

Wash Me

Favorite Psalms Part 13 Psalm 51:1-7 3-4-2012

Summary: When we sin it makes us dirty (repulsive to God), and we need to seek cleansing. Step one in seeking cleansing is realizing how severe your dirtiness is so you cry out to God for cleansing with proper earnestness. So David labored to magnify his guilt in his own eyes by realizing his sin was 1) against God, 2) systemic, and 3) contrary to divine desire. He was rending his heart, not his garments. And it happened through exposure and consequences, the pain of which can be training wheels to teach the heart to grieve over the sin itself. That works only when the Word of God is applied to the heart. After you sin, magnify your guilt and then cry out for mercy (exemption from consequences).

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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** Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. **6** Surely 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: Spiritual Dirtiness = Being Repulsive to God

Have you ever felt spiritually dirty - like you were just disgusting on the inside? David did.

Psalms 51:2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me

He was dirty - but what does that mean exactly, to be dirty on the inside? If I asked for a show of hands of who has ever felt that, probably most everyone would raise their hand. But if I asked for a definition of exactly what that means, I might not get any hands. It's funny - we can all relate to it, but we can't define it. Obviously it is a figure of speech, so let's see if we can figure out what it means. When you sin, something happens to you that is similar to being physically dirty - but similar in what way?

What is bad about being physically dirty? The only reason being dirty is bad is because it makes a person repulsive. If someone has not had a shower in six months, you don't want to get too close to that person - why? Is it because you have a prejudice against dirt? No - dirt is all over the place on the ground and that does not bother you a bit. The reason you are repulsed by a really dirty person is because that person is unpleasant to the nose and to the eyes. They look bad and smell bad, and in that condition they generate disgust in your eyes.

When we commit sin, and we feel dirty, what that means is we feel ugly and repulsive. Ugly and repulsive to whom? We feel ugly and repulsive to whomever we regard as our God. For most people, their god is themselves. So when they feel dirty, it is because they have done something to make themselves repulsive in their own eyes. For others, their god is other people. So they feel dirty when they do something that makes them repulsive in the eyes of others (or would make them repulsed if they knew about it). For those who fear God and not men, we feel dirty when we do something that makes us repulsive in God's eyes.

And that is what true spiritual dirtiness is. *Feeling* dirty means you *feel* like you are repulsive. *Being* dirty means you actually *are* repulsive. When we sin, something happens to us that causes us to become unpleasant for God to be around - unpleasant for Him to look at, unpleasant for Him to interact with us. The reason God designed this world such that we become smelly and ugly and repulsive and disgusting if we don't bathe enough is to teach us what it is like for God when we sin. And so when we sin, we provoke God to withdraw His presence from us.

So the question is, what should you do about it? When you sin against your spouse, or a friend and you are now in the doghouse with that person, there are various ways you can handle that. Some people - you just steer clear of that person until it blows over. Other people want you to grovel with apologies and to do something nice for them to make up for what you did. Some people want to talk it over, others might want something else - different responses for different people. But when it is God - when you have sinned against God - how should you respond? Answer: Psalm 51. David had done something that made him ugly and repulsive to God, and that provoked God's anger, and made David deserving of punishment. So David did exactly the right thing in a situation like that - he repented. And he wrote down one of his prayers of repentance - actually two. One is Psalm 51, and then later on, after he was restored, he wrote another one (Ps.32). We are going to take a look at the first one - Psalm 51. When you become dirty in God's sight, the solution is to repent. There are some people who claim that repentance is not really necessary for the Christian. They say once you are saved, all your sins are forgiven automatically, and so there is no need to repent anymore. There are other people who claim that repentance is not necessary for non-Christians. They say, "You can't call unbelievers to repent. If you do that, you are adding works to salvation." So you have people saying repentance is unnecessary for non-Christians, and you have people saying repentance is unnecessary for Christians. But God's Word says this:

Acts 17:30 God commands all men everywhere to repent.

If anyone says otherwise, that is false doctrine. We all know the filthiness that we have soiled ourselves with in our sin, and we know something has to be done about it, and that something is described in vivid, full-color detail in Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 begins with a cry for mercy.

