

"A Clean Heart"

Psalm 51

As our children are released for children's worship, I would encourage you to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Psalm 51. As we continue in our series here on the Psalms, you will note that there is, like many of the other Psalms, though not all, interestingly, but many of our other Psalms have superscripts like this one. That's just that little extra textual note at the beginning. And so, you'll notice that this one gives us a bit of a historical context that this Psalm is coming out of the experience that David had when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan because of his sin with Bathsheba, and then his sin against particularly Bathsheba, but also Uriah. Um, it's interesting, though, if you note that before that little historical context where it says, you know, according after the prophet Nathan had confronted David, uh, right before that, there's another superscript that says to the choirmaster, which then tells us that this is meant for public worship. And so you'll notice something in all of the Psalms. There's this movement from the individual to the collective or to the group, from the personal experience to the public experience. And it's a reminder for us as well as we worship and as we come before the Lord. These personal psalms about David's experience are meant to be sung by the whole congregation. See, that's how we worship too. We come before the Lord as individual persons who are bringing our prayers, our needs, our faith, our repentance before the Lord. But we're also coming as one body, because God has promised us that he's going to make us one body, one collective, one people in Christ Jesus. We are all one in our union with him through his one spirit, one baptism, one Savior, one Lord, one father. So we're all both individuals, but we're also a part of this larger community. And it's good to remember that as we read this. So this is about David's experience. But as the superscript reminds us, it's also about our experience together as a body. So let's read Psalm 51 to the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. When Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you. You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth and in the inward being. And you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, that I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence. And take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from blood. Guiltiness Oh God, oh God of my salvation. And my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. Oh Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a

broken and contrite heart. O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will be offered on your altar.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, there are a few things that tell you as much about what a person really believes as when as it is, when you see them or experience them fail in some way, usually in a public way. You see, people can tell you they believe a thing. They can tell you about their worldview or their values or their principles, but you really get to see what they really believe. When there is some kind of public failure, when they get exposed for a weakness or a failure or an error or a lapse in judgment, you see people respond to failure in many different ways. It's kind of like the way that you respond to pain, right? You learn something about them when you see them experience sudden pain. It's the same thing when you see them experience sudden failure. Some deny the failure. They say, I didn't do anything wrong no matter what, even though even if it's totally obvious that they made a mistake, that they made an error in judgment, that they did something wrong. They just can't admit it. They never did anything wrong. They never say anything. They won't admit it. They deny it. Some minimize it. They'll say, well, it really wasn't that serious after all. Nobody's perfect, you minimize it, you play it down. It was a small, minor thing, something to be diminished and forgotten. Some rationalize it and say, well, if you had understood the situation, you have to understand this had happened right before that this took place. And you know, you gotta understand my background and this is my intention, right? So some people rationalize it, others blame others. You ever met that kind of person? When they fail and you call them out for it, they say, well, you did this or did you see what that person did? They blame others for the reason why they act the way they did. And then lastly, of course, many just compare. You minimize yours by comparing. Others say, well, I'm not I mean, I'm not terrible, right? I'm not, I'm not Hitler after all, am I? I mean, come on. Right. You make it seem less because of comparison with with what someone else has done. You see, we can hide our failures. We can excuse them. We can redefine them. We can broadcast them. We can laugh about them. Some people just make light of them. We can punish ourselves endlessly. That's another way. When you make a public error, you just grovel and you punish yourself endlessly as a result of it. But what I want to point out this morning is that none of those things, none of those things, is the biblical notion of repentance. You see, Psalm fifty one offers a different way to deal with your errors, your mistakes, your failures, your sin, whether it's private or public.

