



How can a believer contend with the greatness of his remaining sin? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Psalm 51:1–8 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that because the cause of forgiveness is found entirely in God and not at all in us, we are freed to admit fully the extent of our sinfulness, because there is sufficient cleansing from Him in Christ to bring us all the way through to limitless joy!

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 • Read Psalm 51:1–8

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom is the Psalm addressed (superscript)? Who wrote it? On what occasion? What does it first ask (v1a)? According to what (v1b)? What is his second request (v1d)? According to what (v1c)? What is his third (v2a)? Fourth (v2b)? What does he see is a circumstantial condition for this (v3)? Against Whom was his sin (v4a)? Whose sight determines what is evil and judges what David did (v4b)? What would God have been just and blameless to do (v4c–d)? When did David's sin begin (v5)? What sort of truth does God desire (v6a)? Who gives it (v6b)? What does David need to have done before he can have inner truth (v7)? What effect will this have (v8)?

So often in Scripture, David is a sign (a type) that God has given us to point us forward to Jesus (the Antitype). This might cause us to wonder why the Lord would let him fall into such great sin. Among other things, it's a strong warning to us and a lesson to the growing Christ (cf. Luk 2:52) about how badly we needed His perfect righteousness and full atonement. But it's also a lesson for us in how to interact with God when we have sinned greatly.

The more we grow, the more we realize the magnitude of every single sin. But even those who have made some progress in grace are susceptible to committing the most scandalous and heinous of sin. What can we do, when we see the magnitude of our sin? This Psalm brings home to us what it is like to address our great sin by way of God's greater grace.

The Pervasiveness of Our Sin: Forgiveness Comes from God Alone

It seems obvious that forgiveness comes from God alone. Only God has the authority to forgive sin. But this is more than that. The *origin and cause* of forgiveness is in God alone. What can David plead? What reasoning can he give God for forgiving him? The reasons aren't in David. They're in God. God's covenanted/steadfast love ("lovingkindness," v1b). God's "multitude" of "tender mercies" (v1c). What's in David aren't reasons for him to be forgiven—only reasons that he needs forgiveness: "transgressions" (v1d), "iniquity" (v2a), and "sin" (v2b). We're tempted to come with some good thing from us (how sincere we are this time, how sorry we are, how much better we're doing or will do, etc.). But these all need their own atoning. We must come on the basis of what's good in God, not what we want to think is good in us.

This connects back to Psalm 50. God isn't rightly worshiped by receiving what He needs (He needs nothing!). He is rightly worshiped by giving us what we need. And we need nothing more than forgiveness! It glorifies His character to forgive us, and we can come armed with His character. When He commands a saint to pursue sanctification, He says, "be what you are!" And when we ask Him to forgive us according to His love and mercy, we are in a sense praying, "Be what You are!"

The Nature and Reality of Our Sin: Sin Is against God Alone

In v3a "acknowledge" translates a word that is often relational. Taken with v3b, the sense seems to be not that David is admitting sin so much that David is reporting how intimately acquainted he is with it. It's not an aberration that appears every once in a while. It's a constant companion, ingrained in his experience, something "besetting" and "indwelling" that is left over from his nature in the first Adam. "Always before me" uses a preposition that means "opposite" or "toward" or "corresponding to." It's the experience of the apostle in Rom 7:13–24.

Do you know what/Who else is always with you? God. The Creator and Sustainer of all things. The One Who has bound Himself to His people by covenant. Has David sinned against others? His sins against Bathsheba, Uriah, Joab, the army, and the entire nation have been great. But not by comparison to how constantly and intensely his sin is against God (v4). When you know you've wronged someone, and they say something about it, you acknowledge their justness in doing so. How much more, when God says something to us about our sin (vv4c–d)!

And this isn't just with reference to the last day. Every time Scripture convicts us, or providence confronts us (even through the mouth of another), our hearts ought to admit before God His own justness accusing us (even, sometimes, when others are falsely accusing us).