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.

The Severity of Sin (3-5)

Unrelenting Guilt

Why are you begging for mercy, David?

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

David had a massive sin problem. He had done things that made him repulsive to God. He had made himself a stench in God's nostrils, and ugly in God's sight. And the guilt feelings were relentless.

3 ... my sin is ever before me.

Literally it is, "My sin is continually in my face." Even though this is a year later, his guilt was unrelenting. When a person wakes up to the reality of his sin and he comes to the point of repentance, his thinking is dominated by his own guilt. He is not concerned about his wife's sin, his boss's sin, the sin of someone at church – he is not focused on the extenuating circumstances, explanations, excuses - the truly repentant heart can see one thing - the giant, black cloud of their own devastating guilt that blocks out everything else.

If you want to know about the sin David is repenting of in this psalm, you can read about it in 2 Samuel 11. The short version is this - he committed adultery, the woman got pregnant, and David tried to cover it up by having her husband killed in battle. And for our purposes today the most important verse in 2 Samuel 11 is the very last line of the chapter.

2 Samuel 11:27 ...the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

God was displeased with the man after His own heart. That is another way of saying David was dirty in God's sight.

And David speaks to God about his dirtiness as he asks for cleansing. That is a very important principle to understand, because God does not clean people who do not know they are dirty. The great news is there is a way to become clean. God can clean you, but He will only do it in response to heartfelt and urgent pleading. And your pleading will never be earnest enough until you have a sense of how much you need cleansing.

Against God (4)

Most people never get to that point because they do not understand what sin actually is. They do not understand the principle of verse 4.

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.

Now at first that does not sound right at all. Against God and God only David sinned? He slept with another man's wife! Isn't it true that David sinned against his own wife, and against Uriah and Bathsheba and the baby at the very least? And isn't part of true repentance admitting the harm you have caused other people? When someone keeps his repentance quiet - just between him and God, and he refuses to go to the person that he hurt and acknowledge what he did and how much he hurt that person and ask that person's forgiveness - we would say that guy is not truly repentant. So is that David? Is he trying to ignore all the damage he has done to people?

No, that is not what he is doing. There are other places in the Bible that teach us how to deal with people we have hurt, but this psalm is about how to approach God after you have sinned. So when David says, "Against You only have I sinned," the point is not to minimize what he did to people. The point is to get to the heart of what sin actually is. What is it that makes sin sin? What is it about sin that makes it so bad? Sin hurts people, but that is not what makes it evil. Lots of things hurt people that aren't evil. Rivers hurt people; they are not evil. Surgeons hurt you when they cut you open; that is not evil. The thing that makes sin sin is the fact that it is against God. There is no such thing as a sin that is not a sin against God. And the fact that it is against God is the ONLY thing that makes it evil. That is the only thing about sin that is evil.

So why do we feel so much more guilt when we sin in ways that hurt people? We tend to be so much more ashamed when we break the second table of the law than if we break the first. If you murdered someone, committed adultery, stole something - you probably won't mention them in your prayer group, and if you do, you will feel incredibly embarrassed and ashamed. But if all you did was break the first table of the law - people have no problem confessing that.

"Pray for me; lately I feel like there is some idolatry in my heart, where I'm preferring earthly things above God."

"I've taken the Lord's name in vain."

Those are not any big scandal. You say that and everyone will just jot down your prayer request and move on. But if you say, "Yeah, day before yesterday I committed adultery" you are going to get a little more reaction. "A couple days ago I held up a convenience store and shot a couple guys" - that is going to raise some eyebrows. Why? Is adultery more evil than idolatry? No. It is not more evil, but it feels more evil, and it is easier to see how evil it is because of all the harm it does. The damage our sin does to other people is a visual aid to teach us how evil sin is. Dishonoring God in any way is just as evil as things like murder or stealing, but it is harder to see it as evil. But when you see the flood of tears coming from the eyes of someone you have hurt, that makes it easier to see as evil. So if you only feel bad because of the human fallout, you do not understand sin yet, and your repentance is deficient. True penitence is when you have a deep sense of having offended God.