Psalm fifty one gives us another way to deal with it than those things that we just said. You see, the biblical doctrine of repentance recognizes the truth about who we are, as we so often say here in this service, the truth about who we are, but also the truth about who God is, who creates and who sustains and who redeems. You see, biblical repentance is not a sentimental repentance. It's not something that says, oh, you know, nobody's perfect or you just got to love my flaws. I love you just the way you are. It's not sentimental. It's not wistful. It's not pollyannaish that kind of ignores sin or ignores that you did something wrong. And it's definitely not fatalistic. It can never lead us to wallowing in self-loathing and groveling because of this endless display of our sin. It can't be those things. Biblical repentance is, as we will see in Psalm fifty one, is always truthful. It's humble and it's worshipful. Now, this Psalm was written

after one of the darkest episodes in David's life. This is after his great, mighty works. He's now older in age. He's taken to retiring back into his palace while the armies go out into battle. And during one of those times he commits adultery. He uses his power to power over this young woman, this married woman in his community. He powers over her. She becomes pregnant. In order to cover up his sin. He brings back her husband, Uriah, from the battlefield. He's out fighting, which is where David should be, by the way. He should be out leading the people. That's what the king does. He should be leading in battle, but rather he's staying back. He brings Uriah the Husband back, who's not an Israelite. Interestingly, he's a Hittite, and yet he shows himself to be more righteous than the Israelite king David. Okay? He calls back Uriah. Uriah, though in solidarity with his army and his soldiers, will not sleep in his own home. He says while they are sleeping out under the stars and in battlefield formation. I will also sleep outside the front door of my house. So David's ploy fails and as a result, he decides, well, I'll just get rid of Uriah anyways. That way he can make no complaint against me about, uh, about the adultery that I have committed. And so he sends Uriah out, but he tells some of the commanders in the heat of the battle, pull back and leave Uriah exposed so that he's killed. And so David commits not only adultery and then deception. He finally commits functionally murder by way of treachery. It's only later in first Samuel twelve that we learn about the prophet Nathan coming and convicting David, challenging David because of his sin. Now, here's the reason why we need to know that we don't know exactly when this Psalm is written. Is this Psalm reflecting on a time before Nathan convicts him of his sin? Or is it kind of taking the whole thing into account after Nathan convicts him of his sin? That's going to have some bearing on how we interpret it, but it's important for us to know this. David's committed the sin. There is a season of time where he is not confessing the sin, but we don't know if he's aware of the sin or not. Right. I'm going to tell you why that's important later. But in reflection on this whole enterprise, David writes this Psalm. It's a kind of poetic response. It's a poetic prayer to the conviction of sin that happened with Bathsheba and then ultimately with Uriah.

See, Charles Spurgeon, the great British pastor, says, what we learn from this Psalm is that a broken heart can never long be divided from the broken Saviour. Whatever David is experiencing. It ultimately draws him back to his need for salvation. As a matter of fact, Spurgeon regards Psalm fifty one with such reverence that he says it's like a burning bush text. He says, the interpreter, that would be me. In this case, the interpreter should remove his shoes before he approaches a text like Psalm fifty one. That's how highly he held this psalm in regard, because it is profoundly human. The text is profoundly human in its candor about the human experience as profoundly human in its sobriety and in the the constant appeals for God's forgiveness. But it's also profoundly redemptive in its deep call and sense of hope. There's a deep awareness of the hope that we have from a God who loves to forgive. So Psalm fifty one teaches us that repentance is not merely the doorway to the Christian life. It's not merely the way that you get saved and then sing just as I am right afterwards. It's not merely a revival text, okay? It is actually a text for the whole of the Christian life.

You see, Psalm 51 gives us the movements of repentance and faith. It happens in three parts. Okay. Notice in verses one through six we have **confession**. We're meant to acknowledge our sin before the Lord. Secondly, in verses seven through twelve we have **cleansing**. We now

appeal to God to be cleansed, to be renewed, to be restored. And then thirdly, we have a **commitment**, a commitment in which we arise and commit ourselves to this changed life that God has given us. That's in verses thirteen through nineteen.