The Origin of Our Sin: Our Original Nature

Rather than arguing "it's not my fault that God made me this way," David's reasoning in v5 is "this must be my fault, because sinful is what I was from the start, and how I have conducted myself ever since." How desperately we need to recover "this is how I am" as admission of guilt rather than some sort of vindicating excuse! God's righteousness demands righteousness from the heart (v6a), and when God grows someone in righteousness, He initiates that work in the heart (v6b).

The Solution to Our Sin: God's Cleansing

"Hyssop" in v7 is not announcing some herbal remedy for sin, but reminding us of the branch dipped in the blood of the lamb (cf. Ex 12:22, Heb 11:28). Despite attempted commentary to the contrary, it's not the most physically effective way of applying cleaning fluid.

But God's atonement is perfectly effective for removing guilt (v7)! The removal of all sin, the removal of all guilt, turns what we had made an occasion of greatest grief into what God has made an occasion of greatest joy and gladness and rejoicing!

What do you contribute to your forgiveness? Why is your sin so bad? Where does it come from? How does it end up being a bringer of the greatest gladness?

Sample prayer: Lord, we bless Your Name for Your glorious steadfast love and mercy! Glorify Your grace by bringing us near through the sprinkled blood of the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ. We are always before You, and our sin is always before us, so we look to You not only to take away our guilt but to produce in us Your righteousness. You would have been right to condemn us, but instead You have cleansed us in Christ. So, make us to come before You with that joy and gladness and rejoicing that is in Him alone, AMEN!!

Suggested songs: ARP51A "God, Be Merciful to Me" or TPH51C "God, Be Merciful to Me"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Psalm 51 versus 1 through 8. These are God's words to the chief musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba have mercy upon me O God, according to your loving kindness, According to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin for I acknowledge my transgressions.

And my sin is always, before me against you, you only have, I sinned and done this evil in your sight that you may be found. Just when you speak and blameless, when you judge Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin, my mother conceived. Me. Behold you desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part you will make me to know.

Wisdom purge me with this and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me here. Joy and gladness that the bones. You have broken may rejoice so far the reading of God's inspired and dinar and tort. So, one of the things that we often see in the scripture, or in the Psalms in particular, is David as a type of Christ, David does being betrayed by Christ David loving, the Lord, with all his heart.

Although of course, we know David is imperfect, but as an image of Christ, David a king, like Christ David, a prophet who writes Psalms like Christ and so forth. So he's often a picture to us of Christ, but one of the things that the Lord Jesus remember, he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God.

And with man as a human and one of the things that he would see in the Psalms as he saw this picture of himself, the promised King was how much we needed his atonement and his righteousness. So when he comes and he prays and sings something like Psalm 51, he doesn't have any sin of his own but he sees how pervasive and that our sin is and how offensive to God, our sin is and how it belongs to our original nature, not to his but to ours and how badly, we need full cleansing from it.

And that this is the purpose for which he came. It's an amazing thing to think about God. The Son having taking to himself a nature that requires him to learn. So one of the wonderful things when we come to a Psalm like this is thinking about holy Lord Jesus as a boy and praying and reading and hearing taught and singing Psalm 51.

And in all of his holy purpose and submission and obedience being determined to offer the cleansing and knowing the greatness of the wrath that was upon us and resolving that he would endure it in our place, understanding rightly, the point of sacrifice and the fire and the sacrifice and the spilling of the blood in the sacrifice.

And what that would require of him and not resisting or refusing. But even though he would shrink from the horror of what would come upon him as we see him, even as a grown man in the garden saying, if at all possible and knowing that it wasn't possible, but expressing the reality of the suffering, the seriousness of the suffering, we must never let the, the fact of the divinity of Christ deceive us into thinking that it was easy for him to bear what he bore for our sake.