Systemic (5)

David mentions three things that magnify his guilt. Instead of trying to cover it up, he does the opposite - he is thinking of things that make it more serious. The first one is the fact that it was against God (v.4). The second one is in verse 5.

5 Behold! I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.

That is a figurative, poetic way of saying, "My sin problem is not a surface issue. It's systemic. I'm shot through with sin to the core. It was there when I was a single cell - it's in my DNA."

Some people look at that as something that excuses their sin.

"I was just born this way. I naturally have a powerful sex drive. It's just my nature, I can't help it."

"I get angry and say hurtful things just because of hormones or genes - it's not my fault; it's just natural."

But for David this is not an excuse - just the opposite. The fact that he was born this way makes his guilt even worse. If this were a surface problem, I could just brush it off. It would not really reflect who I am. But it isn't. I brush off one sin and beneath that is a worse one. I pick off the rotten fruit, but the tree of my heart keeps producing more rotten fruit faster than I can pick it off the branches. That does not excuse me - that makes me evil to the core. And that is what David is saying - I am evil all the way down to my DNA.

No doubt one of the reasons God allows us to struggle so much with sin is so we will understand just how deep it runs. Our efforts to change do not work because the drive toward evil and away from God inside us is so powerful and determined that no natural effort can overcome it.

When I think about the incredible depth and breadth and pervasiveness of my sin, it is staggering. There are sins that are easy to resist, and I have huge, massive reasons to resist, and I have all kinds of help, and no special, extenuating circumstances, and *still* fall to that sin. That is how systemic it is - like a virus that has infected every part of me. And that would not be so bad if God were indifferent to sin, but...

Contrary to Divine Desire (6)

6 Behold! You desire truth in the inner self

Red Alert!

“Behold” is an emotional exclamation. It means, “Look! - This is huge!” Verse 5 becomes a million times more serious because of verse 6. This “behold” here means, “Red alert!” I am shot through with sin, but red alert - God desires the opposite. There is a massive chasm between what God desires and what is inside me. He desires that the truth of His Word be internalized and put into practice from the inside out. He desires that I have integrity, and that my thoughts, affections, inclinations, attitudes, drives, words and actions all be governed and shaped by the truth of His Word. But behold - red alert – what is in me is the opposite of that.

God’s Desire

And notice that it does not just say God *requires* truth. It says He *desires* it. It is not just a detached regulation in the books somewhere. When God tells us, “This is what I desire,” instead of just, “This is what I require,” it is an appeal to our love for Him. We might do what He demands just to avoid punishment, but we do what He desires because we love Him.

And David uses that as yet another tool to show the enormity of His guilt. I knew God wanted something from me. So doing that thing would show my love for Him. But I did the opposite. My guilt is magnified by the fact that my sin was against God, it is magnified by the fact that I am sinful to the core, and it is magnified by the fact that I sin in the face of the very desires of a perfect God.

How to Become Broken?

So, when you soil yourself with sin and make yourself ugly and smelly and repulsive to God, what should you do? It is not hopeless. As deep and ingrained and profound as our sin is, there is a solution. There is a way to be clean. And if you want to know that way, just follow in David’s steps in this psalm. Begin with brokenness. Think through the severity of your guilt. David did not just say, “OK, God, I admit what I did was wrong.” He goes into detail with insightful thoughts about why it was evil and how evil it really was. You can tell he has given this some thought, and now he is taking the time to write it down.

In the ancient Jewish culture the way people would express grief was by tearing their clothes. But like any external expression, that could turn into a routine that does not really express a penitent heart. And when that happened in Israel, God sent the prophet Joel to tell the people:

Joel 2:13 Rip your heart and not your garments.

You are all ripping and tearing your clothes as a show of repentance - do that to your heart, and then it will be real repentance. When your heart is not broken by sin as it should be, sometimes we need to take action to break it.

But how is that done? When my eyes are dry and my heart is cold - what can I do to bring myself to the point of true contrition before God? David could relate to that question. He went more than nine months without coming to this point of brokenness over his sin. So what finally did it? Let’s back up to the beginning of the psalm.