I want to argue here that these are not just kind of little parts of the Christian life. This is actually the main nutrients of the Christian life. When I argue this morning that much like nutrition itself, you know, this is a metaphor. Okay, bear with me. This is just a metaphor. But like nutrition itself, you know, when you want to have a healthy body, there's all kinds of things you can do to have a healthy body. You can take vitamins, you can take supplements in the morning, you can take fiber, you know, all of those things, right? That kind of help you out. And yet if you talk to a nutritionist, they will point out to you all of those things that you're taking. Those are micronutrients, right? They're micronutrients. Those are helpful, but that's not what you need to live. What do you need to live? You need the macronutrients, right? Not micronutrients. You need the macronutrients. And what are those as carbohydrates fat protein water. Right. These are the Macronutrients. I want to argue that Psalm fifty one is not just giving us the gateway. Like, how do you become a Christian? These are actually the macronutrients of the Christian life. Confession, cleansing and commitment. Okay. **Confession, cleansing and commitment.**

So let's start with **confession**. Biblical repentance involves freely and clearly speaking the truth about our desires, our plans and behavior before a God who loves to forgive. Every part of that sentence is important, okay? It is the free and clear confession of sin. Okay? It's not someone who's confessing sin under duress because you're a slave, and you have to confess just enough so that you don't get in trouble or. But you don't want to get in too much trouble. So you hold a little bit back. No. It's free, clear, open confession of sin. Not just about the thing that you did, but about your desires. Right. Because our desires are sinful. Your plans. Okay. The things that are running kind of like background applications in the back of your mind as you're planning for comfort and for security and for pleasure and for convenience, all those things that's going on in the back of your head that's also tainted, that's also perverted by sin. It's being open and free and clear about those things. Why? Because you're doing it to a God who loves to forgive. He loves to show mercy. As a matter of fact, he loves to show mercy so much that Paul will tell us in Romans, you will be tempted to think I should sin more, so that I can confess more sin, and he can show me more grace. And remember what Paul says, may it never be. He said, don't do it, but you'll be tempted to. Because he loves to show grace so much that you'll be tempted to sin more. He's like, yeah, don't. Don't do it. It's wrong. But that's how much your father loves to show you grace. So you can freely and openly talk about every single failure error of wrong thought misjudgment, just out and out evil. You can be as open about it as you like because God loves to forgive. Notice what David says have mercy upon me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. David appeals not to himself. There's nothing within him that deserves or esteems him to salvation. He appeals yet entirely to God. Your steadfast love, your abundant mercy. If you remember last week, Jim Alexander reminded us that steadfast love is this unshakable, unmovable love of God. And he's right, because it's founded in God's covenantal character that God has bound himself to us, and he's bound us to himself. And he has said,

