

## **Confessing Your Sin**

Psalm 51

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, March 11, 2018

All right, good morning everyone. I want to say a special hello and greetings from Southern California and Grace Advance, from our friends out there. As many of you know, as Dave mentioned earlier, we were at the Shepard's Conference this past week in Los Angeles; a good number of men from our church. It's a conference designed to help pastors and laymen learn Scripture and sound theology. It was started by John MacArthur several decades ago.

This year, we had an opportunity to attend with several men and to see our friends from Grace Advance. Carl Hargrove and Hon Cho and John Crawford all send you guys greetings. We also got to run into ... You guys remember Richard Caldwell, Jr. who did sermons for the church? (This was before I came). We ran into him. I was very encouraged because he's a short man like me. I saw him. I didn't say this out loud, but I was like, "Man, you're short like I am. This is really ... It's encouraging. It's a blessing," but he was thrilled to hear the ministry he was having here without even knowing it. He was having a ministry from Texas all the way up here into Canada; he didn't even know. I got his information and said, "We'd love to have you come up sometime." We'll try to arrange that down the road.

I want to let you guys know as well, while we were out there, I bragged on you up and down. I told so many people of the wonderful things going on at Grace Fellowship Church (the conference was on the church, so it just came up in conversation), and how much a blessing it was to be there, to be here and to get to go there and brag about you guys. Thank you for sending us. Thank you for praying for those who went. It was a blessing. If you wanted to catch some of it, you can go online. I think I emailed you the website and you can listen to some of the sermons that way.

To ease into our passage for this morning, in his first session at the conference, John MacArthur said, "That the goal of the church is to sanctify believers." It's to make believers, make disciples, but part of that processes is sanctification or helping them grow in holiness, helping them become more like Jesus Christ.

In fact, I remember when I first came to Grace Fellowship Church, one of the things we talked about in our men's time on Wednesday night is what is success as a church? Success as a church is when our people become more like Jesus. Amen. That's success. The goal is not to make everyone happy. The goal is not to give everyone a wonderful life or to build up their self-esteem. Our goal is to make people holy before the Lord, which is what Paul's been saying in the book of Romans that we've been studying.

In fact, you don't have to turn there, but we just learned in Romans six last week that we're free from sin because of what Christ has done for us. Because of His death and resurrection, we can put off sin and live a holy life. Romans 6:14 actually says, "For sin shall not be master over you, for you're not under law but under grace." We're under the power of God's grace, Paul says. We're under the control of that so that we're free now to walk away from our lusts and our pride

and our coveting. We're free to give up our jealousy and our gossip and judgment or whatever sin that holds us, because Jesus died to it on the cross. We have victory now.

He put it to death there, which raises an important question. This is why we're going to turn to the Psalms this morning. But it raises a question: then why do we sin so much then? You guys ever wonder that? Am I the only one? Come on. If we have victory, if it's been put to death, why do we still live the way we do? Why do we sin so much? Or maybe another question to ask, a very important question to ask is "When I do sin, what do I do?" How do you recover when you give into those sins I just mentioned before; hatred, jealousy, all that stuff? How do you live a holy life after you've been unholy?

That leads us to Psalm 51; if you want to turn there. We just read that with Kevin a moment ago, but if you want to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 51. I told you last week that we were going to take a quick break from the book of Romans to talk about this issue of sin, because I think it's important. You can't follow Christ if you don't know how to deal with sin.

Matter of fact, we say it this way. You can't live in the real world if you don't know how to deal with sin; your sin, other people's sin. That's what Psalm 51 is about. In Psalm 51, David deals with his sin. Specifically, he deals with the suffering that it caused him. In other Psalms, if you remember the book of Psalms, in other Psalms, David talks about how to deal with other people's sin. He suffers because of outside forces, stuff that's coming at him, but in this one, it's all on the inside. David suffers because of what he has done.