Pre-Repentance: Exposure and Consequences Bring Repentance

The Pain of Exposure and other Consequences can be Training Wheels for Repentance

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.¹

This prayer of repentance did not occur until after Nathan came and exposed David's sin, and told David that because of his sin, his child would die. I find that very, very significant. When there has been an especially scandalous sin, and then a cover up, and the person only confesses after he has been exposed and he has no choice, very often people assume, "His repentance is a sham. If it were genuine, he would have confessed on his own a long time ago. The fact that he is suddenly sorry and broken over his sin just because now he's suffering some consequences - that proves his sorrow isn't really over the fact that he offended a holy God; he's just sad that he got caught." If you think that way, you need to explain why the greatest example of genuine repentance in all of God's Word - David's repentance in Psalm 51, came a year after the sin and only after he was caught.

You see, the thing about getting caught, and being exposed and humiliated, and suffering the painful consequences of sin - all that can actually stimulate true repentance. In fact, that is the purpose of all those things. Imagine a man who is embezzling or committing some crime in his work. He is rationalizing it somehow, he is not taking it seriously, he is not repentant. Or maybe he admits it is wrong, and he is trying to stop this sin, but for some reason it just does not seem like all that big a deal to him, and he knows there should be tears of repentance, but there just aren't. And he cannot seem to generate them. But then his boss finds out, he gets fired, arrested, and sentenced to ten years in prison. And his wife divorces him, and he loses everything. And now, because of all that suffering and pain, the tears are flowing. Now he is crushed. That sorrow is not necessarily the sorrow of repentance, but it can easily become that.

God very often uses the tears of suffering natural consequences as training wheels to teach the heart how to grieve over sin. I know that from personal experience. They start out as tears of suffering, but in that state of sorrow and humiliation it becomes much easier to read the law of God and see how your sin has dishonored God, and to genuinely grieve over that. There was a time in my life when the sorrow for my sin did not run very deep. But then some painful consequences came, and before long my weeping over those consequences turned into weeping over having offended God. In fact, I actually felt a real sense of gratitude toward God for those consequences, because they were what brought me to a deep and thorough repentance.

So one of the things that rips the heart open is exposure, and if you need to rend your own heart - confess your sin to someone. Do not wait for a Nathan to come along - just confess.

Only through the Word

Now, that is not to say that the tears of sorrow that come from being exposed are automatically genuine repentance. Very often they are not. The only way they can succeed in bringing about true repentance is if they are combined with the power of the Word of God. Nathan was a prophet, and the prophets were the ones who revealed God's Word. And it is only when the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures is applied to your heart that repentance comes.

When you sin, imagine yourself as being like a train, moving down a track toward destruction. It is leading directly toward a cliff where you will plunge to your death, and the only way there will be

¹ Literally it says, "after David went in to Bathsheba." It means he went in to her bedroom, which is a euphemism for sleeping with her. It is a play on words, because it is the same word used to describe Nathan's coming. So in the Hebrew it sounds this way: "When the Prophet Nathan went in to David after David went in to Bathsheba."

any outcome other than destruction is if someone throws the switch so that the train turns onto another track that goes in a good direction. And contrary to what most people believe, throwing that switch is not completely in your own power. Most people think, "I can sin, and then turn myself around. I'll sin, then I'll repent. I'll stop my momentum toward destruction, turn around, and get myself going in a good direction." But that is not in our power to do. Once you start tumbling down the cliff, you do not have the power in yourself to stop your downward movement. Only the Word of God applied to your heart can do it. And in some cases, the truth of the Scriptures cannot penetrate your heart deep enough until your heart is ripped open by the pain of some drastic consequences.

Provides what He Requires

The Scriptures are a wonderful gift to us when we fall into sin. Look down at verse 6.

6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

He does not just desire that we be filled with His truth - He teaches us His truth. How hopeless we would be if He required it without providing it! How utterly incapable we would be of generating our own wisdom. He is a God who provides what He requires, and He provides it in His holy Word.

Forgive and Cleanse Me

So how did David go from taking his sin lightly to really becoming shattered and contrite and crushed over his sin so he could properly repent? It was a wise and loving friend who applied the Word of God to David's particular situation. And by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that Word penetrated the shell of David's crusted-over heart and brought him to repentance.

