The Greatest Reason To Give Thanks

Psalm 51:1-3 *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

**Introduction**

- If your bible includes the superscript that explains the context of Psalm 51
  You will read these words before the Psalm begins:
    - *To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David,*
      - *when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.*
  - Can you imagine how humiliating it must have been for David when Nathan came to him that night?
    - No doubt David has hidden his secret for so long and so well that he has begun to think that he got away with his horrible atrocity.
    - By now things have begun to return to a semblance of normal
    - By now David is doing his best to forget the whole sordid affair and to put the past behind him.
    - There is no doubt in my mind that David had no idea where Nathan was going when the prophet launched into his story of the poor oppressed man who had his one little lamb stolen from him by his rich neighbor.
    - I have no doubt that it was genuine anger that was stirred within David as he rose up to his kingly stature and began to pronounce judgment on the selfish individual who would have the audacity to do such a thing.
  - But can you imagine, tonight, how shocked David must have been when the old prophet finally dropped the charade and pointed his bony finger in the face of the King and said, “David – you are the man!”
    - In just a moment, anger became guilt.
    - In just a moment kingly pride was swallowed by utter humility.
    - Can you just imagine if the worst thing that you ever did in your life,
      - that one thing that you were hoping was forever lost to time,
      - that one thing you were hoping that you had successfully concealed,
      - if all of a sudden you were confronted with the knowledge that someone knows the terrible thing that you did.
  - There is no doubt that it was a defining moment in the life of David.
    - It was a moment that he would never forget.
    - So many emotions, so many thoughts and feelings must have run through his mind in that moment.
On the one hand he must have been overwhelmed by the guilt and the shame, while on the other hand he must have felt an utter violation that unsettling feeling that his secret was out and in the open.

The thing that he had worked so hard to conceal was now known.

All of the effort to hide the thing,

- all of the scheming and planning,
- all of the sense of false security once the murder of Bathsheba’s husband was complete,
- the flood of relief when he was able to add her to his concubines and finally feel that he had fully concealed the matter.

All of it vanished in that instant.

All of a sudden he was forced to recognize that he couldn’t hide the truth any longer.

- Tonight, I must share with you the truth that David learned that night.
  - You can’t hide anything from God.
    - No matter how well you conceal a thing, there is always ONE who knows the truth.
  - He knows all things.
    - He knows the most secret things in your life.
  - You might hide it from everyone else, but you can’t hide it from him.
    - You might conceal a matter from your spouse.
    - You might conceal a matter from your parents.
    - You might successfully hide a thing and feel as if you got away with it.
      - You might think that the thing was securely concealed.
      - You may hope that it is ever forgotten.
    - But, mark my words, there is one who knows!
  - There is one who sees you when no one else will ever see you,
    - He knows what no one else will ever know,
    - And You can’t hide anything from him.
  - He knows the very thoughts and intentions of your heart.
    - Not even the utter darkness can conceal you from his all seeing eye.
    - He knows everything that there is to know about you.
    - You might have fooled everyone else but you haven’t fooled him!

- In that moment, when Nathan revealed the dreadful truth, David’s heart was smitten before the Lord.
  - There were two courses that he could have taken.
    - You might say that there were two roads that lay before him.
      - Both a blessing and a curse.
  - On the one hand he could have chosen to make excuses,
    - to try to continue to cover up,
    - to try to rationalize away his guilt.
• Or, on the other hand, he could throw himself at the mercy of God.

  • David, with reckless abandon, chose the latter.
    o He chose the blessing instead of the curse.
    o He chose the mercy and forgiveness of God instead of the wrath of God.

  • The words of Psalm 51 were born in David’s spirit on that night of nights when the charade of his innocence was torn from him.
    ▪ Out of the depths of sorrow,
    ▪ from a heart of repentance,
    ▪ the words to the Psalm flowed from David’s heart.

• He said, in Psalm 51:1:
  o Have mercy upon me, O God,
  o according to thy lovingkindness:
  o According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
  o Blot out my transgressions.

• Up to now David has tried to hide his sin, but now in the face of the revelation that he can no longer hide he turns to God for mercy.
  o Not only that but he finally realizes what he didn’t grasp at first:
    ▪ Only you, Lord, can blot out my transgressions.
      • I’ve tried but I can’t escape them!
      • I’ve tried but I can’t get away from them!

• He goes on to say, Psalm 51:2-3:
  o Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
  o And cleanse me from my sin.
  o For I acknowledge my transgressions:
    o And my sin is ever before me.

