sins, that they will mock and have nothing whatsoever to do with you. But it is the opposite. It is the transparent Christian who has no sin to hide, and no sin to be afraid of, and who can be bold in his witness. Like we saw two weeks ago, it was the mom or dad who is cleansed and freed from a past abortion who often makes the best post-abortion trauma counselor. It is the former addict who can be the most zealous in the cause of winning other addicts. And David’s Psalms show a God-engendered desire to keep others from falling into the same sin that he fell into, as well as showing compassion in rescuing those who have already so fallen. On the other hand, those who hide their sins are running from the light and have no great desire to draw others to the light. So if you have the needless loss of power and passion in witnessing, Psalm 51 shows you the remedy. It’s probably the most famous confession of sin.

VI. The loss of desire for worship (vv. 14-17)

The sixth loss is the loss of desire for worship. Verses 14-17:

Psalms 51:14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, *and* [here is the result:] my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

Psalms 51:15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

Psalms 51:16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*; You do not delight in burnt offering.

Psalms 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart— these, O God, You will not despise.

God despises worship that comes from hardened hearts. God doesn’t like worship from stained hands one little bit. In 1 Timothy 2:8 He calls us to lift up holy hands. So God does not desire that kind of worship. But neither did David desire to worship a holy God who was convicting him of his sin – at least not prior to Nathan’s confrontation. Like Jonah, he was running from the light, not attracted to the light. How can you be attracted to the light of God’s holiness when you are trying to hide your sin? It’s not possible. When you are trying to justify your sin, the last thing that you want

is to worship. But when David found cleansing, he found a renewed interest in worship in 2 Samuel 12:20. And it makes sense when you understand what worship is. William Temple defined worship this way:

... worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose -- and all of this gathered up in adoration, the most selfless emotion of which our nature is capable and therefore the chief remedy for that self-centeredness which is our original sin and the source of all actual sin.²

It's no wonder that David lost a desire for worship when he was holding on to sin. And based on the many Psalms that testify to his joy in worship, it was a great loss indeed.

VII. The loss of concern for God's interests (vv. 18-19)

The last loss mentioned in this text is a loss of concern for God's kingdom interests. When we cover our sins, we become more and more absorbed in ourselves and we become less and less interested in praying: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." We no longer have a passion for that. But as a result of David's repentance and casting of his sins under the blood of Christ, God began to once again stir up David's heart to yearn for God's kingdom and God's glory. Verses 18-19 say,

Psalms 51:18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem.

Psalms 51:19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Can you see the kingdom vision that was regained through this repentance? "**Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.**" Right? He was no longer just preoccupied with his own needs. He also desired the best for Jerusalem and Zion. And I have found that a similar passion for God's kingdom and God's purposes begins to rise in my heart when I have uncovered my sins, and put them under the blood of Christ, and forsaken them. Many, though not all needless losses, can be recovered when we humble ourselves as David did in Psalm 51.

Conclusion

² Quoted by Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Integrity Crisis*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, p. 119.

And so this morning, if any of these seven losses is evident in your life, ask the Holy Spirit to shine His spotlight on your heart and expose what it is that you need to do to regain those losses. Let me end with the little poem by F. B. Meyer that you see at the bottom of your bulletins:

“One
 above
 another
 and the taller we grow,
the easier we can reach them.
 Now I find, that
God’s gifts are on shelves
 one
 beneath
 another
 and the lower we stoop,
the more we get.” By F. B. Meyer

May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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