

RESTORE TO ME THE

JOY

OF THY SALVATION

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Charles Willis

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, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight,
So that You are justified when you speak
And blameless when You judge.

I KNOW MY TRANSGRESSIONS

Psalm 51 is noted as being *“A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba”*. No greater text in all of the Bible relates a more repentant attitude about sin, nor conveys a more proper attitude toward God. It is hoped through the study of this great Psalm we may all learn to better serve God and have a more correct attitude regarding our sin.

David begins by seeking God's grace, the only place a sinner can go for forgiveness. *“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions”*. Only God can forgive our sins. It is by His grace we are saved (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11) and by His grace we are forgiven (Titus 3:4-7). He was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 12). He pleads for grace according to God's love and compassion. This is what motivates all of God's forgiveness. He wanted to be washed completely and made clean of the guilt from his sin. David recognized the importance of God's grace and we must also.

The heart of this lesson is found in verses three and four: *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me”*. One of the qualities David possessed which the Lord liked was his personal honesty. When confronted with his sin, David immediately repented. He was quick to recognize his sin and work toward repentance. I believe this is why David was a man after God's own heart. In contrast, consider King Saul who, when confronted with his sin in not destroying the Amalakites, began to make excuses and put the blame on others (1 Samuel 15). We all need to develop the honest attitude of heart which David possessed in examining ourselves. The guilt of his sin was ever before him. He could not forget it or dismiss it.

While it could be argued that he sinned against Uriah, or Bathsheba, David says *“against You, You only I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight”* (Psalm 51:4). God is the one who has given the Law. This means He has defined righteousness and sin. It is God's law that is violated: *“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness”* (1 John 3:4). Whether we think something is evil or not does not really matter, if it is evil in God's sight then it is sin. David demonstrates a correct understanding of who determines we are guilty of sin and who we have offended by our sin. God, and God only is the one who will hold us accountable, thus: *“You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge”* (Psalm 51:4).

David was not so great and powerful as the King to prostrate himself and fast when he recognized his sin. He was not concerned about embarrassing himself before others, his only concern was in receiving God's grace and forgiveness. We all need the same attitudes which David possessed. We need to recognize our sin and understand the only place to turn is to God. He alone has been offended and He alone holds eternity in His hand.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. What is required to know our transgressions (Isaiah 1:3, 5:13; Hosea 4:6, 14)?
2. How does David's proper attitude avoid and prevent hypocrisy?
3. How is the joy of God's salvation impacted when we fail to have David's attitude?
4. How does Psalm 51:1-4 serve as an example of 2 Corinthians 7:9-11?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Examine the following passages and determine how we might deceive ourselves.
 - A. James 1:26
 - B. James 1:22
 - C. 1 Corinthians 15:33
 - D. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
 - E. Galatians 6:7
2. How do we prevent ourselves from being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13-14)?
3. In what ways will self deception impact the joy of God's salvation?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. David appears bold in seeking God's grace while admitting his sin. How does this compare with the Christian's attitude in seeking God's grace (Hebrews 4:16)?
2. Discuss how David's attitude should be evidenced in our life when someone comes to us pointing out our sin like Nathan came to him.
3. If we know our transgressions, discuss what choices we have and how those choices will impact the joy of God's salvation.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me away from Your presence
 And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
 And sustain me with a willing spirit.
 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART

David's prayer was for God to create something in him. He recognized his need for a new heart and attitude which was substantially different from his previous heart.

The word "create" is the Hebrew word "Bara" which is only used of God's creation, the change could only be brought about by God. It is used in a similar way in the Greek where Ephesians 2:10 says, *"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works"*.

David wanted to cast off the old and start anew. He emptied himself of his previous attitudes and desires and wanted to be filled by God. He recognized how empty he was without God. He strongly desires God in his life, and requests God's help. He has already said, *"purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow"* (v.7). Only God could bring about this purification and cleansing from sin. We see what David wrote, but must remember he had already prayed this and felt it in his heart.

"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. 18:31). This passage indicates we make ourselves a new heart whereas David is praying for God to create in him a clean heart. The process is the same for both, merely examining two different aspects. God is the one who forgives. He is the one who cleanses. He is the one who creates. Yet we must have a submissive willingness to possess that new heart. As David has already said, *"I know my transgressions"*. When we recognize our sinful state we are ready to undergo change. We must stop sinning if we want a new heart. The desire to obey must proceed God's forgiveness.

For David to have uttered this phrase while possessing no sense of godly sorrow would have been a mockery and hypocritical. It would have truly indicated a belief that if the right formulae of words are uttered, a person's soul will be made right. That is a pagan belief which is offered up to all of the idols. God demands all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Yet even today there are many who call themselves "Christian" who behave as if uttering a proper prayer, or reciting "The Lord's Prayer" will enable them to be clean - even when there has been no change of their will and no repentance. David's mind was wholly repentant and submissive to God, and this occurred immediately upon his being confronted with his sin.