In this Psalm, there's no mention of enemies or battles or violence, which is interesting. In a lot of the Psalms, David talks about that stuff. In this one, there's no mention of war or armies coming against him, because in Psalm 51, the problem is in David's heart. In Psalm 51, the problem is what's going on internally. And if you read the subscript of the Psalm, if you notice, David says this. It says, right where it says Psalm 51, right below that ... Matter of fact, in the Hebrew, this is actually verse one. It's interesting with the Hebrew and English translations, but in Hebrew, this is actually the first verse. It says, "For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

Just to give you a background of that, let me read you the passage that talks about this event. You don't have to turn there, unless you just want to, but second Samuel 11 tells us what this is referring to. Matter of fact, if you want to, you can hold your finger in Psalm 51 and turn back a couple of books to second Samuel 11. It talks about that event, just so we kind of know what we're talking about here.

In the very first verse of second Samuel, chapter 11, it says,

1 Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam,

the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. 5 The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

From here, the story tells us that David had Bathsheba's husband murdered, which was horrible because he was one of David's best soldiers. Second Samuel 23 says Uriah was one of David's mighty men. It's a reference to kind of like the special ops forces in Israel at the time. He had him murdered and then he married Bathsheba, and she gave birth to a son. And after that, the prophet Nathan rebukes David. And David repents and writes Psalm 51.

But all this to say is that this was a very, very horrible sin David committed. This was like something from a rated R movie. This is one of those stories you read about and kind of go "That's really in the Bible?" You want to look at the cover and say, "We got the right book here? ... Adultery, murder, betrayal." I'm sure you've sinned, but I'm guessing most of us haven't killed anybody. You might have messed up, but you haven't betrayed the best soldier in the kingdom. David did that.

It's even worse when you consider how long it took David to repent. Second Samuel 12, the next chapter, says that Bathsheba had already given birth when David repented, which means that the repentance took place nine months after the sin. Does that make sense? It's even worse when you consider that Nathan, or excuse me, David didn't go to Nathan to repent. Nathan went to him. Nathan had to march right into the throne room and say, "You're the man, David. You did this. You slept with a woman who wasn't your wife." All of this would have ruined him if he didn't repent and beg God for mercy.

Listen, it was no big deal for a king in the 10th century BC (that's around the time David lived) to do what David did. This was normal kingly behavior back in the ancient world. Matter of fact, what's unusual about David's life is that he only did this once. What's even more unusual is that he repented. Kings didn't repent back then. They did whatever they wanted. David could've said, "Listen, Nathan, I'm doing more than you are for God, so just get off my back, okay? I'm building God a city. I'm leading God's people. I'm writing the Psalms, so just who do you think you are?" He could've said, "How dare you talk to me like that? Don't you know who I am? I'm the king. I'm your ruler, so off with your head." He could've done that, but he doesn't. He says, "I've sinned against the Lord." I've done what is wrong. And as he does that, he writes this Psalm, which is interesting.

Some background on this Psalm. It's one of the most famous Psalms in history. Christians have turned to it for centuries to help them when they sin or when they're struggling through life. For instance, Athanasius in the 4th century recommended it for Christians who couldn't sleep. It was like a bedtime story in the 4th century. I think that's a very interesting bedtime story personally, but that's what they used it for. Martin Luther said it was the most popular Psalm for Christians in the Middle Ages. People loved it back then. Lady Jane Grey recited it just before she was beheaded. Henry V had it read to him as he lay dying in bed. William Carey, the famous missionary to India, requested that this be read at his funeral. Christians have always turned to this passage in Scripture for comfort.

Maybe some of you need to do that today. Maybe some of you have sinned against the Lord and you know that. You failed to do the right thing. Maybe you didn't commit adultery, but you thought about it in your heart and you planned it out in your mind. Or you didn't murder someone, but you thought about murdering them. You killed them in your heart over and over and over again. I said something months ago about chaining someone up in your heart and just torturing them in there 'cause you hate them that much. You know that's wrong, but what do you do?

David shows you in Psalm 51. How do you ask for forgiveness? That's what this Psalm is about. It's about asking forgiveness from God. It shows you how to come clean. Here's what the Psalm's about, if you're taking notes, in Psalm 51, David gives us six confessions to make to the Lord. It's a pretty simple outline this morning. Six confessions to make to the Lord, six statements to make when you repent.

The first one is this: David confesses that he needs forgiveness. He just starts there. David confesses that he needs forgiveness. Before David does anything else, he admits that he's wrong. Nathan says, "You are the man," and David says, "Yes, I am." Nathan says, "You did it," and David says, "Yes, I did."

