



COMPASSION

Small group questions

Psalm 51 - Compassion to blot out Transgressions

Leaders - if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer - please contact the preacher!

Read this Psalm aloud as a group.

1. What are some of the lies of the world you have heard regarding sin? Why do you think there is such an avoidance of the term 'sin' in the world and, sadly, even in some churches?
2. What were the events leading up to David composing this Psalm?

Prayer for Forgiveness - vv1-9

3. Why did David cry out for mercy? Why was his heart so heavy?
4. What are some things that are always on your mind? What was always on David's mind in this Psalm? Have you ever experienced something similar?
5. What is the root of all sin? Ultimately, who do we sin against?
6. David comes to the point of realising that he was sinful from the time his mother conceived him. How do you react when you hear this? How would your friend who isn't a Christian react to hearing this?
7. What is our BIG problem?
8. How is this problem solved for us?

Prayer of the Forgiven - vv10-17

9. What are the things that David ask God for in vv10-12? Why does he ask for them?
10. In response to God's great mercy shown to us in Jesus Christ, what should our prayers be?
11. What is David's response, in vv13-15, to the compassion shown to him?
12. In vv16-17, David writes that God doesn't delight in ritual or religiosity. What does God delight in? How is this different to the narrative that the world usually makes up about God?
13. Have you come to a deep realisation of your sin and come to God with a broken spirit? If you have, what brought you to this point?

Prayer for the Forgiven - vv18-19

14. Try to sum up these two final verses.
15. What should our prayer be, this side of the cross?
16. What will you take away from this second sermon in this series?

- Big Idea: God is a compassionate God who will forgive sins through Jesus.
- Aim: For people to totally rely on God's compassion and devote their lives, once again to Him.
 - Structure:
 - 1-9: Prayer for Forgiveness
 - 10-17: Prayer of the Forgiven
 - 18-19: Prayer for the Forgiven
- “Life is short, have an affair!”
- “Do whatever feels good!”
- “Love is Love!”
- “I did it my way!”
- “Follow your heart”
- These are the things that the world is saying at the moment.
- Just do whatever you want! No consequences!
- The concept of ‘sin’ isn’t even a category of thinking for those outside the church
- In fact, telling children about sin, is considered to be terrible in some circles. Even in some churches!
- As Christians, it’s tempting to have these views!
- It’s tempting to just slip into and out of Sin like it doesn’t matter.
 - Just like slipping in and out of the pool on a hot summers day

- And For King David, God's anointed, he gave in.
 - God's chosen King who was described as a man after God's own heart gave in.
 - Whilst her husband was at war, he slept with a lady called Bathsheba;
 - and then had her husband killed on the frontline of battle, in order to cover his dirty tracks.
 - David committed adultery and then murder.
 - So, God sent a prophet called Nathan to tell David what horrible things he had done
 - And David came to a deep repentance.
- This Psalm today was written by David, after Nathan had come to him
- And, we'll see that he didn't brush off his sin, or just laugh it off.
- No..
- In this Psalm, we see David taking his sin extremely seriously.

Prayer for Forgiveness // vv1-9

- The Psalm begins with a cry for mercy.
- David had a clear idea of what his sin meant. A separation from God himself.
- He took this with complete seriousness!
- He didn't want there to be anything that marred his relationship with God, so he begins:

'Have mercy on me, Oh God'
- But On what basis does David have to ask for mercy?

- Only because of God’s righteous love, his loving-kindness can David ask for mercy
- Only because of God’s great compassion for his people can David ask for mercy.
- And he asks God, not just to have mercy but to wipe out the record of his sin and to obliterate his sin from God’s memory.
- Look with me at V1:

*“Have mercy on me, Oh God,
According to your unfailing Love
According to your great compassion,
Blot out my transgressions”*

- Why does he do these things?
 - What brings him to this point?
- Well, he is deeply aware of his standing with God.
- He knows his sin and he knows his sinful nature
- He continues in V3:

*“For I know my Transgressions
and my sin is always before me”*

- Do you know what it’s like to have something always on your mind?
- That’s always at the forefront of your mind?
 - Maybe, it was a high school crush, having them always on your mind
 - Maybe it’s a child, grandchild, that just always occupies your thoughts,
 - OR

- Perhaps it's stress at work,
- maybe it's something that you have done or have said to someone
- It could even be an addiction that you crave that's just always in the back of your mind
- For David, his Sin was always on his mind! and he couldn't not notice it!
- He has a complete, deep awareness of his sins.