A clean heart is what the repentant desires. The guilt of sin weighs heavily and cannot be removed without God's forgiveness. For this reason Psalm 51 has become renown as a prayer of repentance. It truly demonstrates a proper attitude of heart which we should all possess. This clean heart will no longer desire to pursue sin, but will retain pure thoughts and godly attitudes. David recognized how he was led to the point of his sin. We must each desire this clean heart, and desire it so strongly we will submit fully to God's will. Only then will we be able to please Him. Only then will God grant forgiveness.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. Compare the attitude of a clean heart in Psalm 51 with Psalm 24:4, Matthew 5:8 and Acts 15:9.
2. How do New Testament teachings about forgiveness agree with Old Testament teachings (for example: Isaiah 1:18 and 1 John 1:7)?
3. Galatians 6:15 speaks of the “new creation” which is in Jesus. How does God make us a new creation, how does He cleanse our heart?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. How does David’s desire for a clean heart agree with Old Testament rituals such as are found in Exodus 19:5, 10-11 and Numbers 8:7, 21?
2. Compare the new heart David speaks of with the Christian new birth and new life.
3. What will be the result if we fail to maintain a clean heart (Titus 1:15-16; 2 Peter 3:14; Romans 1:21, 28)?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how David’s outward physical life had changed and why he saw a need for help in changing inwardly.
2. For those who have been a Christian for a long time, but have since begun to live as the world, why is this statement of David so vital an attitude?
3. Discuss how quickly or slowly the “clean heart” happens.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

RENEW A STEADFAST SPIRIT WITHIN ME

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). Create what is not there and renew what is there, but which is very weak. The

Hebrew for “renew” literally means: to rebuild (Strong’s Concordance #2318). The concept of renewal is common in the new Covenant as well. Paul told the Ephesians to be *“renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (Eph. 4:23). David recognized his poor spiritual mind-set and strongly desired to see some internal changes take place. The desire for change and the love for God is what motivates renewal.

We are told, *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5). We are not saved by observing and keeping all the commandments of the Old Covenant, or even by keeping those in the New Covenant. Salvation is not something owed because of our obedience, it is something extended to us by God’s mercy and grace. It is applied to those who are washed (baptized) and renewed (made new through God’s forgiveness) which is accomplished through the Holy Spirit. The old man of sin dies in the grave of baptism and we rise to walk in newness of life - a life which is directed by the Holy Spirit who brought about the written word.

This agrees with Paul’s teaching in Romans 12:2 that we *“not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect”*. This re-training of our mind, this new way of thinking and operating in this life, has the effect of transforming us when it is applied. “Transformed” in the Greek is: *metamorphoo*. From this we get our English word *metamorphosis* which speaks of being changed from one state into another (as in the caterpillar to the butterfly). We are transformed (changed into a new creature) by the renewing of our mind. This is exactly what David was seeking in Psalm 51 and what we should be seeking.

Through this renewal we will be able to be *“steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (1 Cor. 15:58). The word “steadfast” (Ps. 51:10) in the Hebrew means: properly, to be erect (i.e. stand perpendicular); hence (causatively) to set up (Strong’s Concordance #3559). The King James translates this as “right”. We will not stumble or fall, but rather will remain upright and stable in our faith through renewal. Paul commends the Colossians for their *“good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ”* (Col. 2:5). Repeatedly Paul tells the Ephesians to “stand firm” in their faith (Eph. 6:10-14).

David’s plea before God is the attitude every believer should possess. We should strongly desire to see the feebleness of our faith replaced and made new and strong. We should pray for this and expect that God answers prayer. It is an attitude demanding submission and study. If we are unstable in our faith, or weak and wavering, our only prospect to become steadfast is to be renewed.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. Our renewal is according to what (Colossians 3:10-11)?
2. How frequently should we seek renewal (2 Corinthians 4:16)? How?
3. What benefit is there to being steadfast?
 - A. Hebrews 3:14
 - B. 1 Peter 5:9

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Explain the heart and spirit which God would put in the Israelites (Ezekiel 36:25-27).
2. How might we fall from steadfastness (2 Peter 3:17)?
3. What mind-set is necessary to be steadfast?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is it impossible for some to be renewed (Hebrews 6:6)?
2. Discuss the connection between the renewal of our mind and the will of God from Romans 12:2.
3. Discuss how a person is brought to a point where they realize a renewal is needed.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me away from Your presence
 And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
 And sustain me with a willing spirit.
 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

SUSTAIN ME WITH A WILLING SPIRIT

The King James has a very different rendering of verse 12, *"Uphold me with Thy free spirit"*. The word translated *"Thy"* is not found in the Hebrew. Many have missed the point of this verse due to the poor translation. While it may be a good and valid point that God upholds us (Psalm 54:5), that is not what David is saying in Psalm 51. He desired to remain consistent in his faith with a spirit that was willing.

"Sustain" (King James has *"Uphold"*) in the Hebrew means: to prop (literally or figuratively); reflexively, to lean upon or take hold of (Strong's #5564). He desires to be sustained in his faith, to see his faith remain constant. Recognizing the depth of his sin he has no desire to ever again fall away from faithfulness. The joy of God's salvation will only be realized when we are sustained in our spiritual relationship with Him. God has extended salvation to us, but gives us the choice. We must ever work to keep ourselves in His love (Jude 21).

