

Communion Preparatory Service

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Date: 16 March 2024

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[0 : 00] While seeking God's help, let's turn back this evening to Psalm 51, and as we said, we'll focus on verse 7 to 12. If you are into music, then perhaps you're listening to your favorite song on repeat.

Possibly it's films, and there's one movie that you've seen hundreds of times. Or maybe here, in our island, there's a favorite location that you return to and never tire of visiting.

We listen to that song, or watch that movie, or go to that place repeatedly because we love it. We love being able to experience it over and over again.

Psalm 51 may not be the song that you switch on to get you into a good mood. If you're looking for something cheery and happy, then this is not that.

It is not light and chirpy, but it is very serious and absolutely relevant. It is a song that we find ourselves as God's people repeating over and over because it expresses in words how we so often feel.

[1 : 39] And I wonder, even as we come tonight, having looked at the first part of Psalm 51 last night, is there any part of us that thinks, is there anything else for me to learn here?

Is there anything else, any other reason that I should listen to Psalm 51 again? Well, I hope and pray that you will see that there is.

As we press play again on David's track, we will find our headings directly here in the text. He asks in prayer to God in verses 7, Purge me.

And then he asks in verse 8, Let me hear joy and gladness. And in verse 10, Create in me a clean heart.

Purging, hearing, and creating. Let's look at each of these in turn. First of all, he's asking God to purge him or to cleanse him.

[2 : 58] There it says in verse 7, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

And also look down to the end of verse 9, the second line in verse 9. Blot out all my iniquities. Now, if you were here last evening, then you'll remember that David used this trilogy of words.

These three words when he asked God to combat against his sin. He used three words to talk about his sin, his iniquities, his transgressions, his sin.

And he then talks about these three words as well, that God would use them to combat, to blot out, to purge, to cleanse, to wash away.

You see that David is repeating himself. Now again, what he's already said at the beginning of his prayer, at the beginning of the song that we sing, David repeats himself again.

[4 : 02] He's already asked God to purge him, to cleanse him, to blot out, to wash away his iniquities, his transgressions. He's saying what he's already said.

Let me make something very clear. What David is not doing is desperately trying to appease an angry, dictating deity.

Just after I passed my driving test, I remember reversing my car into a pillar. And it was fine.

It wasn't bad. It was just a broken taillight, a broken brake light. And I remember the fear that set in of what my father would say when I returned home with the car, with the light broken.

And yet, there was nothing to be afraid of. He was only concerned that I was okay, and the light could be fixed the next day. David is not coming to God here as if he's some angry deity that he must appease.

[5 : 18] He's not repeating his prayer because God is so cruel and just wants to see him work for it and beg for forgiveness.

And we never need to fear. He's coming again and again to our God, owning up to our, not just our mistakes or our trips or our errors, as we like to call them, but owning up to our sin that our God detests because he invites you to come to him and ask for that forgiveness.

He wants you to open up to him. The Bible is absolutely clear. The invitation is to come to Jesus, and he will forgive your sins.

Let me make this even more abundantly clear. In the Old Testament, Daniel 9, the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

In the New Testament, 1 John 1 verse 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

[6 : 42] So don't delay. Don't be afraid, but come. Come to the Lord with all of your sin.

But of course, as believers, we don't take this tremendous privilege that we have for granted. Our approach to forgiveness isn't to be like the toddlers when they're sitting in the high chair and they deliberately throw their food off from the high chair and onto the floor and it makes a mess and you tell them to say sorry.

And so they say, sorry, only to pick it all back up and for them to throw it again and to be one step ahead of you this time and saying, sorry, our approach to God is not to be like that.

anybody that we have done wrong to and certainly not least to God. They don't want our mere lip service, but the Lord wants our repentant hearts.

It's not just about saying the words, but feeling what we are saying. David repeating himself, isn't him just quoting a script or performing some ritual or tradition this is David even as he goes on in his journey of faith discovering even deeper depths of his sin.

[8 : 11] And so he says again to the Lord, purge me, wash me, blot out all my iniquity. Purge me with hyssop, he says.

The hyssop was used to apply the blood of the Passover lamb and also to sprinkle the water and the priest's purifying water.

We read in the Bible several times about the leper and the condition of leprosy. It's made very clear that if anybody has leprosy, then they were to self-isolate and to stay outside of the city and to repeatedly warn others who may come anywhere near them saying, I am unclean.