The way he says this is very creative. Again, this is poetry, so David writes as a poet. He says in verse 1, he says, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." Now you read that in English and it may not seem so poetic, but let me point out a few things to you.

For one, David uses three words for forgiveness in these verses. In verse one, he uses the word "blot out." He asked the Lord to blot out his sin like you would blot out a mistake in a book. "Erase it, Lord. Wipe it away." You guys remember those old chalkboards? You write stuff with chalk and then you go back and erase it. Now we just hit delete, but same idea. Delete it.

In verse two, he asks the Lord to "wash me thoroughly" like you would wash dirty clothes. "Scrub me down," he says. "I need a bath." In verse two, he says, "cleanse me," which is the idea of ceremonial cleansing. David's worship has been hindered by sin. He can't sing to the Lord anymore, and he needs to be ceremonially pure again so he can worship.

He also uses, in these two verses, he uses three words for sin. He used three words for forgiveness. Now he uses three words for sin. If you notice, verse one, he calls his sin a "transgression" or "the crossing of a boundary". David says, "I crossed the line. I went too far with what I did."

Verse two, he calls it "iniquity", which is the word for "perversion" or "something unnatural". This was unnatural for a godly man to do this. In verse two, he uses the familiar word "sin," which means to "miss the mark". He said, "I missed the mark of God's law here. I didn't even come close."

To add to all this in verses one to two, one more poetic thing he does is he uses the word "me" or "my" six times. He says, "Be gracious to me, O God. Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." David says, "I did it. I did it. I did it. I did it! It was my fault. I'm the one to blame for this."

David doesn't ask God to spare him from the consequences of sin. He doesn't ask God to keep quiet about it so no one'll find out. He doesn't ask God to put it off to the side. He says, "This is all my fault. I did this." He says, "There's no one to blame, but me." And in his simple, humble way, he asks God for forgiveness, which leads to a second confession David makes here.

We're going to move through these a little quickly 'cause there's so many of them, but a second one is this: David confesses that he sinned. He confesses that he needs forgiveness, and he confesses that he has sinned. If you read on in verse three, he says,

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You and You only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part, you will make me know wisdom.

David said, or Nathan said, "You're the man." David says, "I am the man," and he asked for forgiveness. He admits his sin, and this is how he does it in verse three.

David says he knows his sin. He's fully aware of it. It's ever before him. He can't get it off his mind. You know if you think about it, a hypocrite can forget his sin in a second. A Christian can't. A fake person, someone who's not truly born again can forget about his immorality immediately. David couldn't do that. It's been nine months since David slept with Bathsheba. That's a considerable amount of time and David couldn't forget it. That's one way you know you're saved by the way is you can't forget your sin. Try as hard as you might, you can't get it off your mind until you repent.

I've talked with people who have said, "I don't know if I'm saved because I've committed this awful sin, and I can't quit thinking about it." Well, that might be a sign that you are saved. That might be a sign you're a child of God. Children know when they offend their parents. They know when there's a rift in the relationship.

David also says in verse four, "Against You and You only, I have sinned," implying that this sin was ultimately against God. It's not that David didn't sin against others, because he did, it's that the sin was ultimately against the Lord. He didn't sin against them first. He sinned against God in his heart long before he committed adultery. I heard one pastor say, "When you sin, you don't fall into it. You plan it." The same pastor said, "If you don't want to sin, don't walk where it's slippery. If you don't want to fall, don't walk where it's slippery." David said, "I've been walking on slippery ground a long time before I did this." His sin was ultimately against God.

And David says in verse five - this is interesting - he says, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Now David wasn't blaming his problems on his mother. Sounds

that way, but that's not the idea here. He was saying, "I'm a sinner by nature. I'm a sinner by birth." We've seen that already in the book of Romans. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world." That means it entered in through birth, through our nature. Adam sinned, and we all inherited that sin nature that he had. As Charles Spurgeon put it, he said,

The filthy water came from a filthy spring. David is not low enough yet. He must actually come lower in verse five. It's not enough for David to confess that the water is filthy at the pool. He must go back to the source and confess that the whole river is polluted up to the head. The source is unclean. David was born into foul waters.