It is not that God will freely sustain us (as is sometimes taught from this passage), but that David desired to have a heart that was *"free"* or *"willing"* to serve Him. His spirit (in the past) had not been willing to obey God. He had chosen to forsake God and follow the things his heart desired. He recognizes the problem in his heart and desires to see that change. He wants a heart that will not waver but be strong and committed to God. He wants to be free from the paths of sin. David expresses this same sentiment in Psalm 119:116-117 saying, *"sustain me according to Your word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope. Uphold me that I may be safe, that I may have regard for Your statutes continually"*.

You and I would probably think of this as a desire in our mind to have zeal in our heart. To have a burning desire that continually drives and motivates us to obedience. If this internal fire is lit and remains strong, the desires of the flesh and the lusts of the heart will be burned away. We will desire to please God more than we desire to sin. David saw this was his failing and would be his remedy. He does seek God's help, but implies he has already determined to choose to obey.

Do we have a willing spirit to do God's will? There are times when we feel it is a burden to obey the Lord. If we ever grudgingly obey, complaining of God's expectations, we need to beware for we have the kind of attitude that David wanted to change. No matter how difficult the task, we should desire to serve God voluntarily, willingly. Like the apostles, we should count it a joy to suffer for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41). A proper spirit that is willing to obey and be of service in God's kingdom is a spirit that will sustain us in the time of trial and temptation. We will see through the fog of appeal and recognize the terrible nature of the temptation which would have us turn away from God. We will instead strongly desire to serve Him in holiness and righteousness. This was David's appeal.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. What do the following passages reveal the proper Christian spirit should be?
 - A. 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - B. 1 John 5:3
 - C. James 4:8
 - D. Hebrews 10:22
 - E. 2 Corinthians 10:5
2. What prevents us from having a willing spirit?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Paul speaks of the “readiness” of the Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:12, 19, 9:2). What does this mean and how does it apply to this lesson?
2. What does a willing spirit have to do with Titus 2:14?
3. What must be developed or nurtured in order to have the attitude of the apostles in Acts 5:41? How does this relate to returning the joy of God’s salvation?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Matthew 26:41 records Jesus saying, “*the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*”. So what is the point of having a willing spirit like David desired? (See also Romans 7:14-25)
2. Compare Revelation 3:15 with Psalm 51:12. How are these two passages similar?
3. Why did this man go away grieving (Matthew 21:19, see also 1 Timothy 6:10)?

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

I WILL TEACH TRANSGRESSORS YOUR WAYS

David acknowledges what would happen if he refused to truly repent: *“Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me”* (Ps. 51:11). God never stops loving us, and He is ever willing to forgive; however, our sin causes us to be His enemy (James 4:4). We separate ourselves from God when we sin (Is. 59:2). David understood this chasm stood between he and God. He did not want God’s presence to be taken away from Him. We see in this that David is no longer drawing away from God and is instead drawing near. He feared what this life would be without God.

David gets to the source of his problem when he says, *“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation”* (Ps. 51:12). What was missing in his life was a godly joy. He did not rejoice in God’s salvation, and likely had not in some time. The focus of his life had been the pursuit of his own lusts. Contemplation of God’s will and drawing near to God were not his first priority. Because he did not rejoice in God’s salvation he sought joy somewhere else. This is a common road of misdirection which many travel rather than recognizing joy is only found in the Lord. Restoration was needed.

Restoration only comes from God when He forgives. David wanted God to create the steadfast spirit within him (Ps. 51:10) and is similarly asking God to restore his joy. When we know we are in a right relationship with God there is joy in our heart. Each day we are able to find joy in God’s salvation providing stability in our life. No matter what troubles face us each day, they can be overcome because of God. Problems will not beat us down to the point we forsake God, for our joy remains in His salvation. When we find ourselves in the valley of sin, we should long to return to the summit of a joyous relationship with God.

“Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You” (Ps. 51:13). David surely recognized that he was not in a position to be the one to teach others about God. He desired to be used that way, but saw he must first be restored. He needed to work on his heart before speaking to others. Yet, when he did receive the blessing of God, his plan was to teach and convert others. He would not be a “convert” who did little or nothing. He wanted to be busy and useful doing all he could to help others. Every congregation of the Lord’s church needs this attitude. It is typical to have a handful at each congregation with this attitude, and a majority who do not. It is difficult for us to imagine what could be accomplished if everyone possessed this “working” attitude of David. He would teach them by his example and words. There would be reason for others to listen to David because his heart will have been restored sustained and renewed. His good example will provide opportunities to teach others, and he confidently states sinners will be converted to God.

David gives us a good model for returning to God, with proper attitudes in a proper sequence. If we will follow this inspired model, we also can possess the joy of God’s salvation.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. How are Christians taught to draw near to God (James 4:8-10)?
2. David's desire for a restoration was strong. How do these passages describe what should be a similar attitude in Christians?
 - A. 1 Peter 1:14-15
 - B. 1 Peter 4:1-2
 - C. 2 Corinthians 7:10-12
3. When our joy in God's salvation has diminished, where do we tend to turn for some joy?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Describe the "joy of Thy salvation" which David desired and which we should possess. Be sure to define "joy".
2. How does the teaching of Matthew 7:3-5 carry over David's thoughts to the New Covenant?
3. How will our behavior effect our ability to teach sinners and convert people (Phil. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:16; James 5:19-20)?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Describe what life would be like without God? Why should we say with David, "*do not cast me away from Your presence*"?
2. What does the New Testament teach about a Christian's joy and how does this compare with what David sought?
 - A. 1 Peter 1:3-6; Romans 5:1-5
 - B. 1 Peter 4:1-2
 - C. 1 Peter 4:12-13
3. Considering Psalm 51 as a model for restoration, how does this model compare with Acts 8:22-24?