I am unclean. They would have longed for this. Hyssop. Purge me with hyssop. To be sprinkled on them that they may be declared clean.

See that longing, that picture that David is using here for himself. His longing again to be clean, to have that closeness in his relationship with God as we'll see later on, that joy in his relationship, in the salvation that he has to be restored.

[9 : 33] The Lord hasn't gone anywhere, but David has strayed from the Lord. Now that word, hyssop, is actually based on another word for sin.

And it literally means, in this form that we have it here in the Hebrew, to de-sin. Just like in the winter months you go out and de-ice your car so that the ice evaporates.

And so, David is pleading that God would de-sin him. It could read like this, purge me, de-sin me, and I shall be clean.

This is why this song is so relatable to you and me. That we can have it on repeat over and over. Because we are the ones who can and have been declaring, I am unclean.

Unclean. And so David goes on. Purge me, wash me, verse 7, and I shall be whiter than snow. This will be the result of David's cleansing.

[10 : 43] He knew that God's cleansing was effective. His sin, though it was deep, a deep stain, but purity, he knew, could be restored to him.

And David speaks here with faith, even though it can be difficult for the convicted sinner to believe that this cleansing is possible. Last night we thought about what Satan, how many sins that you've committed.

And yet, maybe it's not the number that bothers us the most as to that one or two in particular. the stain of the sin, the effect, the scar, as we mentioned last evening, that it leaves behind and perhaps still lingers in our lives or circumstances.

that Satan, who is the father of lies, wants to keep reminding you, maybe even you who are considering to profess your faith but think that one sin is one too many, that one is too dirty for you to come and to profess the name of the Lord Jesus.

But it is not true. And David is making that abundantly clear of himself. And therefore, it is true for all of us. Whatever, however many, however deep that stain of sin is in our lives, the invitation is still to you tonight to come.

[12:20] Come to Jesus and receive this washing, this cleansing. Now this verse is picked up later by the prophet Isaiah regarding the nation of Israel.

It says, though your sins are as scarlet, I shall make them as white as snow. When the snow falls here and we wake up in the morning and we open the curtains, we notice that everything is covered.

The white snow has covered the green grass and the brown fence and the red car. Everything is white. white. But God's washing of our sin leaves us whiter than snow.

Whiter. God makes us, makes you, as if you have never sinned at all. He makes us holy, pure, spotless.

So have you come to Christ? Have you confessed your sin to Christ? Have you been cleansed by Jesus Christ?

[13:29] So, purging. But secondly, hearing. Have a look at verse 8 in your Bibles. Let me hear joy and gladness.

Let the bones you have broken rejoice. Broken or crushed. David here listens or hears three voices. You may be looking at the text and when you where's the three voices? It's the voice of Satan, the voice of breaking, breaking bones and the noise of joy.

Well, there's no mention of Satan, although we've just spoken of him briefly there. There's no mention of Satan in this psalm as you look down. There's no direct reference.

He's not speaking here in this passage. But David, not long before this, wasn't listening to the voice of the Lord.

[14:35] But he was listening to the voice of Satan. And how subtle that serpent can be. We have been led along by him in our own lives.

Thinking what we are doing will be fine and then before we know it find ourselves up to our neck in sin. So we must check this evening who are we listening to even as Christians.

Christians. But if you are not a believer in here this evening, then it is Satan who is the dominant voice in your life.

You may be hearing God speak when you come to church even on a Saturday evening or on a Sunday, but yet you choose to reject everything that the preacher is saying, that the word of God is saying as you listen to it.

And yet you go on listening to the father of lies. The second noise that David heard is his own broken bones.

[15:51] the crushing of his bones. And of course he speaks here metaphorically. Anything that's been crushed, been broken, is very unpleasant to listen to.

Even something so simple as if you were baking for the fellowship tomorrow evening and if you're having to break or crush these digestive biscuits either by with a rolling pin or in a machine or even under your foot in a bag that makes a racket or a car being crushed to pieces.

It's noisy and the machine is roaring away and then all the metal and glass are being smashed and shattered. But David is talking about his bones and the noise of your own or somebody else's bones breaking is repulsive to be around.

nobody wants to be there to hear that. And this is what it feels like for David. He is a broken man because of his sin.

More particular because he hadn't sought out that forgiveness for his sin the length of time it had taken for him until Nathan exposed it to him.