Ever Before Me
• In that final statement of verse 3, David is acknowledging the truth that defines his life:
  o My sin is ever before me!
  o That phrase “ever before me” conveys several powerful truths.

• Always before me.
  o First of all David’s sin would ALWAYS be before him.
    ▪ Even though he gets mercy from God.
    ▪ Even though his sins are blotted out by God
      • David lives under the law
        o and the sad but brutal truth is
        o that his sins will always,
        o for the rest of his days, be before him.
  o His only hope is the sin sacrifice,
    ▪ but the blood of bulls and goats can’t wash away sins!
      • His sins will always be rolled ahead for just one more year.
    ▪ The looming guilt is there, every year.
- The condemnation will be there every time he carries his sin sacrifice to the temple.
- Every time he selects a lamb he will be reminded of the dreadful thing that he has done.
  - He will always, for the rest of his life, bear the crushing guilt of those terrible tragic choices in his life.
  - It would be rolled ahead – but only for one year at a time
  - And every year David would have to face again the greatest failure of his life.

- **Always growing.**
  - Not only was David’s sin always before him, but the unfortunate truth is that his sin was always growing, his guilt was always increasing.
    - Each year, in David’s life, brought new failures,
      - new guilt that was added to the old guilt,
      - new transgressions that compounded the old transgressions.
  - David’s sin wasn’t just a static reality that was always before him,
    - it was a dynamic growing problem that was looming over his life.
      - Each year the guilt was greater and greater.
      - Each year his transgressions were more and more.
      - Each year he fell further and further short of the measure of God’s law.
  - He was guilty.
    - He would always be guilty.
      - His guilt was ever growing!
  - And the best he could hope for was to roll his sins ahead.
    - To take the ever-growing list of wrongs and faults and failure
      - The ever-growing evidence that demanded death under the rule of the law.
    - The best he could do was just to push his punishment off for one more year!

- **Always awaiting judgment.**
  - That’s the worst truth that is conveyed by the phrase “ever before me.”
    - Ultimately, judgment was waiting.
      - Even if David did everything right.
      - Even if David fulfilled the full letter of the law.
      - The best he could hope for was one more year!
  - He may roll his sins ahead but the truth was always there that he was only putting off the inevitable for another year.
    - Sooner or later there was a price had to be paid.
    - Sooner or later the He would have to answer for his sins!
    - Sooner or later the blood of Uriah would be placed fully and squarely on his hands.
David’s was a dreadful reality.
- Judgment was never satisfied, it was just rolled forward for one more year.
- But David lived under the heavy weight of the reality that you can put a thing off and put it off and put it off
  - but you are only prolonging the inevitable.
  - Sooner or later you have to answer for what you’ve done.
- Sooner or later the sin that is ever before him is going to demand accountability.
  - A price must be paid.
  - The account must be settled.
  - David keeps offsetting the penalty temporarily,
    - he keeps pushing it ahead one year at a time
  - But sooner or later he will have to face what he has done.

The Lamb of God
- That why it is so important that, on that wonderful day that John the Baptist stood there in the river Jordan
  - and lifted up his eyes to see Jesus coming down to the river
    - that he uttered some of the most powerful words in all of scripture.
    - In John 1:29, he lifted his voice and said:
      - Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
- Thank God for that precious blood that flowed down Calvary’s tree.
  - He was the lamb of God that came to TAKE AWAY the sins of the world!
    - He didn’t come to roll them forward.
      - He didn’t come to just temporarily pacify judgment.
  - He came to TAKE AWAY my sins!
    - He came to take away my guilt!
      - He came to remove that ever-present responsibility for sin!
    - He came to take away the ever-looming judgment for sin.
  - Thank God for the Lamb!
    - He bore the brunt of God’s wrath at Calvary,
      - he paid the price for my sins!
- He did more than just cover them.
  - He did more then just roll them ahead.
    - He brought forgiveness.
    - He brought remission.
    - He brought a blood covering that would forever cover sin.
  - He made the words of the Psalmist a reality:
David didn’t even understand what he was writing when he said, He cast my sins as far as the east is from the west!
  • Jesus made that a reality!
David didn’t even fully know the impact of what it meant when he wrote that our sins would never be remembered again.
  • But Jesus made that promise real.
  • He stood in my place.
  • He was more than just another lamb.
  • His blood was more than just the blood of bulls and goats.
  • He bore the wrath, he faced the judgment,
    o He was wounded for our transgressions,
      ▪ He was bruised for our iniquities:
      ▪ The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
      ▪ and with his stripes we are healed.
      ▪ The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
    o He didn’t just push judgment off for another year.
      ▪ He paid the price for my sins.
      ▪ He died for my iniquities.
        • And He established that they would never be remembered against me again!
• Do you want to know what I am most thankful for this thanksgiving?
  o Let me tell you what:
    o Romans 8:1 says:
      ▪ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.
    o The phrase “no condemnation” includes both the sentence and the execution of guilt!
• The greatest reason to give thanks is not that he healed my body.
  o Its not that he provided my needs.
  o Its not that I have a roof over my head and food on my table.
    ▪ The greatest reason to give thanks is that once I was lost,
      • once I was helplessly bound by my sins,
        o but Jesus Christ has set me free.
  o He paid the price.
    ▪ He bore the judgment for my sins.
    ▪ Both the sentence and the execution of the sentence have been fully satisfied at the cross!
• Let me tell you what I’m thankful for:
  o I’m thankful that the blood of Jesus has done for me what the blood of bulls and goats never did for David!
    ▪ I’m thankful that my sins are NOT ever before me.
    ▪ I’m thankful that I’m not left with that fearful looking forward to of the looming judgment of God.
I’m thankful that I know that He has already paid my price.
  • He has removed both the sentence and the execution of that sentence!
  • The price has been paid.