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me away from Your presence
 And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
 And sustain me with a willing spirit.
 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

OPEN MY LIPS, THAT MY MOUTH MAY DECLARE YOUR

The open lips to praise God will only come after the spirit has been renewed and the joy of God's salvation has been restored. No man will declare His praise who does not first obey God to the extent his soul has been saved. Belief and repentance will always precede declarations of praise. David could not praise God for pardon until pardon had been extended.

David's lips had been shut by his own sin. Matthew Henry states: "Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God." It is interesting to note that David, the harpist and writer of many Psalms, had lips which were shut. No praises were being given to Jehovah at this point in his life. Such a low point and a change from his typical demeanor.

The return of joy in God's salvation would result in an opening of his lips. The praise of God would flow naturally from his mouth. *"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness"* (Ps. 51:14). We see David's understanding of the change in his relationship because of his sin. His guilt was before his eyes and he stood condemned before God. Only God could deliver from this guilt. The good use of his mouth will return with the joy of God's salvation. He will again *"sing"* (v.14) and *"declare"* (v.15) praises to God. His prayers would be offered again. See in this his determination and commitment to confess to others of God's goodness, grace and mercy.

We innately understand what David is saying for we are all sinners. We have felt the guilt of sin. When in that valley of lost faith, we barely can express ourselves or comment on our spiritual state. We are at a loss for words of what to say to God or others because of our own guilt. Our sin hovers in our mind as a fog that blinds our speech. When on the summit of strong faith, our spirit soars with sentiments of praise and thanksgiving to God. The summits are where our lips are able to strongly declare the praise of God. Words of praise rise quickly and frequently to our lips, at times with little thought for it is natural and correct. When strong in our faith we are able to be used of God for great good.

We learn in this that God is able to take the most despicable, unrighteous sinner and bring them to a point of usefulness in His kingdom. We are not able to sin to such a degree that God is not willing to forgive when we repent. The vilest offenses can be forgiven in the blood of Jesus. Consider as an example of this how David lived faithful after this sin, yet went on to do great things for God. Paul and Peter also prove this point. May our lips evermore praise Him for His goodness, forgiveness and holiness for He has done great things for each of us in providing the means of our salvation! May we open our lips to declare His praise.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. What is the purpose of guilt? (see 2 Corinthians 7:8-11)
2. How does sin tend to close our lips?
3. What words of praise should we utter because of our salvation? (Give a few examples)

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. How do the following passages demonstrate praising God follows His salvation and renewal?
 - A. Exodus 15:1-2
 - B. Exodus 18:9-12
 - C. Isaiah 38:9-20
 - D. Isaiah 57:18-19
 - E. Luke 1:59-64
 - F. Luke 2:28-32
 - G. Luke 18:35-42
 - H. Acts 3:6-8
2. Are we to praise God for any other reason? (see James 5:13 and any other passages)

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how David's sentiment in verse 14 agrees with the instructions to Simon in Acts 8:22-23.
2. Discuss the relationship between the joy of God's salvation and our sharing the gospel with others.
3. Relate one or two personal stories of how God forgave and used a person for great good in His Kingdom (like Paul or Peter).

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART... YOU WILL NOT DE-

David fully understood how to please God, even if he had not been doing so for some period of time. God did *“not delight in sacrifice”* and was not pleased *“with burnt offering”* (Ps. 51:16). God had required both as part of the Covenant Law. Nevertheless, *“the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit”*

(Ps. 51:17).

David’s language is remarkably similar to what Samuel told King Saul, *“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22-23). Obedience is absolutely necessary, but it must be obedience from the heart. His delight is not in the actual burnt offering, it is in the heart of the one who is repenting and so offering the sacrifice; the one who has the broken spirit. God has not changed, nor has His attitudes. The Law has changed, yet even Jesus tells us, *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). It is not the works that men do in obedience that pleases God, but the heart of man that chooses to worship Him in obedience.

This “broken spirit” is a sacrifice to God (Ps. 51:17). David had wandered far away from God. As he examined his own heart he found it to have grown hard and uncaring about God’s Law. When his sin was pointed out by the prophet Nathan, his heart was broken. Much like the spirit of the wild horse must be broken before it can become useful in service, so man’s “wild” heart must be broken. The heart must soften to submit to God’s will. Therefore David says, *“A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise”* (Ps. 51:17). The broken heart is drawing near to God, and He has said He will draw near to us (James 4:8).

God does not overlook or abandon us, even when we chose to live in sin. He sees when our heart grows soft. *“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Ps. 34:18). He longs to save us. Salvation will only be possible when we see our sin, admit our sin and repent of our sin. That’s our part. God is the one who then saves us. He saves those who have the proper heart and submit to His will. God despises our sin, and He does not shine His face upon those who refuse to repent. He will not despise those who have the broken and contrite heart.