[17:15] And during that time of him covering up his sin David was without joy and he suffered that inner torment as he describes in Psalm 32 when I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long for day and night your hand was heavy on me my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer and if there's unconfessed sin in your life and the Lord will not hear you he will not listen to you until you do confess it all you will continue to hear is the annoying sound of that guilty conscience the third noise that David hears is a noise he wants to hear he wants to hear joy and gladness and that his whole being would rejoice again

I came across something that Spurgeon said on this verse and I just wanted to share it with you Charles Spurgeon said David here is requesting a great thing he seeks joy for a sinful heart music

for crushed bones Spurgeon says it is a preposterous prayer anywhere except at the throne of God in other words here with God at the mercy seats as the hymn writer says approach my soul the mercy seat where Jesus answers prayer there humbly fall before his feet for none shall perish there but what does joy and gladness sound like David is asking to hear what does it sound like this joy and gladness we prayed about it earlier what is going to sound like if we are hearing it how do we know that we're hearing it how will

David know that he's got this joy and gladness back well before all that David heard was the repeated banging of his guilty conscience once he confessed his sin to joyous and gladdening words that any of us can ever hear you are forgiven to know that in your heart this evening is pure joy remind yourself as we come to the Lord's table tomorrow that you are forgiven for however many and however bad we believe in a saviour who washes all my sin away Jesus who paid it all you are forgiven may you be aware of the fact do not let the father of lies steal that joy from you when

I initially went to Tain and Fern almost seven years ago just within a year one of my elders he became terminal and so we he knew that he was his life was coming to an end and so I sat with him in his living room one day and John Ross was his name and he sat in the chair and he said to me Andrew have you seen this I was a bit lost for word what do you say but he was he grabbed his blue sing psalms off the shelf and he opened it up and he said have you seen this this psalm he was full of the joy days before he was about to die before he was about to leave this world because he was assured because he could sing the words that follow on from this psalm psalm 32 and he got to it in the page and he didn't read it to me but he started singing and he started singing in his living room how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sins whose sins are covered from God's face whose debt is cancelled by God's grace there's no deceit in him and days later John Ross went to be with the Lord his saviour he heard joy and gladness restored to him and his salvation purging hearing and thirdly creating have a look at verse 10 creating me a clean heart oh God and renew a right spirit within me see David felt that it wasn't enough for God to simply clean up the heart that he had the plea to create indicated that he needed a new heart the verb that's used here is the word bara in the Hebrew and is only ever used of God in the Bible most notably as you may know in Genesis chapter 1 God is the creator he's the bara of heaven and earth and the [23 : 22] Bible repeats that over and over about our God so in saying this David is anticipating one of the great promises when he cries out create in me a clean heart give me a new heart he's anticipating one of the great promises that's given to all of us who are under this new covenant that we read I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you I will take the heart of stone from you and give you a heart of flesh David was asking for nothing less than a miracle that is the direction of all three of David's requests it's only God who can cleanse him and restore to him the sound of joy and gladness who can create in him a clean heart it's only God who can do it every one of us who have been forgiven have received nothing less than this miracle from God my colleague

Alistair Macaulay who's known to you he was here in the island on communion and he shared this story with us in the congregation recently that he was in the minister's study and the minister's cat was in with him and while he was in there the cat he was there for maybe the best part of an hour and the cat didn't stop licking itself trying to lick itself clean you can't do that with your sin no amount of efforts or church attendance or the right manner or behaviour only by coming to Jesus Christ can all of our sin be washed away in verse 11 he says cast me not away from your presence and take not your

Holy Spirit from me now we could think of a light-hearted illustration to go along with this undoubtedly here that some of you are keen with the fishing the season has perhaps started or about to start again those of you who go out to the rivers here or the lochs will cast into the water as far away as possible or maybe the urge for the rest of us is to spring clean and to declutter the house and cast out the items that are just piling up in your homes them to know in your eyes people don't think his words here are light-hearted at all the matter that he is concerned with is not like catching a fish or tidying your house but he is truly burdened with the fact that he has offended the Lord God Almighty.

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. For David, the whole point of being cleansed and restored was to renew his relationship with God.

He didn't want a God who cleansed him yet remained distant from him. This is how it feels when we become aware of our sin. This is how it was for us before Jesus came into our lives.

[27 : 05] And this may be how it is for some of you who are yet outside of God's kingdom. Maybe cast away from God's presence.