Once the Word of God has brought you to the point of true brokenness, now you are ready to approach God. But when you approach Him, what do you say?

Ask for Mercy

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your love

The word translated **mercy**² in this context means to withhold deserved consequences and to give blessing instead.³

Asking for Mercy Instead of Sternness

David appeals to God's mercy and love, but he knows full well that those are not God's only attributes. God is also holy and just and wrathful against sin. He is a stern Father who scourges and chastises his children. If He decides to treat you according to His sternness, He will take you to the woodshed. And if He decides to treat you according to His mercy, He will bypass the woodshed this time. And one of the factors that goes into His decision on which to do is your prayers. He is more likely to treat you according to His mercy if you ask Him to.

² CHANAN (חָנָן)

³ He used this same word in 2 Samuel 12 when his child by Bathsheba was dying. Nathan had told David that as a result of his sin, the child would die. And from that point until the child actually stopped breathing, David fasted and wept and prayed, begging God to allow the child to live. And when he described his reasoning for doing that, this is what he said:

2 Samuel 12:22 He answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.'

That word translated **be gracious** is the same word translated **have mercy** in Psalm 51. The consequences David deserved were to lose the child. And the mercy he asked for in 2 Samuel 12 is for God to withhold that consequence and bless David with a healthy child instead.

Now, in Psalm 51 David is not asking for that specific thing. He does not mention the baby at all. In Psalm 51 David is asking God to withhold other consequences - like removal of the Holy Spirit or God turning His face away or God continuing to remain displeased with David.

If God deals with you according to His mercy when you have not asked for that, then you will not realize that is what is happening, and it will not help increase your love for Him. But if you fully expect to be dealt with according to His sternness, and so you beg for Him to deal with you according to His love instead, then if He grants your request you will see that grace for what it is.

The natural expectation after sin is negative consequences that come from the displeasure of God. And it is appropriate to ask God for favor instead of those consequences. And in some specifics, the answer will be no, but in other areas, there is favor we can have and exemption from negative consequences that we can have if we ask, but we will not have if we do not ask. The fallout from your sin is not set in stone. There may be some consequences that are going to happen no matter what (in David's case it was the baby dying), but there may be others that may or may not happen depending on whether you seek mercy from God. There may be some physical consequences, or relational fallout, or financial impact that God may be willing to waive if you ask. And more importantly, there may be spiritual consequences that He might be willing to waive. Maybe one of the consequences of your sin will be that God will withdraw His presence, so you are unable to take delight in His attributes. The Bible will seem dull and dry to you, and the excellencies of God won't bring any great joy into your heart. Your prayers will seem to bounce off the ceiling, and you will not be able to have satisfying, delightful interactions with God for a while - maybe a few months. That is what is going to happen - unless you ask for mercy. But if you seek mercy like David does here, instead of three months, that distance from God will only last two days.

Maybe a consequence of this sin is going to be spiritual weakness. Now you are going to be vulnerable to the enemy and Satan is going to be allowed to sift you like wheat and you will fall into all kinds of other horrible sin. But if you seek mercy from God, He may waive that consequence and give you strength instead. I could go on and on. The potential consequences of sin are innumerable, but the worst of all of them - the one that is the most unbearable to David, is the consequence of being repulsive to God. More than anything else David wants to be clean again.

Cleansing

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me

David begs for God to do something about his ugliness and stench before God so that he can once again be fit for God's presence and he can draw near to God. It is really an outrageous thing David is asking for. Given how extreme his contamination really is - down to the cellular level and his very DNA, and given how extensive it is and how severe it is, how could it ever all be cleaned up? What could possibly clean all that up? Answer: **hyssop**.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean

In Leviticus 14 God gave the instructions for how to purify a person who was ceremonially unclean due to an infectious, contagious skin disease. They were to dip the hyssop branch into the blood of an animal sacrifice and then sprinkle that blood on the person and on his house as a purification ritual. Why? Why hyssop? Wouldn't a branch from any tree work just as well for sprinkling blood? Yes, it would - but God specified a very specific, particular procedure to show them that cleansing could only come from God. If you do not follow His prescribed ritual exactly, there is no cleansing. The animal sacrifice is just a picture - it has no inherent power to clean anything. All those sacrifices were symbolic. The blood of bulls and goats and lambs never actually cleansed a single sin - ever. And David understood that.