Charles Spurgeon aptly writes, *“A heart crushed is a fragrant heart”* (Treasury of David, Ps. 51:17). It is a sacrifice that comes up to God as a sweet-smelling incense. Only when we possess the broken heart can we then be of service to Him. This is problematic for those who have been Christians for several decades as they must continually work to maintain a broken spirit. The dangers of pride, arrogance, and confidence in his salvation surely contributed to David’s fall. Praise God for His patience, His love, His grace and mercy. May our sacrifices truly be those of the broken spirit.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. How do we please God in this new covenant (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3; Eph. 6:6)?
2. What is meant by the Lord opening Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14)?
3. What is meant by "the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8)?
4. How are we a "Christian who is one inwardly" (Romans 2:28)?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Tell how the following passages contrast the heart which pleases God and the heart which does not.

1. Romans 2:5
2. Matthew 22:37
3. Romans 6:17
4. 1 Peter 1:22-23
5. Romans 1:21
6. Acts 7:51

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Describe how James 4:4-6 is a parallel to David's statement in Psalm 51:16-17.
2. How do we get this "broken spirit" of which David speaks?
 - A. Acts 17:30-31
 - B. Romans 2:4
 - C. 2 Peter 3:9
 - D. Acts 2:37-38
 - E. Luke 13:3
3. Understanding David's sentiment, how do we apply this to our worship (Eph. 5:19; Matt. 15:8)?

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me away from Your presence
 And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
 And sustain me with a willing spirit.
 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

SPIRITUAL BOREDOM

The joy of God's salvation is sometimes missing in the lives of "Christians". They do not feel as if they have sinned, but are just bored to spiritual death. In truth these have sinned but are not aware of their negligence and omission.

They possess the same attitude as the Israelites in the time of Malachi when they said of worship, *"My, how tiresome it is"* (Mal. 1:13). They possess the same attitude which is condemned in the Christians from Laodicea who were *"lukewarm"* and in need of repentance (Rev. 3:16).

Consider the High School boy who was all excited about being on the football team. He initially worked hard and was enthusiastic just at being a part of the team. After a few games it became obvious he was not a "player" and was typically standing on the sideline. He began to feel disappointment at not being included and truly felt unneeded. His efforts became minimal and his concern vanished. To no one's surprise, this young man eventually quit the team.

In many ways spiritual boredom is a result of similar feelings and leads to the same result. Every Christian needs to feel as if they are contributing and are a necessary part. It is hard to grow bored when involved. Sadly, many Christians (babes and "mature") do not involve themselves. Because they do not feel needed they believe they will not be missed at assemblies or classes or other activities with the brethren. What's worse is when "the faithful" do not miss them, and/or do not let them know. The feeling of being unnecessary is confirmed and propagated. If this is all there is to being a Christian, why remain?

Everyone does better when there is a challenge. Certainly football coaches are known for putting goals and challenges before their teams. We see the same in Nehemiah's challenge to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, or in several of the Kings of Judah who worked to remove idols from the land. The spiritual goal gives direction and purpose to our lives. Without this everyone would grow spiritually bored. Perhaps the challenge can be adopted by the congregation, but realistically we need individual goals. Many would do well to challenge themselves to speak to others about the gospel. The intention may have been there for a while, now comes the doing. It is difficult to be spiritually bored when talking to others about the love of God!

Spiritual boredom is just one step away from apostasy. It is a dangerous state in which to live. Certainly a hard heart leads to this state, and repentance is needed to create the new heart of which David speaks. Like David, I fear many assume their salvation because of past efforts. Nevertheless, when David "came to himself", he saw how far from God he really was. Some folks need to come to their senses. Some folks need to recognize how much more spiritual growth is needed. Some folks need to make goals. Everyone needs to get busy and be involved in doing service in the Kingdom. There is plenty of work to do. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 7:21).

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. What is the danger in thinking of ourselves at a safe spiritual plateau (1 Corinthians 10:12)? How does this relate to spiritual boredom?
2. What is God's expectation of our involvement in the Kingdom?
 - A. Romans 12:4-8
 - B. Hebrews 12:15
 - C. Ephesians 4:11-16
 - D. Hebrews 10:24-25
 - E. Hebrews 10:35-39
 - F. Hebrews 3:12-13

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Questions Regarding 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

1. How are the weaker members of the body necessary (v. 22)?
2. How do we give more abundant honor to that member which lacked (v. 24)?
3. In showing the same care for each other (v. 25), how do we help prevent spiritual boredom in ourselves and other saints?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the importance of involvement for new converts in a congregation. Include views about the convert and the existing members.
2. How might spiritual boredom lead to an acceptance of religious error?
3. Discuss the importance of spiritual goals both as individuals and as a congregation.

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Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.*

BEING EXCITED ABOUT CHURCH

David speaks of the joy of God's salvation that leads to his teaching others. He speaks of going from a weak and perhaps dead faith, to a strong and active faith. This is a change from being bored spiritually to being excited about spiritual things. They are total opposites. Please note there is nothing in between, for the lukewarm believer is condemned (Rev. 3:16).