No, it was a great and manly and unimaginably intense suffering that he willingly went through resolutely went through for us. And that's one of the things that we get from a passage like this But the other thing is that it shows us how a sinner like David repents and what it looks like when the spirit gives real repentance, How should we come to God when we have sinned, when He's, and when his spirit has exposed our sin by, our consciences, being instructed, by the scripture and the Holy Spirit teaching us from the Bible that we have sinned.

And what our sin is, what does it look like to interact with God? And there are those four things that I already mentioned to some extent here that inform how you come to God, when you have sinned and you come to him, not trying to gloss over your sin is no big deal but recognizing the fullness of what it is because God has already recognized it.

It's no use to pretend with God that we are better than we are. You might be able to deceive your parents. You might be able someday to deceive your spouse. You certainly are able to a great extent to deceive yourself, which is one of the reasons why we need passages like this.

But you can't deceive God, and so that frees us and compels us to come fully clean with him because he is the one who's provided for us. A salvation that can fully cleanse and does fully cleanse even such sinners as we are. And that's why it's marvelous to be able to come to him and recognize these four things, the pervasiveness of our sin.

That forgiveness can come not at all from us. It's sin, is everywhere in us and we need the forgiveness to come not in response to something in us but in response or have as its source. Something in God, the nature, and reality of our sin, that our sin is an attack upon and rebellion against and hatred toward God himself.

It's not just a little mistake but an assault upon the throne of glory, The origin of our sin that the sin comes from our original nature. It comes from us, there is a sense in which you as a believer you would say. That's not me because there's the new me in Christ, but it definitely comes from.

What was you and you are you are culpable for it and you are fighting against not just a series of mistakes but what is left over from your former self and you are engaged in combat with your foremost, former self. So it comes from who we are or maybe who we have been and are less and less continuing to be as we more and more are being our new self in Christ.

You can think back to our sanctification lesson and then the solution to our sin God's own cleansing which actually suffice us for this combat with against and cleansing from. Even such sin is this. So first, our the pervasiveness of our sin forgiveness comes from God alone. Now, that seems obvious only God, has the authority to forgive sin, but what we mean?

Or what I mean, when I say, forgiveness comes from God, alone means that there's nothing in us that convinces, God to forgive us, everything that convinces God to forgive us is in him. So verse 1 have mercy upon me O God, according to and the tendency of our flesh is to say according to how sorry I feel this time since I feel so sorry.

Lord, I can be forgiven now. No, you don't feel, sorry enough. The sariest you've ever felt isn't? Sorry enough because we're sinful even about how sorry we feel. So according to your love and kindness, Have mercy upon me O God, according to the multitude of my new good intentions and how well I'm going to do this time.

That's how we feel. Sometimes O, Lord, just forgive me this one, you know, we're like Pharaoh. Forgive me. This once give me this once and I'll do so much better from now on. Oh God. You'll be so glad that you forgave me, you know, we're like that with other people, but we mustn't be like that with God.

And it's not according to anything in us, it's according to something in him have mercy upon me O God according to your loving kindness according to the multitude of your tender mercies, okay? Since the reason for forgiving us is in God, we can never run out of the reason.

For forgiving us justification is an act of God's free grace and even sanctification is a work of God's free. Grass wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Blot out my transgression. So what do we bring to the table for our forgiveness transgressions iniquity and sin?

Very similar. When you say blessed is the man who at the beginning of Psalm 32, and you say, all right, let's find out what we bring to the table for blessing and it's the for the transgressions and iniquity and sin of which we need to be forgiven, which we need to not have counted against us.

That's what a sinner brings to the table. You have nothing. Good to bring to God. To convince him to forgive you. The only thing you bring are the things of which you need forgiveness and such as the greatness of the grace of our God that he has in him, the pleasure to forgive sinners.

It connects us back to Psalm 50, you know, in a sense. Remember last week in Psalm 50, we noticed that God doesn't need anything. We don't do him. Any favors in worship when we come to worship, whether it's a bull, and a goat, or a song in the prayer.