The Letter of the Law
  • Perhaps you think, like David did, that perhaps you can escape the judgment for your sins.
    o Perhaps you think that you can mitigate the wrong that you’ve done by doing right.
    • The legal definition of

• A few years ago I was on a hunting trip to White River Wildlife Refuge.
  o It was a limited draw permit hunt and, on opening morning I killed a nice little 8-point buck.
    • The deer was at a dead run when I shot him and the shot placement was not perfect.
    • I was shooting a 45/70 lever action rifle that uses a 405 grain soft nose bullet.
    • That big old hunk of lead that is about a half-inch wide and massive had struck a tree, just before it got to the deer.
    • The bullet had broken in two and one piece hit him in the brisket and the other hit him in the neck.
    • The neck shot was fatal but the result was a long tracking job and a recovery that involved me dragging that big-bodied deer nearly 2 miles back out of the swamp.
    • It was one of those atrocious opening days where the temperatures quickly climbed into the seventies.
    • And, by the time that I finally got the deer out of the woods and moved my dad to my stand, it had been several hours since I killed the buck and the meat was getting warm.
    • Too warm for my comfort.
    • So, when I got back to the truck I quickly got me a gambrel and a rope, hung the deer and started the process of skinning and quartering it in order to get the meat on ice and preserve the deer.
  o Now I was a little excited.
    • It was a nice deer.
    • It had been a long recovery and an even longer drag.
    • I was exhausted but was running on adrenaline and I forgot that the law – at that time – required that a deer be checked before it was quartered.
    • They changed it the next year, but they hadn’t changed it yet.
    • So I was nearly halfway done with the process when I realized that I had failed to check the deer.
To make a long story short I finished the job.
- Packed the deer in coolers.
- Iced it down.
- And drove to the check station to plead my case.
- When I got there a federal warden was manning the checkpoint and I told him what I had done.
- He quickly signed off on my license, making me legally checked and chided me about my lapse in protocol but sent me on down the road with this warning:
  - You better disappear because when the State Warden gets back, he’s liable to write you a ticket for this.
- I proceeded to try to disappear but it wasn’t just a few minutes when I looked in my rearview mirror and seen the state game warden’s truck bearing down on me.
- He wrote me a ticket under a law that was intended to stop poachers.
  - He wrote me a ticket under a law that was intended to provide the game warden the opportunity to ticket and individual that he caught with an unchecked deer that had been quartered for the purpose of concealing it.
- He wrote me a ticket for quartering a deer before it is checked, but he wrote me the ticket AFTER the deer was legally checked.
  - There was no way for him to prove his case unless I perjured myself.
- So, I made up my mind to fight the ticket in court.
  - The problem was that the night before the court date, the whole state was under the threat of a sever ice storm and the court was way off in south Arkansas.
  - So I called a Game Warden that I knew and told him my whole dilemma.
  - I explained the ticket and I explained why I felt that I had a good case to fight the ticket.
  - Basically what he told me was simple.
  - HE said, you are right, you were not guilty of the intent of the law, you were not guilty of the spirit of the law.
  - The law was intended for guys who tried to conceal a deer, not guys who drive up to the check station and make themselves known.
  - The law was never intended to catch you.
  - But the problem is that you were guilty of the letter of the law.
  - When you stand in that courthouse the judge is going to ask you one question.
  - Did you quarter the deer before you checked it?
  - The circumstances aren’t going to matter.
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

All of the reasoning about the spirit of the law is not going to matter.
- The only thing that matters is that you are going to look at him and say yes I did.
- And you will be found guilty under the letter of the law.
  - Now, before I move on, the warden did have sympathy on me.
  - I paid the fine in full, but he took the points off of my record.