Like the rest of us, the problem did not start outside. The problem started in here. That's what David is saying in verse five.

That leads to a third confession David makes: He confesses that he needs cleansing. He confesses that he needs cleansing. He confesses that his soul is dirty, and he needs a bath in his heart. Like we just said, there's filth in him. Not just on him, but in him. The filth is not out there in the world.

I was talking to some people at the conference, and I said, "I'm new to the area of British Columbia, but it's very interesting to me that Vancouver's like the Sodom and Gomorrah of Canada." Am I summing it up kinda, sorta? Then this is the Bible Belt, and they're so close to each other. And there could be a temptation in our hearts in Chilliwack to say, "Boy, that's a really bad town over there." Let me tell you something. David says, "There's bad people in Jerusalem, and there's bad people out in there in Rome." You get that? There's bad people in the Bible Belt and there's bad people in Sodom and Gomorrah because the badness is in here. It's not out there.

David talked about cleansing before in this Psalm, but now he brings it up again. You can almost feel the dirt flying off of him as he says this, but if you look in verse seven, he says,

Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

Notice all the references to cleansing here. Hyssop was a small plant that grew in the walls of Israel and because of its shape and size, it was used in the Old Testament for sacrifices. Specifically, the hyssop plant was used to sprinkle blood on someone who is unclean. That's what it was used for. As a Jew, if you contracted leprosy, or if you touched a dead body, you were considered unclean. You had to stay outside the camp until a priest could sprinkle you with hyssop. That's what David is referring to here.

He goes further than simply saying, "I'm dirty." Now he says, "I'm so dirty, I should be cut off from Israel. Not only am I wrong, but I'm so wrong, the people should have nothing to do with me." Jews were supposed to have nothing to do with a leper in the Old Testament. When someone approached a leper back then, a leper had to cover his face and shout, "Unclean."

Unclean. Unclean," which was another way of saying, "Stay away from me." That's what David is saying in verse seven. "Unclean. Unclean." He says, "I'm defiled, so Lord, please cleanse me." Literally, the word "purify" in verse seven, means to "de-sin" something. David was born in sin and now he asked the Lord to de-sin him. Sin defiles you, doesn't it? Do I have to tell you guys that? You guys know that. Sin makes you dirty. That's what it does.

When I was seven years old, my friends down the street were digging in their backyard, and I asked my mom if I could join them. If you have a seven-year-old, you know where this is going. At first, she said "no" because of obvious reasons, but she changed her mind later. When I came back, I was so dirty that she had to spray me off with a garden hose before she let me come back into the house again. She stood me out in the yard and just sprayed me. My grandfather, who was a man of few words, supported the idea initially. And when I came back, he looked at me in silence for a minute, and then he said, "Son, ain't no sense in that." Sin is like that, isn't it? There ain't no sense in it. There's no reason to it. It makes you do stupid things.

More importantly, it makes you dirty. It covers you in filth, especially, sexual sin. Because sex is a very personal thing. That's what God intended it to be. It's very intimate. And when you sin sexually and immorally, it has a huge effect on your heart. You feel dirty on the inside. You feel like a leper. You want to go around saying, "Unclean. Unclean. Unclean." That may be why it's so hard to break away from sexual sin. It's maybe why some people stay enslaved to it for years, because it touches a place in your soul.

I don't know any studies that have been done on this to tie these two things together, but I bet one reason for the high numbers of depression in Canada and the United States is sexual sin. According to the CTV News website, last year one in seven Canadians admitted to having suicidal thoughts. One in seven people surveyed thought about killing themselves. I bet it's tied directly to this, or it could be tied directly to this.

In the US, NBC News published a study some time ago (I think the numbers are probably similar in Canada) saying that the average woman today sleeps with four people in her lifetime, and the average man sleeps with seven. That could be tying all this together as well. The seventh commandment says, "You shall not commit adultery," and when you break that, you become depressed. Your conscience makes you depressed, as it should. You feel low. You feel dirty, and you feel horrible.