when you come to me and ask for forgiveness, when you come in repentance, I am bound to give that forgiveness to you. So notice what David does. He doesn't come and say, Lord, please forgive me. I was in a tough spot. I was tired. You know, she was so attractive, right? He doesn't say that. You notice that there's no excuse. Because I deserve everything I'm getting and so much more. But I know you love to show mercy, so please have mercy. Let that be a part of your repentance, of your confession, of your sin. You are not coming to make an appeal for why you actually were not that bad. Okay. You're not coming to try to explain the extenuating circumstances. You want to quell that inner attorney within you who's arguing on your behalf within your own brain. You want to quell him. You want to push down, push him down and say, no, Lord, I deserve the judgment and so much more. As a matter of fact, if you look at those great prayers of repentance and you've heard me mention them before, right? All you got to remember is the number nine. Okay. Daniel nine, Ezra nine, Nehemiah nine. Okay. Those are all prayers of repentance on behalf of the people, both privately and collectively. And you'll notice they all say the same thing, Lord, we deserve what you've given us, and we deserve more than you've given us. But because of your steadfast love, because of your mercy, please have mercy upon us. That's the proper stance of repentance. This is the stance that we ought to have in all of life. True confession begins when we stop presenting our resumes of self righteousness to God. We do not come telling God that we deserve another chance. We don't come telling him how our case is different from the other guys. We don't come telling him we had so much that we had to overcome. I mean seriously, help us out. We don't come with that. We come and we say, Lord, have mercy because you love mercy. I know your character and I'm appealing to who you are, not to who I am. Now notice David gives us three words for sins here. He gives us the word transgressions, iniquity, and then sin again. It's good for us to remember this, because in the modern world, people have a hard time with this idea of sin. Okay, that word feels archaic. Okay, we'll talk about being offensive or offending. Okay. And that actually is a way of describing sin. But we don't really talk about sins so much, do we? But notice the Bible actually has five or six words that it uses to talk about this thing that we call sin. Okay, this first one is transgression, and this word transgression is talking about a kind of crossing of a border. So imagine someone saying, here's the border, don't go across it. And you step across it, right? You've transgressed that line. You've broken it, right? This shows up in our old version of the Lord's Prayer, where we say, forgive us our trespasses, right? This is kind of like transgression. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. They've they've broken the border. They've broken the line. Okay. That's one word for sin, because sin is that we are stepping across. God has set out his law, his character, what he desires. And we've said we don't care and we've stepped across it. That's a transgression. Okay. Notice he also says iniquities, okay? Iniquity is more something like a mark. All right, think about it. Kind of like a mark that you have put upon you so that. So that you everyone knows you're guilty. You did the thing. Okay. Uh, you know, I remember when I was a kid, I'm old enough to remember there was a time where teachers did actually do things like put a dunce hat on one of the kids in class if he was acting bad. Right. It was a mark. Okay. I don't think many. We don't do that at Briarwood Christian School, I don't think. Right. But you put a mark on him and say they did the wrong thing. Okay. I remember actually, one kid, uh, he he, uh, this is a this was back in the eighties. Okay. It's a long time ago. There was a fire alarm, and

one of the men in the class, one of the young boys in the class didn't go out in time, but he actually went the wrong way and was talking to his buddies and not paying attention. And so for the rest of the week, the teachers made him wear fire boots around school. right? Which, of course, if you knew this kid, it was to his great delight, because he now got to walk down the hallway stomping in these big rubber galoshes. And he loved all the attention that he got him, right? He was meant to shame him. It was meant to be an iniquity, right? A guilt mark. But it became for him something he celebrated. Okay. Right. It's that kind of thing. It's a it's the scarlet letter. You've been marked by the sin. So it's a crossing of a line. It's also a mark against you. And then this last word, the word sin that we use is translating a Hebrew word, which interestingly usually shows up with the verb to lift up or to bear, to lift up sin, or to bear sin, because that word sin is an English word, but it's translating this Hebrew word that that has something to do with weight. It's like a burden. Can you see how sin is also a burden to. It's a crossing of a line. It's an infection, it's a mark, but it's also like a burden. It's placed on your shoulders. David Will even says, I felt my bones being crushed underneath the burden. You see, sin affects us in multiple different ways. It's one thing, and yet it affects us in multiple different ways. Notice David is not looking to to soften the vocabulary. He doesn't say, well, we all make mistakes. My mistakes are ever before me. Oh Lord, look what he says. For I know my transgressions. I've crossed the barrier. My sin right? The weight is ever before me. We don't know exactly when this psalm was written. I wonder if this part is reflecting on what happened before he repented in front of Nathan. Is this during that time where maybe he still rationalizing to himself that he didn't commit a sin, that he's king and this is his right. And he can do all this. And why wouldn't Uriah just do what I told him to do? Right? Is this reflecting back on that time? And yet he's still under the burden of sin? Have you ever had that experience? When you're feeling the weight, you're feeling the mark. You're feeling the alienation from God because of unrepented sin. I want to encourage you in that you may there may be times you may even go through seasons. And it doesn't necessarily mean that this is the case. But if you're going through a difficult season in life, if you are feeling oppressed and separate and alien from God, it may mean you have unrepentant sin. It doesn't necessarily mean that, but it's a good thing to remember. That should be one of the things in our tool belt. As Christians, when we are feeling alienated from the love of God to say, Lord, is there a sin that you are drawing to my attention? I notice David also goes on to say, behold, look, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Now I want to be clear he's not blaming his mother for a sin, but what is he pointing out here? He's pointing out that this thing that happened with Bathsheba and Uriah is not an occasional experience. This is not just something that was a one off that he has to ask for forgiveness for. He's recognizing that ever since his conception in the womb, he has been directed towards disobedience and sin. See, David realizes that this is not an occasional problem of making bad choices, but rather it's because sin inhabits his heart. Later on, the prophet Jeremiah and Jeremiah seventeen nine will say this, and Paul will quote it in Romans the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Who can understand it? David realizes that his heart has always been bent on sin, and that's why the solution is not just trying to do better. The solution is a new heart. We do not merely need better circumstances. We don't need better habits. We don't just need better public relations. We need a doctrine of grace that reaches into our