- But, why is sin so terrible? Why did it torment David so much?
 - Well when David sinned, it was against God
 - He turned his back on the creator of the universe;
 - and did what was evil in God's sight;
 - and it ends up in judgement
- When we sin, who do we sin against?
 - When we gossip, or
 - Tell a white lie, or
 - Really hurt someone...who are we sinning against? God.
 - We sin against God.

- In fact, the root of all sin, is an issue between us and God.
 - It's when we put ourselves first before God that we fall into sin and then
 - Rightly come under God's judgement
 - But this is something which we can't fix on our own.

- In V5, David reflects on why this is. And reflects on why he was what he was.
- He was this way because of his fallen nature.
- Look with me:
 - *“Surely, I was sinful at birth,
Sinful from the time my mother conceived me”*
 - Now it’s important to notice that David isn’t using this as an excuse.
 - This isn’t a case of David being, “born this way so he can do whatever he wants”
 - No, it’s a frank admission of the human, fallen nature.
 - From conception, we were sinful. Every human was and is and will be.
 - AND that isn’t good enough for God!
 - He desires faithfulness, even in the womb! V6
 - God’s righteousness, demands complete faithfulness.
- And if you’ve been listening, you may have noticed a problem here!
- A very BIG problem!
 - Firstly, we were sinful from conception and birth
 - Secondly, God desires faithfulness even in the womb.
- So if we are left on our own, we are left in a position of complete helplessness; under God’s judgement permanently!
 - Have you thought about this before? Have you thought about how it is to live a life without God’s compassion?
 - It’s like being left in the middle of an ocean with nothing,
 - It’s like jumping out of an airliner with no parachute
 - It’s like trying to space-walk without a space-suit

- This is the reality of life and eternity without the compassion of God!!
- BUT God hasn't left us in this position. David knew it.
 - He writes in V7:

*“Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow”*
- David throws himself on God's compassion shown in his grace.
 - He asks God to make him clean. To restore their relationship.
 - He asks God to wash him; to wash away the guilty stains, and God will make those stains whiter than snow.
 - David wants to hear words and songs of joyfulness and gladness rather than the sinful words that he uttered ringing in his ears.
 - Instead of a broken and crushed body under the judgement of God, he wants a restored body to be able to dance in joy before God.
- Not only that, but he never wants to return to his sin again.
 - He knows his sin and feels it deeply
 - He has given a gut-wrenching confession
 - He has asked for forgiveness
 - And now he prays as one who has been forgiven.
 - He never wants to return to his sin again.

Prayer of the Forgiven // vv10-17

- A few years ago, some members of the Calder family went to a restaurant
 - And the experience, well, wasn't great.
 - The food was overpriced and wasn't great,
 - The service wasn't fantastic
 - But what made this experience even worse was that 3 out of the 4 of them were all awake with food poisoning early the next morning.
 - In light of this experience, the first thoughts the next days wasn't
 - "Well that was fantastic! Let's go again!" BUT
 - "We will never go there again!!"
- Similarly, David never wants to go back to his sin again. For him to do so would be like a dog returning to its vomit.
- So he writes in V10
 - *"Create in me a pure heart oh God,
And renew a steadfast Spirit within me"*
 - He longs for a reborn heart because of his sinful nature,
 - He asks for a firm and established spirit rather than a broken one
 - He pleads with God not to leave him
 - And he wants to be joyful again.
- But these things can only happen by the grace of God.
 - When David asks for a new, recreated heart,

- This isn't a case of David saying, "I'm sorry, I'll try harder next time!"
 - But David is saying, "I'm so sorry. I can't live your way without your help"
 - Brothers and sisters, A joyful heart...a renewed life...a peaceful spirit....can only come...from...God...//
- And then, where does this grace lead to?
 - Well V13-15 shows that it leads to telling others about this great compassion!
 - David has been greatly saved so he wants to teach people.
 - And let people know about God's loving ways so that they would turn back to God!
 - Since God, his only hope, delivers him from his guilt, David wants to break out into song about God and who his is!
 - Whenever God opens his lips, whenever David speaks, he wants to speak in praise of his great saviour.
 - BUT how does David have this confidence? Where is his hope? it is strictly in the compassionate God and his character.
 - David's hope isn't in himself, or in his religious actions.
 - Because David knows that God doesn't care about the rituals or religiosity.
 - V16
 - *"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings"*
 - But there is something which God doesn't turn his face from.
 - He looks for the heart

- A spirit and heart that has been broken and bruised.
 - That has come to the great realisation of its sin
 - That has come to the realisation of the hopelessness of living without God
 - AND one which is willing to turn back to God and live his ways

- V17

*“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise”*

- The sacrifice of David, was his life. His heart.
- That’s what God wants.
 - Not good deeds,
 - Not ticking boxes,
 - BUT the heart.