That's what David is saying here. He says, "I feel horrible. My sin has gotten so deep inside my soul that I feel wrong on the inside. My heart is covered in filth. It's all over me and I need to be de-sinned." For anyone here who can relate to this, this is how you confess. This is how you ask for forgiveness. You confess you're guilty and you confess God alone can forgive you.

Maybe another way to say this is there is no forgiveness without confession. God is waiting to forgive you. God is waiting to show mercy to you, but He does not do that until you admit that you have done something wrong. You have to admit you have sinned. There's no cleansing until you admit you're dirty. There's no being lifted up until you admit you're cast down. You have to say those three magic words, "I am wrong." Not "You were wrong. They are wrong. This world is wrong," "I am wrong. I'm not a victim. I did this sin and God, please forgive me."

I told you earlier, David said, "I did it. I did it. I did it. I'm the man. I'm responsible for this." If you're willing to say that and mean it, God will forgive. If you're willing to say that and believe it, He will wash you off with His cleansing Spirit. In the words of verse seven, He will purify you and de-sin you.

Moving on here to get back to our passage. Let me give you a fourth confession David makes in Psalm 51. That is this: David confesses that he needs a clean heart. Some of these ideas are intertwined a little bit, but he confesses that he needs forgiveness, he confesses that he has sinned, and that he needs cleansing. Just to develop that idea of cleansing, he confesses that he needs a clean heart. We've talked about this a little bit.

You hear a lot of stuff today about following your heart, don't you? They write songs about that and they write poetry about it. The Bible says it's not a good idea to do that. Jesus says in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, and slanders." Jesus said sin comes from your heart. Evil thoughts come from there, so your heart needs to be cleansed.

The bath needs to take place on the inside of us, which is what David says in verse ten. He says,

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.

David's heart is dirty. His heart led him to adultery and murder. We could say it like this. David didn't sin 'cause he was a good person. Does that make sense? Good people don't sin. It's often said he didn't sin. He sinned because he was a sinner. He's not a sinner because he sins. It's in his nature, and we all have that problem.

I talked with a man one time. He was wrestling with something; some sin he was dealing with. He kept saying, "I don't want to do this. I don't want to do this. I don't want to do this." Finally, after talking to him for half an hour, I said, "Then why are we having this conversation?" I said, "If you don't want to do it, then just don't do it and let me get on with my day." I said, "Brother, you want to do it. That's the problem. That's the issue and you're fighting it." This is David fighting this.

Verse ten, he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." David's heart didn't need just to be purified. It needed to be recreated. That's kind of a poetic expression, 'cause it doesn't mean David was lost, it just means David was in sin. He was temporarily enslaved to sin. He knew it was wrong. It had gotten so deep inside of him that he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." We just sang about that a moment ago.

It was so bad that in verse 11, he asked the Lord not to take His Holy Spirit from him. This is kind of an interesting thing. First Samuel 16 says the Lord took His Spirit away from Saul. We know in the New Testament God doesn't take the spirit away from believers. Saul was not a believer. The Lord took the Spirit away from him. First Samuel 16:14 says, "Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him." David saw that. He



saw the terror and the agony that that evil spirit produced in Saul. David says, "Don't do that to me, Lord. Please. Don't take your Holy Spirit from me."

He goes on to pray, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation." David had lost his joy. You guys know if you're living in sin, there's no joy in that, is there? Not for a believer. There's no peace. There's no hope. It's interesting here. David doesn't pray, "Lord, restore to me my salvation." You can't lose your salvation, but you can lose the joy of it. You can lose the hope that comes with it. David asked the Lord to bring it back to him. David was a musician. You can't sing if you don't have any joy or nothing to sing about. He asked the Lord to bring that back.

That's leads to a fifth confession he makes in Psalm 51: He confesses he needs to teach others what he has learned. He goes on and he confesses that he needs to teach others what he has learned. David's been serving himself with his sin. That passage back in second Samuel says that "when the time when the people went off to war, David stayed home." There could've been a little selfishness in that, and now he says, "I need to serve others."

Verse 13 says,

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. 16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

I'll get back to verse 13 in a minute, but just to walk you through some of that. "Bloodguiltiness", in verse 14, it's a funny word in English. But in Hebrew it referred to a capital crime. According to Leviticus 20:10, adultery was a capital crime in Israel. It was punishable by death. In Numbers 35:30, it says the same thing about murder. So David had bloodguiltiness on his hands. According to the Law of the Old Testament, he should be put to death for this.