innermost parts. You see, biblical confession says this, and it can say this because of our doctrine of grace. What I did is wrong. I did it, no one else. It was me. It was against God. It came from within me. And I have no excuse. But you can only pray that if you are praying it to a God who is filled with grace and loves to forgive. I want to be clear, even when you realize that that's the God you're praying for, saying those words that I just said are very difficult. For those of you who are married have experienced this. There's been times I know you know it. You can think back exactly to when the moment was when you're sitting there next to your spouse and you're like, I need to say, what I did was wrong. There was no excuse. Please forgive me. And when you go to say it, there is a thing. It's very much like a physical pain. It's a psychic pain, right? It's like pulling off a scab within your brain and heart. If you had that feeling. Okay, I say it. It's actually, in some ways the easiest thing in the world. You're just saying a thing. And yet there's a pain that comes with it because it's acknowledging the truth about who we are. But we can do that with the God who is gracious and loves to forgive. So that brings us to our next point, verse seven through twelve.

Let's take a look at the cleansing. We appeal to God's renewal for his. We appeal to his desire to give us new hearts to turn away from sin. Completes its action in the request for a clean heart from a God who loves to give clean hearts. So when we turn away from sin, we're not. Here's the sin. This is what I did. My plans, my desires, my behavior. I'm turning away from it. And I'm turning to what? New heart, cleanliness, wholeness, the spirit worship. Notice David does not stop with confession, but he calls for cleansing. He says, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. What is the hyssop? Well, the hyssop branch is a branch that had small twigs on it that would have many little kind of small leaves that really acted well as a brush. And this is why they were used in the sacraments of the Old Testament, including Passover. Remember, you could dip it into the blood, and then you could paint on your door and put the blood on your door for Passover. And it was a nice little sort of way of spreading out and distributing the blood for the sacrifice. So when David says, cleanse me with hyssop, what he's saying is, is he saying, make me ceremonially clean again? Make me acceptable in your sight. Wash me. He's remembering Moses commentary in the book of Deuteronomy, where he says, don't just be washed with water, but have your hearts washed. Don't just be circumcised in the flesh, but let your heart be circumcised. Don't just be clean on the outside, but be clean on the inside. You see, David realizes that he cannot clean himself. He can go to the temple, but that's not going to solve his problem. God needs to cleanse him. This, of course, is the great difference between biblical repentance and self-punishment. Self-punishment says, I will make myself suffer until I feel the pain that atones for what I did. This has been a temptation for one reason or another. A temptation. Throughout church history, people have. Have thought, if I just make myself suffer enough, I can atone for my sins. If I just whip myself enough, okay, I can make myself somehow atone for what I've done. Okay. If I just wear a bad enough hair shirt right in Birmingham heat so that it makes my body itch right, then I can suffer enough to atone for my sins. But you see, David would say, you don't understand what sin is if you think that you can atone for it. Whatever you do, making yourself suffer, that's just what you deserve. It's nothing added to you. We don't applaud the prisoner for spending time in jail. You did the thing you got. You got to be punished. You cannot atone for your own sins. Faith, biblical repentance says I cannot pay for my sins. I don't have it