When we come to worship whether it's a bull and a goat, or a song, and a prayer. What we? What we bring is what he commands. Not because he needs it but because we are needy and same here. Not so much talking about worship, but not talking about forgiveness.

We come with our neediness. We come with the forget with the sin that needs forgiving and then we admit the not just that the only cause we have for forgiveness is in God and not in us but that the greatness of our sin is not what it has done to others but what it is against God?

He says for I acknowledge my transgressions, he's not really saying. I admit the word that's being translated acknowledge. Here is no and it's not just no information about. It's I have a friendship with or a relationship with. I'm not, maybe friendship isn't a good word, but he knows his and he's intimately acquainted with his sin.

He sees it with him all the time. For, I know my transgressions, my sin is always, before me. Now, the fact that he knows his transgressions and as soon as always before him is a problem. If he's keeping the first commandment to any extent at all, isn't it?

Because the first commandment teaches us to know God, and to realize that we are always before him. And so here he's always before God, but his sin is always before him, God is holy and cannot tolerate the smallest or the smallest moment of sin cannot be in his presence.

God is just he's righteous and he cannot tolerate the smallest amount of sin without punishing it. And so it has David sending into others. When he says against you, you only, I have sinned and done this evil in your sight. Well, yes, he's sinned against Bathsheba a lot, he's sinned against Uriah Bathsheba's husband, a lot.

He sinned against the military that he was supposed to be out leading and that he gave commands that compromised, their ability to win in order to get Uriah killed a lot. He sinned against Joab, the commander whom he gave an order that would actually put more than just Uriah in jeopardy.

It's obviously if you if you're losing one of your best men, that by itself is not a good thing and Uriah was one of the mighty men, but even the maneuver that was necessary to get him killed wasn't. So, David sinned against lots of people sinned against the whole kingdom, hasn't he?

And yet because his sin is always before him, because he's intimately acquainted with it. He realizes that everything. He does that. A sinful is an offense against the holiness of the God and the justice of the God before. Whom he lives his whole life, you are always before the face of God.

And as you realize how continual your sin is and how offensive it is, the one of the works that the Holy Spirit does for you as you grow in the knowledge of God and understanding of your sin. And its remaining sinfulness is how offensive it is to God. Every once in a while, I still say or do something to one of you children or to mom that immediately, the realization of how offensive and hurtful that was it strikes?

Me very wayly, but the longer I have walked with the Lord and the longer I have known him and the longer, I have known my sinfulness. The more I have known my sinfulness, the more I've had a similar, not what it should be, but a similar or analogous experience of it with him.

That's what David is having here. His realizing that, as, as immensely as he has sinned against others, it is as nothing compared to the greatness of the offense against the God, who is always with him, the God who is perfectly? Holy the God, who is invariably righteous. And just in his judgments, The nature, and reality of our sin, it is against God to such an extent that that you can rightly say.

Even when you've sinned against many others against you, You only have I have sinned that you may be found, just when you speak and blameless when you judge, when you know you've wronged someone and they say something about it. You don't get upset about upset at them for saying it.

Do you think or even sometimes you say you're exactly right to have called me out on that? Well, that's exactly how we should be with God. Whenever he exposes, our sin should watch against any reflex in our hearts, to resist the Scripture exposing or pointing out our sin and know that all mouths will be stopped at the judgment.

And so let us learn to have our mouths stopped and not make excuses for sin. Now, in, in our life. And so the pervasiveness of our sin, there's nothing good in us upon, which we could ask for forgiveness. All the goodness upon, which to ask for, forgiveness isn't God.

The nature of our sin, the reality of our sin, that it is so constantly and infinitely against God, that when he declares his infinite wrath against everyone, every tiny sin, we will acknowledge that justness of that. And then a third place, the origin of our sin. Where did the sin come from?