Prayer for the Forgiven // vv18-19

- This psalm ends in what can seem as a really strange way to end a Psalm like this!
- But it’s a fantastic way to end the Psalm
 - David as King set the ‘tone’ of the religion of the Israelites.
 - For them, Jerusalem was the centre of their worship.
- So, David finishes with asking God to build up the place of worship.
 - To build it up and cause the worship of God to prosper,
 - for people to come under the compassion of God
 - For people to be able to worship God in fulness and truth

- AND THEN, what they do becomes pleasing to the God.
 - When people truly rest on God for their forgiveness, their worship becomes delightful to God.
 - Then, the sacrifices would all that God wanted them to be.
 - Look with me:

*“In your good pleasure make Zion prosper,
Build up the walls of Jerusalem,
Then there will be righteous sacrifices,
Whole burnt offerings to delight you;
Then bulls will be offered on your altar”*

- So David asks God to make this true worship of God, greater, larger and more faithful than ever before, why? Because of God’s compassion to forgive sins. To blot out transgressions

- And I want to ask you today, do you trust in God’s compassion? Do you trust in God’s mercy? Do you trust in God’s unfailing love?
 - Have you felt the burden of your sin?
 - Just like David, we need to come to a place, where we realise our helplessness without God.
 - Where we realise
 - The fact that there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.
 - That it’s against God, and God only that we have sinned.

- That we have done evil in his sight.
- That our sins deserve judgement from God.
- That, We were sinful at birth, sinful from the time our mother's conceived us
- That without God, we are utterly helpless.
- Do you feel this? You should!...I should! It's a heavy, heavy load to bare!
- BUT
 - Can you imagine the weight of our sin, and the sins of the whole world, resting on the bruised body of our Lord Jesus Christ?.....hanging on the tree....dying the death that we deserve....so that, with great confidence we can ask God for forgiveness and it will be given.
 - 1 Peter 2:24 says:

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”
- It's because of the Cross that we can ask God to cleanse us.
- It's because of the Cross that we can have utter confidence that we will be clean, and whiter than snow. That our guilty stains are completely washed away.
- It's because of the Cross that we can rejoice in gladness
- It's because of the Cross that we can have confidence that God will hide his face from our sins.....BECAUSE Jesus has taken them all on the cross....///

- And it's then, after realising our sin and asking God for forgiveness that we ask God to remake our heart. So that we will be more and more like him.
 - It's only by the grace of God that we can even begin to live like he wants us to live. To be reborn.
 - Whether it's a one off sin or something reoccurring, we should be asking God to cut these out of our lives, daily.
 - We should be praying for God to make us more and more like Jesus in all that we do
 - Not so that we can earn brownie points with him but because of our disdain for what we once were. And because it's what God deserves.
- And then, because of his great compassion;
 - we can't help but tell others about his compassion.
 - We can't help but sing about his love;
 - And we can't help but speak of God's great mercy shown to us in the Lord Jesus.
- Because, we know that there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves.
 - God doesn't delight in us trying to work our way up to heaven.
- BUT
 - He will accept a broken heart. A heart that doesn't trust in its own righteousness or good deeds.

- He won't turn his back on a person that realises their failure to live his ways
- He won't turn his back on a person that throws themselves completely on the compassion shown to them in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- But he will welcome them with open arms. Because he has blotted out their sins completely away.
- No sin is too big to be forgiven for God.
 - Because, no record of sin is kept for those who repent and truly believe the gospel.
 - The sins have been taken in the death of Jesus and destroyed in his resurrection.
- And so we ask God to build up his church.
- To bring in droves of people to hear about his great compassion and experience it in the body of Christ.
- So that many will come to worship him.
- If you haven't yet; or your relationship with God is feeling stale:
 - Come under God's compassion
 - Come to God with a broken heart
 - Cast the burden of your sins onto Jesus.
 - Live with God in a great relationship with him for eternity.
- Because he is a great, compassionate God who forgives all who turn and believe.