within me to do so. But God has provided cleansing. David does not ask God to help him clean himself. He says, wash me. He's kind of lays back. He says, just wash me. I can't do it. I don't have it within myself. Notice, he goes on, he says, hide your face from my sins. Blot out my iniquities. That's the mark again. Okay. Hide your face from the burden. Blot out the mark. That's on me because of sin. And then he reaches the heart of the Psalm. Look at what he says here. This is the very core of the Psalm. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Notice this word. Create. It's the same language used in Genesis one to talk about both bringing substance out of nothingness and giving that substance a purpose. Okay. The earth is both made out of nothingness in Genesis one, but then is directed towards a purpose. Humanity is made out of nothing and then directed towards a purpose. The same thing is here. He's saying, give me a heart and then direct it. I can't do it myself. You have to do it for me. You see, true repentance wants more than a removal of the consequences of sin. It wants renewal. We can use this as a diagnostic for ourselves. Saving my marriage is a good thing. But if I want to save my marriage without renewal, then that's not biblical repentance. Okay. If I if I'm a leader and I want to protect or restore my reputation, that's a good thing. If I want to do that without a new heart, that's not biblical repentance. Okay. If a child wants to get out of the consequences of the thing. If an adult wants to avoid the consequences of their sin, that's fine, I understand. Okay. But if you want that without renewal of the heart, then that's not biblical repentance. Notice David wants both pardon and the purity. He wants both the pardon and he wants the purity. Look at what he says. Give me a new heart, Lord. Restore to me. Give me your spirit. Place your spirit within me that I might be made holy. But then, even more. Look what he longs for. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. I love this because I think sometimes in our circles in the reformed world, we can forget that the goal is always unto joy. Do you remember what our first question is in the Westminster Shorter Catechism? What is the chief end of man? I think we often want to say it's to glorify God, right? Period. End of the sentence. It's to glorify God. What? And enjoy him forever. That's why you exist human. You're like, what am I here for? You're singing that song. What am I here for? This is what you're here for. To glorify God and then to have great joy come out of it. We need to be careful about this because we have a strong doctrine of repentance within our circles. And yet our doctrine of repentance can be kind of morose in oppressive, and can feel sad and self-loathing. And like, I just walk around like I'm just a worm and I'm nothing. That's not biblical repentance. Biblical repentance says this. You have been restored. You have had the righteousness of Christ put upon you. You have been made clean. What we just sang about that sufficient merit. It's now mine. It was. It's his. I didn't earn it. It came to me from outside. It's alien. Jesus gives it to me, but now it's mine. And you get to rejoice in that fact. People who are known for repentance ought to be known as joyful people. People who have this kind of strange peacefulness about themselves. A wonderful peace, not a detached peacefulness, a truthful, honest peacefulness because they can actually speak clearly and openly about who they are and who God is because they've received forgiveness. You see, joy is the goal. David had a lot of causes for happiness. Notice even after his sin, nobody called him out for it. He still had a palace. He still had an army. He now had Bathsheba as his wife. He had a lot of causes for happiness. Let me just be clear about this. You don't need to be repentant to be happy. Okay. I've quoted before that book by the social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. It's called