In verse 15, he asked the Lord to open his mouth so that he can sing praises, implying that he hasn't written a Psalm since this happened.

He says, "For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You're not pleased with burnt offering." When he says that, it could mean a couple things. It could mean that a contrite heart is what matters most to God. It matters more than offerings. It matters more than sacrifices. David says you can't just throw a bull up there on the altar. You have to mean it. You can't just sacrifice a goat. It has to be important to you.

But this could also mean that there was no sacrifice to be offered for the sins of adultery and murder. Does that make sense? He says, "You're not pleased with a burnt offering. Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Like I said earlier, the sins of adultery and murder were capital crimes. All David could really offer God is a broken spirit. He had nothing else to give. All he could offer is a contrite heart.

“A contrite heart” in verse 17 could be translated "broken heart" or "a crushed heart." A heart that's crushed open for all to see. David's sin was public, so his confession must be public. He did this as a king, as a representative of Israel. Now his repentance has to be representative, which goes back to verse 13: "I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted to You." Kinda the idea here is "Lord, I'm writing this Psalm for everyone to see what I did." Psalms were written to be sung publicly. You can imagine David sitting in the front of the Tabernacle listening to everyone sing about what he did. But he said, "I'm doing do this to teach you. I'm doing this to teach Israel, to teach transgressors Your ways." David wanted to keep other people from doing what he had done and to warn them not to follow the path that he had went on.

That's leads to a final confession David makes in Psalm 51 and this just ties the Psalm off here: He confesses he needs God's help to be king. He confesses he needs God's help to be king. It's hard to be king. It's not an easy job, but it's especially hard when you've messed up like this.

David slept with another man's wife and then he killed him. I can't think of anything worse than that. He did it to one of Israel's best warriors. As the king, he killed one of Israel's special forces, so who's going to trust David now? He says he needs the Lord's help, and he prays in verse 18. He says, "By your favor do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then young bulls will be offered on Your altar."

The idea here at the end of the Psalm is that David has sinned against God, and he's asking that Israel wouldn't suffer for it, the nation wouldn't suffer for it. The city's walls were it's greatest source of protection. When an army attacked, everyone from miles around would come into the walls. Here in verse 18, David is building the walls around Jerusalem, and he prays that his sin wouldn't stop that; that the city would be protected.

He prays in verse 19 for God to delight in his offerings. Young bulls were very expensive 'cause they were so large. Some of our farmers in here may be able to correct me on this, but 800 pounds? Is that the size of a young bull? Is that sort of around the mark? That's a lot of bull, right? It cost a lot of money. In some cases, parts of the animal were burnt, but in other occasions, someone would burn the whole thing, and it appears in this passage that's what he says in verse 19. He's going to offer whole burnt offerings and young bulls. David's gonna give God everything he has out of gratitude for his forgiveness.

I mentioned to you earlier that to be forgiven of your sins, you have to confess, but we could add here at the end of this Psalm, to be forgiven of your sins you have to rely entirely on the power of God. Verse 18 says you must rest on God's favour. That's what David prays for, is God's favour, or His good pleasure. To be forgiven you have to remember that you don't deserve this. I mean, God shouldn't forgive you. He should punish you for your sins, but He chooses to forgive. And to accept that, you have to rely entirely on Him. You don't meet Him halfway. He does everything.

A pastor friend of mine was witnessing to a young man in Illinois who said to him, "Preacher, I don't want to think I have to be perfect to get into heaven," and my friend said, "But you do." He

said, "If you want to get into heaven by your good works, you have to be perfect, but," he said, "that's why Jesus came to be perfect for you. That's why the Son of God came, so you could be forgiven of your imperfections." That's what David is saying here.

This is how he closes things out. He's saying that sin, his sin is a big deal. I think we live in a world, we live in churches today, that don't take sin as a big deal. It should send him to hell. It has separated him from God. He has not been perfect. He's not lived up to God's standard, and his only hope of salvation is to throw himself on the mercies of God and ask for His favour.