I have known plenty who were spiritually bored, but also those who were excited about the Church and spiritual things. These stand out in my mind as being strong in faith and committed. How did they get to be this way? It was not a result of happy circumstances which led to their mature faith and excitement. It surely was a decided process and goal in their life. Is that the way it is with you? Is your goal to be a faithful and strong Christian? Then you must "practice" your faith (Hebrews 5:14).

Practice is a well known concept to everyone, especially in the fields of music and athletics. All good teachers know that it is not practice that makes perfect, it is perfect practice which makes perfect. If the team practices all week long and performs the play sloppily and lazily, it will most likely fail in the game. The musician who allows himself to practice the passage with a mistake will likely perform the mistake. It is no different for the Christian. If we "practice" our faith in a lazy, haphazard way we will likely fail to grow mature. There will be no excitement about the future for we see nothing but failure on the horizon - much like inept musicians and bad ball teams. If you want to be excited about church and spiritual things, then you must be constantly immersed in study and application of the word of God. Only then will you be able to "practice" your faith.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). A constant diet on the "bread of life" will challenge us to be faithful. Mature faith comes through greater knowledge of the Word and stricter application in our own life. As we work to give up our will to conform to God's, we must ever examine ourselves. How can a person who is intently studying become spiritually bored? Instead they will become engrossed with the application of scripture. They will long to learn more of the word so as to apply it better.

Too often people are not excited about church because they feel as if the same thing is done every time they attend an assembly. They feel as if the prayers say the same things. The singing all sounds alike. What they crave is variety, yet they are unwilling to study the Word which has great variety for our learning. Their focus is on the wrong thing. Spiritual excitement comes from personal application. When you know you are in a right relationship with God and understand His will for your life, you will strongly desire to share it with others. That excitement bubbles up from the inside to spill out onto those around us. In this way we edify our brethren and teach those who are lost. What is your excitement level about spiritual things? Be like David and let your joy return so that you will teach others.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. From 2 Peter 1:4-11 please explain the meaning of ‘practicing your faith’. What application is in the text?
2. Compare and contrast the spiritually bored and the spiritually excited.
3. Define the word “zeal” as used in the New Testament.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

What English words are used to describe the effort Christians are to make in service to God?

1. 2 Peter 3:14
2. Titus 3:13-14
3. Ephesians 4:3
4. Galatians 2:10
5. 2 Timothy 4:9, 21; 2 Timothy 1:17
6. Hebrews 4:11

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Describe the relationship between Bible reading and spiritual excitement.
2. What dangers exist for believers who accept mediocrity in their application of Scripture?
3. How does being a good “workman” relate to being able to convert others (2 Tim. 2:15)?

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 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

HEART WORSHIP

Asa was Judah's third king. He did good and right in the sight of the Lord. He faced a critical moment in the 36th year of his reign. Baasha, King of Israel, came against his nation with an army. What would he do? Would he trust God or would he seek the help of other nations? Asa decided to take silver and gold from the treasuries of the temple and use them to pay tribute to Ben-hadad, king of Aram, asking him to go against Israel. This alliance worked for Asa, and Baasha stopped his aggression. Hanani the prophet came to see Asa and rebuked him for foolishly trusting in a man instead of God. 2 Chronicles 16:9 records, *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His"*.

This is the heart of the matter. God is looking for loyalty and commitment – for a heart that He can work with and strengthen because it is completely His. We live in a world that emphasizes externals. People are interested in who you are and what you like, where you live and what you wear. People are preoccupied with degrees, business cards, achievements, positions and honor. It's easy to live this way. God doesn't look at our credentials or accomplishments. He is unimpressed with our property, cars, clothes or degrees. He wants us to be like David who could set aside ALL his credentials (as King) and say: *"Search me, O Lord, and my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. See if there be some wicked way in me. Lead me in the way of life everlasting"* (Psalm 129:23-24).

The reason people move away from the Lord and into sin is because their heart is not right with God. There may be a real desire to continue to serve God, but the attitude of allowing participation in some sin may also exist. This was the attitude of the Israelites in desiring to serve Jehovah and the idols at the same time. They were always condemned for this attitude of heart. Some may possess this heart which destroys the soul. They are led into hypocritical behavior and speech. We can deceive men, but *"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Sam. 16:7). The reason people lose their zeal and do not enjoy worshipping God is because they have not paid close attention to their heart. They have moved more toward doing their righteousness to be seen of men, an attitude which results in having *"no reward with your Father who is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:1).