The Happiness Hypothesis, one of his earlier books, he talks about people who report the most amount of happiness. In other words, they have little complaint about life. Okay. Like on a scale of one to ten, you know how many complaints? How happy are you? They mark like six through nine kind of thing. You know, people who are generally happy also report that they have an inner lawyer within them. Right. That inner attorney who's arguing their case. And the louder that inner attorney is, who's arguing their case, right, the happier they are. Okay. And we and we all have this to a certain extent, right? You know, when I do something wrong, I go, well, you got to understand my situation makes sense. You know, you got to understand the extenuating circumstances when somebody else does something wrong. I'm like, how could you do that, you idiot? Right. But when it's me, okay, I got the lawyer. He's on my side. He kind of whispers in my ear. He says, you're okay, you're okay. Don't worry about it. You know, he's telling me all that. Okay. The louder that voice is, says Jonathan Haidt, the happier people report to me. David had many causes for happiness. We're not talking about happiness. We're talking about joy. Joy is the deep mental, emotional, and spiritual state of satisfaction that comes from being reconciled to God and as a result, finding your proper place in the world. It is a mental, emotional, and spiritual state of satisfaction. Having found your place in God's economy and found reconciliation with him. Repentance is the great reveal of sin because sin promised you joy. It felt so good right before right as you were moving up to it. It seemed like it was going to give you the joy. But then it ended up with division, fragmentation, and alienation from God. Where do you actually find joy? It's not in the sin, but it's in the reconciliation with the God of the universe. He's the true source of joy. Ultimately, that joy is found in Jesus Christ. Now, let me just stand back for a moment and then we wrap up. David in this point in redemptive history, he does not know the name of Jesus Christ. He does not know about Nazareth. He doesn't know about Roman empires or Roman crosses. He just knows that God loves to forgive and that when he prays prayers like this one, God will forgive him. Nathan the prophet told him. And when David prayed, Lord, have mercy upon me. I've sinned. Nathan said, you are forgiven. The Lord loves to forgive, but he does not understand how the Lord forgives. He just knows that it's in his character to forgive. He knows that at some point in the future, there's going to be some fulfillment of the blessings of God so that all of the people may be forgiven. But he doesn't know the mechanics of forgiveness. And by the way, before we think, well, we're so much farther along than David. Let me just point this out to you. That's true about David. He did not know about Jesus. But now we can look back at Jesus. We can say, oh, I can see how it is. I can see how on the cross Jesus died, he took upon himself the judgment that I deserve and his righteousness, his reward was now put on me in this great imbalanced exchange that I benefit from, that my sin is on him, but his righteousness is on me. That's wonderful. Okay, I can now see how that happens in a way that David could only have anticipated he hoped for. And yet, let me point this out. We can say, and therefore I have new life. I have a new heart. Behold new creation, as Paul says. But I suspect there will come a time in the future when we will look back on moments like this and say, oh man, we had no idea what we were talking about when we said, I have new life. You'll look back and you'll say, how quaint and naive we were at Briarwood when we talked about being new creation in Christ, because we had no idea exactly all that that meant. It wasn't that we were wrong. We just had no idea. David's not wrong in saying, Lord have mercy upon me. Even though he doesn't know

about the person of Jesus, he knows that God loves to forgive. That's all he knows. I can say I'm new creation now, and yet I can. I can readily admit that I don't know exactly what that means. What's it going to be like to not be sinful? What's going to be like not to have a body that's dying? What's it going to be like? Not to be marred by worry or concern or anger or bitterness or jealousy or insecurity? What's that going to be like? I have no idea. I can't imagine a world that's like that. And yet one day I will. And I'll say, it's funny, we said all these things. We had no idea. You see, it's in Jesus that David's hope lies. And so as a result, we get to the third movement here.