Not in relationship with him. Not part of his worship and love. What David does to combat this feeling of being far away from God is exactly what all of us are invited to do in the Scriptures. What we should expect to happen to us because of our sin, the seriousness of it, the offense that we have caused to the Lord God Almighty, what we should expect to happen to us because of our sin, is to be cast away and not to be brought back.

We should expect to be separated from God forever. And yet what God writes to you, what God says to you here in the Word is the complete opposite.

Cast all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you. Instead of you being thrown out, you can throw off all your sin and fix your eyes on Jesus Christ.

[28 : 30] Go to God this evening because He has come to you. And so David goes on in verse 12, Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit.

He pleads with God asking that He would again have this fellowship that He once knew and enjoyed before. Even today, we prayed about it.

We can lose the joy of our salvation. You cannot lose your salvation. That is impossible for the Christian.

Sin shall not separate the believer from God. But sin can and does rob us of joy and the enjoyment of close fellowship with our Saviour.

You may be saved. You may be a member of this church for many years. But tonight, are you rejoicing in that salvation?

[29 : 48] are you full of the joy of the Lord? David wants to be upheld.

That can be our fear, can't it? We've sinned. We have pled for forgiveness. But what is to stop us falling all over again?

I'd love to say that you'll never make another mistake. You'll never let your eyes wander. You will not have that reaction anymore, but we can't say that. But what we can always do is repeat this prayer of repentance.

The Lord will not give up on you. There will not come a time when He will say, you have sinned too much. He will continue to welcome you back with open arms.

So maybe the joy you feel is not there. And what's the answer? Repeat this prayer. Come again to the throne of God.

[31 : 03] Ask Him to restore to me the joy of your salvation. And He will continue to welcome you back with open arms.

But of course, we want to be growing and maturing in our faith. We desire this willing spirit, this steadfast spirit, able to resist the devil, to be standing firm in our faith, able to persevere on the straight and the narrow road.

So do not let the soundtrack of sin be the one that is on repeat in your life. Instead, let us repeatedly, again and again, do as the writer of Hebrews commends us, commands us to do. And even as we prepare to come to the Lord's table tomorrow, will you be coming to His table to obey Him, to do this in remembrance of Him?

The writer in Hebrews says, let's meditate on this this evening. Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

[32 : 13] And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Amen.

Let's pray together. Lord, we can come to You at any time.

We come, Lord, as Your people. At this time, the evening before, we come again to Your table. We come as a congregation, as a community, to remember You.

To remember what You have done for us. What Jesus has accomplished for us. Through His perfect, through Him being sinless, spotless, through His sacrifice on the cross.

[33 : 38] So, Lord, this evening, and as we prepare for tomorrow, Lord willing, may we examine our own hearts. And, Lord, we will find sin in there.

Oh, the sinful people that we are. And, Lord, we want to recognize more and more how much that pains You.

But, Lord, we thank You that You invite us all to come to Calvary, to fix our eyes on Jesus.

But, Lord, our eyes need not remain theirs. Because Jesus is no longer theirs. But, Lord, we pray for us. But, Lord, we pray for us.

But, Jesus has paid the price. The wages of our sin was death. And He died for them. But, praise the Lord, He rose conquering that grave.

[34 : 43] And tonight, He intercedes for us. And we await the Lord Jesus to return. Oh, Father, we pray for any here.

Lord, that You may be working in their hearts. That tonight they would be given the strength and the courage to take that step of faith and profess the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

Amen. Let's sing these words of Psalm 32. And let's sing Psalms, page 38. That my elder was able to sing with joy and that you and I can sing with the same joy this evening too.

How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, whose sins are covered from God's face, whose debt is cancelled in God's grace, there is no deceit in him.

Psalm 32, from verse 1 to 6, to God's praise. How blessed the one who has received forgiveness for his sin, Whose sins are covered from God's face Whose debt is counseled in God's grace

There's no deceit in Him When I kept silent on my boat

[36 : 57] Withthrown in whereworn out Beneath your heart I felt and throught Both day and night my strength was soft As in a summer drought Then I laid bare my sin to you The guilt that lay within I said, O Lord, I have transgressed

And you forgave when I confessed You pardoned all my sin So let the godly pray to you While you are to be found Surely when waves are sweeping past And mighty waters rising fast You'll keep them safe as soon

Now may grace, mercy and peace From God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit Rest and remain with each of you Both now and forever Amen Amen