What is needed is a heart that longs for and desires to worship God. Serving Him from the heart (which is the only one to truly serve Him) will result in satisfaction and fulfillment. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the *"true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers"* (John 4:23). God desires and expects our heart (our spirit) to be engaged in worship. If we fail to worship from the heart, Jesus indicates it is not true and we are not true. We cannot please God without heart worship. It is only when the heart is involved that we will find joy in God's salvation.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. Read 1 Kings 11:4-11. Tell what was wrong with Solomon's heart and how he got to that position. What is the danger for us?
2. What does Jesus say is the greatest commandment of the Old Law (Mark 12:30-34)? How will the adoption of this commandment aid in our return to finding joy in God's salvation?
3. What does the Bible refer to when the word "heart" is used?
 - A. 1 John 3:21
 - B. Mark 2:8
 - C. 1 Peter 2:22
 - D. 2 Corinthians 9:7

THINK ON THESE THINGS

*What do each of these passages teach us
about where our heart should be?*

1. Luke 16:15; Galatians 1:10
2. Matthew 6:24; 12:30
3. Proverbs 21:1 right in own eyes
4. Matthew 6:19-21

FOR DISCUSSION

*Discuss how the heart must be involved in each aspect of
worship. Consider also the results if our heart is not involved.*

1. Praying / Leading a Public Prayer
2. Singing
3. Partaking of Lord's Supper
4. Giving of our Means
5. Studying the Word / Hearing a Sermon

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 Do not cast me away from Your presence
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 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
 And sinners will be converted to You.

REGAINING ZEAL

As discussed in lesson 9 there is a need to move from spiritual boredom to spiritual excitement. The English word 'zeal' means "fervour in advancing a cause or in rendering service"

(*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, p.1273). "In classical Greek usage, *zelos*, denoted the capacity or state of passionate committal to a person or cause" (*Wycliff Bible Dictionary*, p.1835). Clearly the word zeal is related to being a person of commitment and service. I am impressed with the thought in David's Psalm 51 that when the joy of God's salvation returns, he would be a zealous believer.

A person's perspective about "church" must undergo a change. "Going to church" (as a phrase) carries the connotation that we are observers, much like "going to a concert". "Going to church" is not a Bible phrase, nor is it a Bible concept. God wants participants in His Kingdom. Yet many still want to "go to church" and not participate. Just being present is not enough, the heart must be involved in worship and our service should not be limited to the assembly of the saints!

Additionally, we must come to see that "I" am the "Church". It is not "the Church's" responsibility, it is "my responsibility". I must become the servant of God. I am His workman, His tool, and should be expected to be used. No longer will my perspective be that "someone" needs to take care of a job; rather, I am that "someone". I will be the volunteer. I will be the one God can count on. I will learn to shoulder the responsibility. I will grow into the job. I will be the one to say "let me try".

At first this attitude of 'doing' is thought of as being the end result of zeal. It is not. It is the beginning place of zeal. No one will ever grow to become a great baseball hitter who does not first step up to the plate and face a fast ball. Only by placing ourselves in the position of doing will we ever become a person who does. Those who seem to do so much really are just people who have determined they will try. Frequently they do well because they have learned through effort that they can be successful, even at tasks they thought were beyond them. Being zealous is about our desire and our efforts in the Kingdom of God (2 Cor. 7:11).

God expects our service, so much so that we are told to not grow weary in doing good (2 Thess. 3:13). Zeal is contagious. So is growing weary. When we become actively involved we have a deeper interest in what is going on. This is true in any avenue in life, but especially in our service to God. The more we serve, the stronger our zeal becomes. The more we put ourselves into our service, the more we will desire to be deeply involved. God wants us to be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. How is a zealous attitude lost?
2. How do we develop a desire to serve?
3. How does Matthew 7:21 apply to the topic of regaining zeal?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

1. Compare the attitude of a man who wants someone to tell him what to do and the man who finds a place to be of service.
2. Read Ephesians 4:11-16
 - A. What was “for the work of service” (v.12)?
 - B. How does one become “a mature man”?
 - C. How is the body held together (v.16)?
 - D. Describe how “each part” serves and builds up.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss how Hebrews 10:23-25 speaks to the zeal we each should possess.
2. What should be our attitude toward gifts (1 Cor. 14:12) and service?
3. Can zeal be wrong? How? (Rom. 10:1-3)

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THE APPEAL OF BIBLE STUDY

If we are to have joy in God's salvation, there must be an appeal for us to study from the Bible. If we understand the Bible is the only authority for our belief, conduct and worship, we must realize how important it is to know what it says. Jesus tells us, *"just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoke to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"* (John 15:9-11). If we want the return of joy found in God's salvation, we must know if we are keeping His commandments. This requires a knowledge of the Bible.

To many folks, Bible study is (at best) a drudgery. It is a necessary task, like mowing the lawn. For many, it is not a joy and there is nothing pleasant in the concept of study. How sad. To have in our possession the complete revealed word of God, the same message which the prophets of old longed to possess and understand. We can hold in our hand the same knowledge which the apostles possessed (Eph. 3:10), a knowledge for which many in the first century longed. Yet in many homes, Bibles collect dust, serve as a paperweight, are left in the car as a convenience, and are simply left places and lost because an importance is not associated with the written word. The appeal of Bible study is missing, and for this reason many today do not study their Bible. In many ways we have returned to the mind-set of the Israelites who were destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). It is not for lack of availability, but for lack of interest.

The Berean's were praised for examining scripture to see if the things Paul taught were true (Acts 17:30). The text tells us *"they received the word with great eagerness"*. Their attitude toward study must have also exhibited an eagerness and desire to learn. This is an attitude which we must adopt if we desire to fully find joy in God's salvation. I suspect many of us have felt some of this eagerness when a "new" truth is presented to us. Our desire to know motivates us to dig deeply into the word. When the truth to be learned is more familiar, or when we are trying to know more details for comprehension, we tend to be not as eager to study. Nevertheless, the appeal should be the same.