We've had the confession, the cleansing, and we get to verses thirteen through nineteen. Commitment. We arise now to a changed life. The cleansed heart naturally sets itself on the worship of God. Notice, repentance does not end in tears. It doesn't end with self-loathing. It doesn't end with self-flagellation where you're whipping yourself to punish yourself. It doesn't end in that direction. Where does it end? It ends in a life that is committed to the worship of God. What does he say? I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. The man who taught others to sin, sending out those commanders, and then having them pull back so that Uriah would be killed. He is now committed to teaching repentance, teaching righteousness. He says, in effect, forgive me and restore me, and I will pass it on to others. You pray the same thing too. You'll be surprised if you read through the Psalms how often the psalmist makes deals with God. On. Okay. If you're suffering from a disease and you say, Lord, please heal me of this disease, and if you heal me, I'll tell everyone I can talk to about how you did. Okay. That's a that's a very biblical prayer. Here's the deal. If you say that, you better tell people about it when he heals you. Okay. When you say, Lord, have mercy upon me, restore me, give me a clean heart, wash me with hyssop so that I am clean before you. And he does it. You better go tell people about it. Okay. We should always remember that truthful saying I heard back when I was in college. But it's truthful as a Christian, when you're sharing the gospel, you're not coming with the air of superiority. You're coming truly as a beggar telling another beggar where to find food. It's true. That's all you're doing. You're not. It's not because you're better. It's not because they're stupid or they're idiots. Okay. You found the food and you're running back out to your fellow beggar saying I found it. Okay. go tell them. You see, David recognizes that grace comes first in obedience springs out of grace like a new sprout of life. Forgiven people become witnesses to forgiveness. They speak to other sinners, not from a position of superiority, but as recipients of grace. For David, that means worship where his sins had closed his mouth before. He says, Lord, open my mouth in grace. Open my mouth to declare your praise. And then he ends with this interesting point. I just want to draw our attention to this again. It just shows us again how the Old Testament relates to the new. He says, I could offer, if I could offer sacrifices to do this. If I could kill an animal to get forgiven, then I'd do it. But that actually doesn't forgive me for my sins. It doesn't work. Okay, but then notice what he says at the very end. It's actually kind of abrupt how he ends the Psalm, he says, but one day Jerusalem will be restored and there will be a sacrifice that's offered within it, and it will be acceptable. That's the day that I'm longing for. And by the way, this this undergirds the whole of the Old Testament system. David is not rejecting the mosaic covenant by saying you don't care about sacrifices. What he's saying is this what they always knew in the Old Testament, the logic doesn't work out. The animal cannot die for the sins of the human. I

can't kill a ram and have it protect me from my own sins. You see, the Old Testament sacrament of the sacrifices were always pointing forward to this appropriate, satisfying, atoning sacrifice that would be offered in Jerusalem one day. David talks about it right here. We see it in first Samuel, um fifteen, uh, with um, yeah, first Samuel fifteen. We're Samuel, or I'm having a back and forth and Samuel says, do you think the Lord really just cares about your empty sacrifices? Okay. We see it in Hosea chapter six where he says, you offered sacrifices, but what I really wanted was your hearts. Okay. The sacrifices are just pointing towards the one sacrifice that will actually atone for their sins. Just like our sacraments today. What they look back on the thing that saves us. The Lord's Supper doesn't save me. Baptism doesn't save me. What does it do? It points me back to the one that does save me. Okay, I proclaim his death until he comes again. You see, David knows that the Lord wants his repentance and his faith, the sacraments, those are just empowered by repentance and faith. Those are given their strength by repentance and faith. But one day there will be a sacrifice that will be acceptable to the Lord. You see, Psalm 51 gives us a path forward after failure. Confess your sin. Do not excuse it or rename it or rationalize it. Call for cleansing. Don't attempt to save or punish yourself and then commit yourself to a changed life. Do not confuse forgiveness with permission to remain unchanged. The Christian life is not the life of someone who never fails. It is the life of someone for whom God has repeatedly brought back. The perseverance of the saints is not our ability to hold ourselves together. It's God's faithfulness in preserving us, in confronting us, and in renewing us to repentance and restoring us through Christ. Now, some of you have sins in front of you right now. Some of you are feeling that burden when David talks about having the weight crushing down on him, okay? When he talks about feeling that weight over him, you say, I know exactly what that feels like. Psalm 51 gives us words to pray. Have mercy on me. Have mercy on me, Lord, wash me. Create in me a clean heart. Restore me to the joy of your salvation, your salvation for me. Restore me to that joy. The door back to God is not opened by denial, excuse, public performance, or self punishment. It is opened by the mercy of God in Christ.

Let's pray.