The devil made me do it or you know I don't know what got into me. Well, what got into you? Is you the you that has always been you and that if God has given you His spirit and his salvation, the old you that you now are battling against, but still a you that has been sentenced to death and that you are now called to continuously inflict that sentence until he's gone.

And that you see David admitting he's not he's not saying behold I was brought forth in iniquity and then sin, my mother conceived me like throwing up his ensign. Well, God made me this way, right? The fact that we are like this from our nature, is something that is guilty before God.

I am the guilty offspring of a guilty father and God is right to damn me, not just for the sin that came out. But for the sinner that I am in the first Adam from which that sin came out, right? So we live in a culture especially with, you know, homosexuality or adultery.

But even with things like, you know, having a quick temper or being a liar or always coveting from the heart. And well, God made me this way. I'm broken and they use the word here you are broken but it's not an innocent brokenness. The fact that you're broken doesn't take away from that.

It's an offense against God. You're very being that you got from. Adam is an offense against God. It's not an excuse just because you can understand how you came to commit. A sin doesn't make your sin, understand a bull in the sense of excusable. Okay. So we live in a church culture right now that gets this one wrong a ton but you can see in Psalm 51.

That that's not what David is saying. Is he He's admitting guilt before God when he says, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin, my mother conceived me, which by the way, is a wonderful argument against abortion, isn't it? Because clumps of cells are not guilty before God, sinners are guilty before God.

And this is why Jesus had to become not just a baby outside. The womb of fully formed developed baby. He had to become an embryo. Why? Because I was a sinful embryo and I needed my sin forgiven as an embryo, because as an embryo, that descended from Adam and so the last atom had to become an embryo.

So he might be a righteous embryo and that when he atone for our sin and took it away, there was also the corresponding righteousness that is counted for us by faith. And so, you know, I was that way, you can't say, God made me that way. You say, God righteously punished my first father.

Adam by visiting, his sin upon me. Because I was represented in and praise God, that he righteously rewards my new federal head. Jesus. The last Adam by making me a righteous creature in him that I am a new creature. A new man and I'm battling against the old man.

So when we talk about the origin of our sin and that this belongs to the nature that we came into this world with and that it comes from our brokenness. So Kay to have the idea of brokenness but because of how badly the language is used a generally recommend against using the language of brokenness because so many people in the churches are abusing it and taking away the culpability of sin.

That's one of the ways that in the homosexuality discussion, and you'll even have people, who after they are, converted will refer to themselves as homosexual. Christian or gay Christian, which is an abomination because the version of themselves that was bound to sin, is the one that is executed, that has the death sentence and is now dying and their new self.

Cannot be defined or described that way. Much better for them to say. I am a heterosexual in Christ, who is executing that homo that died when I believed in Jesus, except for you're not supposed to use the word homo, in our, in our culture, but you get the idea for the purposes of drawing the distinction.

You know, thank God. We're not in the PCA anymore, but the argument over this is still raging in the PCA and you can pray for that church that in the historical family of churches as a close cousin of ours. So the origin of arts in our original nature. And then finally of course the solution to our said if the cause of the forgiveness is entirely in God.

If there's only sin in us, in the sin comes because who we were apart from grace is entirely from from ourselves and sin is entirely sinful. Then the solution. Justin is God's cleansing. God wants truth. Not just and what we do. Sorry, this belongs to the, you know, sin being not just actions but also nature.

He wants truth, not just in what we do, but what we are. And so he'll give cleansing, not just in what we do button, what we are, Behold, you desire, truth in the inward parts, not just better behavior, but a new person from which the behavior comes a new heart from which the behavior comes and praise God.

He gives the new heart So you see that transition in verse 6 from behold you desire truth in the inward parts to and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom. So he gives that, which he requires purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean and just like the morons who you take Ezekiel's judgment recipe and make Ezekiel bread, you know, commentators will come up with, you know, what a wonderful cleansing ancient hyssop is.