The man who is blessed finds his delight *"in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night"* (Psalm 1:2). Psalm 119 indicates the law *"is my meditation all the day... I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation"* (v.97,99). Jesus also indicates we are to study the word when He said, *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"* (Matt. 7:7). Like the Psalmist, we have *"inherited Your testimonies forever; for they are the joy of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever; even to the end"* (Psalm 119: 111-112). A proper attitude toward Bible study will greatly help in our finding joy in God's salvation, and the joy in God's salvation will create in us an appeal to study the Bible.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. Define “study” as used in 2 Timothy 2:15 in the King James translation.
2. Why are people drawn to God (John 6:44-45)? (see also Romans 6:17) What do we learn from this about our need to study?
3. What are we to study and for what purpose (2 Timothy 3:16)?
4. What appeal for study is found in John 8:32? (See also John 7:17; Eph. 5:17; Eph. 3:10)

THINK ON THESE THINGS

*The appeal of Bible study is found
in what way or area?*

1. Isaiah 34:16
2. 1 Timothy 4:13
3. 2 Peter 1:15; 3:18
4. Psalm 119:104
5. Psalm 119:160
6. Matthew 4:4
7. Romans 10:17
8. 2 Timothy 3:15
9. Proverbs 23:23

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the meaning of Ezra 7:10 in regards to Bible study.
2. Discuss behaviors observed or heard in public assemblies which indicate a lack of reverence for God’s word. How would this attitude be demonstrated in private?
3. What about this study has been appealing and why have you gone over this outline?

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 And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
 Do not cast me away from Your presence
 And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
 Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation
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 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
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BREAKING OUT OF THE RUT

Through this series of lessons we have examined in detail the great psalm of David, a psalm of repentance. It marks a definite turning point in his life. He had allowed himself to move away from God, to think sinful things and even commit sin. David was in a rut and getting out of that rut took some drastic measures seen in God's sending of Nathan the prophet, but also in David's attitudes expressed in the Psalm. Like David we must recognize where our service to God is lacking and drastically make changes in our heart and behavior. Only in this way can we break the habits of sin.

For many, the rut is an indifferent and lukewarm attitude toward serving God. They think a half-hearted devotion is better than no devotion. They have convinced themselves they are doing God's will and are righteous when they partially obey. They have actually only soothed their conscience. They do "enough" righteousness to keep them from feeling guilt. They seldom participate in real service to God. At best, they believe attendance to a worship assembly is "service" and is "all that is required". Many do not even attend all the assemblies, instead choosing to offer God what they perceive as being the "bare minimum" or the "required" to fulfill their "duty". This mind-set is spiritually devastating! To whatever extent we find ourselves in possession of this thinking, we need to wake up. We need to be awakened, perhaps in an embarrassing way, as David was. We must see the **need** for drastic changes. God has never accepted anything but complete devotion from His people.

When the Laodiceans were in their rut of being lukewarm, they were instructed to "*be zealous and repent*" (Rev. 3:19). They needed to make a drastic change in order to please God. Remember, this was a congregation of believers whom God loved. He said, "*those whom I love, I reprove and discipline*" (Rev. 3:19). We see His love for David in waking him from his spiritual coma. Spiritual service can and does degenerate into a rut of sinful behavior and attitudes unless we remain awake, watchful and diligent. Certainly constant examination is needed, but when we find ourselves guilty of sin we need drastic change.

We have engaged in this extended study of repentance because many do not know they are in a rut of spiritual service which displeases God. Some do not know how to break out of the rut. David serves as perhaps the best example for us to follow, yet he is not alone. Scripture has many examples of people who had to make drastic changes to please God, especially in the nation of Israel in their need to put away idols, destroying the high places, and killing idolatrous priests in their midst. These were drastic measures, yet even after doing these things people returned to the rut of idolatrous worship. They made external changes, but did not work on their heart. They did not adopt the principles which David states in Psalm 51. As fellow saints in Christ let us encourage one another to live righteously and serve the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength. Nothing less will please Him. Anything less is in fact a spiritual rut from which we need to break out!

EXAMINE YOURSELF

APPLICATIONS

1. What need should motivate us to break out of the rut of sin (Is. 1:18-20)? How do we learn to see this need?
2. How does Scripture describe those living in a rut of comatose spiritual service (Heb. 5:11-6:1; Eph. 4:14-15)?
3. How is this mind-set described in Isaiah 29:13-14 (also Matt. 15:8 and Mark 7:6)?
4. How does Jesus describe the life-altering, drastic change associated with repentance (Matt. 3:8)? (see also Acts 26:20)?

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Relate what drastic, life-changing measures were taken to break out of their rut.

1. Luke 19:2-10
2. Ezra 10:3, 10-14
3. Acts 19:18-20
4. Acts 9:1-31
5. 1 Kings 15:11-15

FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do we break out of a rut of sinful lukewarmness? (Dan. 1:8; Psalm 51)
2. Discuss how a congregation of zealous people will behave in their service toward God (the “ideal” congregation). Compare this service with your service and our congregation.
3. How has the study of Psalm 51 impacted your understanding and your service?