- I told all of that to say this: In our court system the judge is bound to interpret the law by the letter of the law.
  - It matters little if your intentions were good,
  - it matters little if there were exceptional circumstances.
    - Guilt is not determined by the spirit of the law.
      - Guilt is determined by the letter of the law.
  - The truth is that, by the letter of the law we are all guilty,
    - We all have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God!

- 2 Corinthians 3:6
  - Says: for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

- The letter of the law kills.
  - The letter of the law is wrapped up in works.
  - It is based on what we can do.
  - It is based on our obedience to the law.
    - But, for everything that we can do
    - We can’t forgive ourselves.
    - We can’t remove our own guilt.
  - We will always be guilty under the letter of the law.
    - We will always deserve judgment!
      - Because the letter kills.

- But the spirit represents what only God can do.
  - The spirit sets us free.
    - The spirit sees not our guilt but it sees His innocence.
    - The spirit sees not our failings but His supreme sacrifice.
    - The spirit makes his blood the issue rather than our faults.
      - The Spirit gives life and that more abundantly!

Forgiveness
- The most terrible thing about sin is that the memory of it never leaves us.
  - I can’t tell you how many folks I’ve known that were forgiven of their sins but were never able to forgive themselves.
    - It is a spiritually debilitating thing to live where David lived.
    - To live in that place where you never fully get the victory over your past.
    - That place where past faults and past wrongs haunt you and hold you back.
    - That place where you are constantly reminded that you failed God.
• Let me tell you a secret tonight, God doesn’t want you to live in that place.
  o You have been forgiven.
    ▪ Your sins are under the blood of Jesus!
    ▪ Heaven will never remember them against you.
    ▪ Ever.
  o But now, the enemy, the accuser of the brethren,
    ▪ He makes it his business to bring those things up.
    ▪ He makes it his business to try to make you constantly aware of them.
  o If you struggle with guilt over past sins, if you struggle with forgiving yourself, its time to get the victory over that.

• Col 2:12–15
  o And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;
  o Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;
  o And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

• At the cross, God has, in a single stroke, whipped out the whole record of your offenses.
  o HE blotted out the handwriting of the ordinances that were against us.
  o Everything that hell accuses you of, everything that your enemy keeps dragging back up.
  o If its under the blood of Jesus, God doesn’t even remember it.
  o He has removed it from between you and him.
  o Here’s the wonderful truth, here’s the greatest reason to give thanks:
    ▪ The same nails that nailed Jesus to that cross, nailed the whole list of your offenses there as well.
    ▪ And they were covered in the same blood that cleanses your sins and washes away your iniquities.
  o Someone said that God can’t forget, but my Bible says that he chooses not to remember!
    ▪ Don’t let the guilt of past sin lord over your life.
    ▪ Don’t let your past dictate your future.
    ▪ What is under the blood is under the blood.
    ▪ If God forgets then so should we strive to forget.

Close
• R.A. Torrey wrote a book around the turn of the last century, in the year 1907.
  o In it he shared the story of a particular Sunday in the church that he pastored in Chicago.
    ▪ He said that, after service, a man lingered in the sanctuary.
    ▪ When he went to talk with the man, he immediately broke down and said:
• “I would like to be saved, but I have committed a sin for which there is no forgiveness.
• I remember my mother reading me in the Bible when I was a boy that those who committed this sin could not be saved.”

■ The preacher asked him what the sin was that he had committed.
• The man proceeded to whisper is wrong in the ear of the preacher.
■ Immediately the preacher turned to his bible and flipped to 1 Cor. 6:9–11.
• Reading it to the man he asked, is this the passage that your mother read?
• It reads this way: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

■ With sorrow the man said, “Yes, that is it.”
• Then he questioned the preacher:
  o “Does it not say that there is no salvation for those who do this sin?
  o Does it not say 'they shall not inherit the kingdom of God'?”
• The preacher simply responded by saying, “Listen, while I read the next verse...”
  o And such were some of you:
  o but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

■ All of a sudden, the man began to shout, “Does it say that? Does it say that?”
• The preacher hands him the Bible and says, read it for yourself!
■ With tears in his eyes the man reads the passage then runs to the altar and begins to repent for his sins,
  • with the newfound knowledge that once they are under the blood,
  o they will never be remembered against us again.