And if it grew wild in America or was easy to cultivate in America, I'm sure all the Christian bookstores. Thank God, may they may, they rest in non peace, they're all gone now. But all the Christian book stories would have had. Like, it's a brooms like oh this is the way.

No, the point of the hyssop was that was the what you were supposed to dip in the blood at the Passover to paint the blood that would cover the the sin and and the Lord would see the blood of the atonement and turn away and not kill. And so he's not saying, you know, use the use the right botanical agent God and I'll be clean.

He's saying cleanse me with the atoning blood that you have provided for my cleansing and I'll be clean that nothing that we do and nothing that we come up with for God to do wood cleanse us, but that God Himself has come up with His own way of cleansing us.

And that is the blood of the Lamb. Not acute furry creature that we fall in love with with a few days and then slaughter and enjoy mutton. But the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, which John the Presbyterian announced, his cousin Jesus to be and you come.

And after you had admitted to God, all this horrifying truth about what you have said or what you have thought or what you have done and how it comes from who you were in the first Adam. And that part of you that still is and that it's an attack upon God and a flaunting in the face of His holiness and justice and you realize all of the greatness of your sin, you come and he's given you his own solution.

The application of the blood of Jesus Christ and the greatness of your sin is overmatched by the greatness of God's grace. The greatness of Jesus is atonement perch me with this up and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. And he's so overcomes, the immensity of our sin with the greater immensity of his atonement and his cleansing and the fact that one day, the presence of the sin itself will be gone because the blood of Jesus is not a legal fiction, a lie that God tells himself, in order to feel better about us.

But something that guarantees that we who have been declared righteous will actually be made perfectly. Holy and we realize all that. And what does it produce in us? Joy gladness rejoicing Make me hear joy and gladness that the bones that you have broken may rejoice. And so someone with appear it and doctrine which is just the way of saying biblical doctrine but Puritans are accused all the time of being sad and dour and self-loathing, which is true to some extent.

But appearance, I'm someone who doesn't spend so much time. Looking at himself, He looks at the Lord more and those you who accuse them should read them so that they could learn to look at the Lord more too. So the having a biblical doctrine of sin. Doesn't mean you always go around saying oh horrible.

We are drives me crazy, when you would come into church. And we hear a prayer that is like, 90% how awful we are. Yeah, and yeah, just a little bit at the end.

So forgive us because of Jesus. Amen. And there's no reveling in and joining over the greatness of grace, that is greater than all of this sin.

So that the ultimate response is not the sadness and the grief, but make me here joy and gladness that the bones. You have broken may rejoice. If you have on the one hand, the greatness of your sin because of who you are and you have on the other hand, the solution of God's grace and forgiveness and cleansing because of who He is, which and should win, Who you are.

Or who God is. It's one of those questions that you ask Sophia which should win. Sophia, you are. God, of course. Praise God and May 40 year olds in Christ. Have the wisdom of a four-year-old in Christ to say the joy of the salvation should override all of the grief, over the sin and joy in him and love for him as what will propel the new obedience.

But we'll get that next week and the rest of Psalm 51. Praise God. This has been a long, let's pray.

And father we thank you for this portion of your word that has such detailed description and instruction for how to come clean with you and get clean from you. We send a lot. And so this is an area in our life where we need instruction, we bless your name for giving it to us.

And we ask now that your spirit would help us remember these things that this portion of your word teaches, so that we may live in this way, especially, so that we may live in the joy of those who have been forgiven through the blood of the Lamb, and who are certain at last to be free in the end from all remaining.

Sinfulness that who we are in. Jesus will be the only thing left of us and who we were in Adam will be going forever. So Grant to us to live in that joy by following this process of engaging, you and being engaged by you about our sin and confessing it and receiving that joy of forgiveness, we ask all this in Christ's name.

Amen.