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.

David knew that all the sacrifices were symbolic, pointing to the fact that only God could do that actual work of cleansing. So David does not just go outside and find the nearest hyssop tree and make an attempt at cleaning himself. He asks God to cleanse him with hyssop. David is saying, "God, I'm a spiritual leper. I need the whole hyssop treatment, but I know that hyssop only has power to cleanse when it is in Your hand." David did offer sacrifices and he did follow through on the rituals God had given in Scripture as symbols. But he also understood the reality that those symbols were symbolic of: namely, only God can do the cleansing.

David understood that much. What he did not understand was the fact that those bloody animal sacrifices were bloody not just to illustrate the fact that sin requires death, but also to point to the death of the One who would someday come and die a sacrificial death that was not symbolic - a death that actually did pay for sin. A thousand years after David's time, Almighty God Himself took on human flesh and came into this world. The Lord Jesus Christ lived a sinless, perfect life and then died on the cross as a sacrifice to not symbolically, but literally take the punishment for our sins and purchase our redemption and cleansing. Through faith, and faith alone, our sins are credited to His account, and His perfect righteousness is credited to our account making us clean in God's sight.

That is one reason why no other religion can save you. Other religions can make you an upstanding citizen, but they cannot do anything about your dirtiness in God's sight. Before a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ he is guilty disgusting to God. Whether he feels guilt feelings or not, his guilt exists, and there is nothing he can do to erase it. Only God can erase it, and that happens only when that person trusts Jesus Christ the point where he is willing to follow Him no matter what the cost.

So if you are here today and you have never done that - your sins have never been forgiven, you could do that right now and you could walk out of this building with a heart that is white as snow. Every trace of your systemic filthiness before God wiped away forever!

That is the gospel. But Psalm 51 is not really about that. David was a believer, so all that had already happened in David's life. Psalm 51 is not about how to become saved. It is about how a saved person can be cleansed after having re-soiled himself. David was made perfectly clean and acceptable before God on the day he was first converted as a young man many years before this. But even after your sins are forgiven at conversion, and the eternal penalty for those sins is waived so that you are no longer bound for hell, still, even as a believer, it is possible to do things that make you displeasing in God's sight. There are things you can do that grieve Him. That is why Paul said, **Therefore we make it our goal to please Him (2 Cor.5:9)...**, because he understood that even as a believer it was possible for him to do things that either please or displease God. Just like we read in **2 Samuel 11:27 the thing David had done displeased the Lord.** So there is a kind of cleansing we need to seek even as believers after we sin.

And if we do, we will be clean. I love verse 7.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean

It is not necessary for Christians to walk around with a sense of constant guilt all the time. It is possible to be clean in His eyes - not just the initial cleansing that happens when you become a Christian, but cleansed even from the contamination of the sins we continue to commit day to day. And if you want to know how, step 1 is just what we saw today: a broken and contrite heart. It starts there.

But it does not end there. Sorrow over sin is crucial, but by itself it is not enough. It has to be a sorrow that drives you to the mercy and compassion of God in a way that results in the restoration of what was destroyed by the sin - including the joy of your salvation.

"How does all that happen? What's the rest of the process?"

That is where we will pick it up next time.

Benediction Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Application Questions:

- 1) Satan works hard to prevent us from “rending our hearts, not our garments.” He tempts us toward rationalization or excuses, tries to keep us ignorant of God’s holiness and the evil of sin, tempts us to compare ourselves with others who are worse, tempts us to just put the whole thing out of our minds because it’s too painful to think about, etc. In your particular case which of his schemes tends to be most effective? (In other words, what is usually the biggest obstacle in your life that prevents deep contrition before God?)
- 2) Do you tend to err more on the side of not enough brokenness over sin, or inability to accept forgiveness when it comes? Why do you think that is?