He didn't know a lot about Jesus yet. (Or at least he doesn't say that he does in the Old Testament). The Messiah was still to come, but he knew he wasn't good enough for heaven. That much was clear. And so to get to heaven, he asked for God's help.

You have to do the same thing this morning, if you would be saved and forgiven of your sin. If you're brought forth in iniquity, and conceived in sin, you can't save yourself. It's impossible. The strikes were against you from birth. Therefore, God has to do everything. He must call you. He must draw you. He must justify you and He must (one day) glorify you. Salvation is all of God, but so is sanctification as well. Those are all tied in with Psalm 51.

The only thing you bring to the table is a crushed heart. Does that make sense? The only thing you bring is bloodguiltiness. But if you bring it to God, God takes that guilt, and He puts it on His Son, and He forgives you. This brings us to the question; will you bring it to Him today? Will you ask Him to forgive you? Will you bring a crushed heart to God?

I was getting trained in Biblical counseling years ago. It was interesting. I counseled two young men who were struggling with the same sin. They were both struggling with pornography; two guys, same sin, like David did, sexual immorality. I used the same notes with both of them. I was new to the counseling thing. I hadn't done it before, so I wrote out notes, and I would take these notes and bring 'em to one man on Tuesday nights and another man on Thursday nights. I watched as they went in two completely different directions. One listened and got victory over sin. The other one didn't, and the difference was a crushed heart. The difference was one of them was broken and one of them wasn't.

Listen, the Scriptures say, "God exalts the humble, and He lowers the proud." You could tie that directly into the issue of sin. If you were sinning, and you're humble, God will exalt you. He'll give you victory. If you're sinning, and you're not, then He won't. So are you humbled this morning? Are you going to be low so God can raise you up? If you're low this morning, I want to encourage you that you're in the right place. It is good to be low in the house of God.

Matter of fact, on the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (the church that was built on the spot where Jesus was born, or where we think He was born), the front door is four feet high, so you have to bow down to get in. Some of you have to bow lower, then the rest of us. I don't have to bow too low. Some of you guys probably have to get down on your knees to get in there, but heaven is like that. You have to bow to get in. You have to humble yourself. You go to heaven on bended knee, or you don't go. You get in with your head hung low, or you just don't get in.

Listen, friends, let me say, God loves to forgive sinners. God died to forgive sinners. He gave all He had to forgive sinners, but He won't forgive you if you're not sorry for sin. He won't forgive you if you won't admit you're wrong and come with a crushed heart, so will you do that today? "A broken and contrite heart," David says, "O God, you will not despise."

You know they say that the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian, or between a mature Christian and even an immature Christian, is how quickly they repent. They both sin. A believer and an unbeliever both sin, and even a mature believer and an immature believer both sin. The difference is in how fast you repent. A mature person repents in their head long before they play it out in their life. Will you repent quickly this morning? If you do, God will honor that. If you do, He will raise you up and bless you this morning. Let's pray and thank the Lord for His kindness in that.

Father, we thank you so much, Lord, for Your forgiveness of our sins. There's not a man, woman, or child in here today who has not sinned and has not sinned so much that we really can't even remember when you started, as David prayed here in this Psalm. But, at the same time, Lord, You are so kind and merciful and gracious to offer forgiveness to us. We pray, Lord, for Your help in living according to that this morning.

As we're going through Romans and hearing these important doctrines of the law and how it affects our lives and how we need Christ and what Christ has done to justify us, we need to play that out in real life, and we need to confess our sin.

Lord, I praise You that on one hand this is a humbling thing to talk about, 'cause there's not a one of us here this morning who doesn't need a heart that's crushed even more for our sin, we all do that, but on the other hand, it's a very, very encouraging passage, Lord. Thank you for David's example here.

If David could repent of this, there's not anyone in here this morning who couldn't repent of their sin. And if he could be broken before You, then all of us could be broken. That's what I pray for our church, Lord. That we would be low in our own eyes so that You would be glorified and exalted. Thank you for Christ. Thank you for what He has done for sin and for the privilege, Father, of living on this side of the Cross. David looked forward to it. We can look back upon it and be saved. Thank you for that. May you be glorified in the rest of our day. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.