

Transcription of 18TM815

Psalm 51                    "You Are That Man!"            April 29, 2018

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Psalm 51.

Psalm 51 begins kind of a new series of psalms in the book of Psalms. From here to the end of book two, which I think is at the end of Psalm 22, all but four of these Psalms are attributed to David, and most all of them have very helpful kind of superscriptions at the beginning to give you the context for the writing. Notice that ours this morning says "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

This Psalm, along with Psalm 32, which we looked at maybe a couple of months ago, are really about the same event of David's life with Bathsheba. Psalm 32 was different in that it was written several years after the fact, as David looked back and remembered how hard of a time he had and how thankful he was that God had forgiven his sin. This is much more recent to the activity in the sense that we are told in a present tense, when Nathan the prophet came to confront David, the result was this Psalm.

All of the details of the painful and horrible time are plainly written in longhand in II Samuel 11 and 12. This was one of the favorite Psalms of Sir Thomas Moore. You might remember if you read any Christian history, he and his wife, Lady Jane Grey, was hung on the scaffolds during the bloody days of King Henry the VII. It was also the favorite Psalm to William Carey, who is the Pioneer missionary to India. In fact, when he was about to die, the fellow that was doing his funeral, he said, "I'd like you to use this as the subject matter of the sermon text," which he did.

David's sin with Bathsheba, I think you all know the story, was plotted carefully. In fact, David for the first time in his life did not go out to battle with his troops. He put his feet up. He stayed home. He sent everyone else to kind of keep order in the kingdom, and he kind of just retired for a while, took it easy. And that's when this temptation came his way. It took a lot of planning. He snuck her into the castle. She

became pregnant. When they couldn't really pass her husband off as the father, he had the husband, Uriah, killed. It was a plot by David, calculated to have his life taken. It was followed by some appropriate time of mourning, a quick marriage, in the hopes of covering the pregnancy, and then the eventual birth of a child. It was easily a year or year and a half that David hid all of these things from everyone. He kept it to himself. He tried to hide his sin. Psalm 32 he'll tell you about how he emotionally and spiritually, even physically, suffered as a result. This is a little different, because this tells us of his confrontation.

The two most prominent sins in the story, adultery and murder, there is no solution for in the Mosaic Law. For almost every sin, you'll find a sacrifice that is able to be made, but not these. These are ones that are attached immediately to the death penalty. You do these things, you die. And so David finds himself in a position where he realizes what he's done. He's been hiding it for a long time, and the only way he's ever going to get back to God is not on his mercy or even on his sacrifice, but on the merit of God's mercy alone.

So when David was confronted by the prophet -- and by the way, Nathan was not very comfortable in going to confront such a powerful man, who could easily have taken his life and no one would have been the wiser or have said anything. Nathan came with a story and the story was pretty clear. It's written in the first 13 verses of chapter 12 of II Samuel. Nathan said there was a rich guy who lived next to a really poor guy, and the poor guy had one lamb. It became the family pet. It slept in bed with the kids. Everyone loved it. He ate the same food they did. You know, he's like your dog at home. And then there was a rich guy living next door, who, under the penalty, of not being very kind, had a stranger come by who he took in and he had to feed, but rather than taking one of his many flocks, he went to his neighbor, the poor man, took his one lamb, slaughtered it, and fed it to the stranger. Well, David was appalled. In fact, he got mad really quickly. He said, "That man needs to die." To which Nathan in verse 7 of chapter 12 replies, "You're that man. That's you." And David immediately confesses his sin. "I have sinned against the Lord." And all of those -- that time -- I say years, but I don't think years, but a year and a half maybe of pent up weariness, of guilt and sin, living this duplicitous life, it all gets rolled out by the words of the prophet. And David is allowed to get it off of his chest for the first time. And out of that experience comes this Psalm, the one that we read this morning.

His need was great. There was no appropriate sacrifice to make things better. It haunted him constantly. He knew he was deserving of death. In fact, the words out of the mouth of Nathan the prophet in verse 13 of II Samuel 12 is, "You're not going to die. God is going to restore you." Words that to David, must have been music to his ears, because he knew and recognized that he deserved to die. Once confronted by the Lord though, he comes clean. He doesn't make any excuses, he doesn't blame anyone else or blame shift. He doesn't make rationalizations for his behavior. You'll read the words "me" and "my" a lot, especially in the first six verses, as David confesses his sin. "I have sinned."

The outline is very simple to remember. The first six verses David confesses his sin; verses 7 through 12, he lists what sin had done in destroying his life; from verse 13 to the end of the chapter he prays that God could restore him to usefulness. Confession of sin, realization of sin's damage, and then a plea to the Lord to use him again.

Verse 1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; and according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, clean me from my sin. I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is always before me. And against You, and You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight -- that You may be found just when You speak, blameless when You judge. Behold, I was shapened, or brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inwards parts, and in the hidden parts You've made me to know wisdom." We know from the introductory little paragraph the beginning of the context of this; right? There is adultery, there is murder, there is the covering of sin for a long time. There is this hard-hearted unwillingness to repent, and yet when Nathan comes and verbalizes what David knows in his heart, it shakes David to the core. You can go back and read the story on your own. But it brought David immediately to confess. Right? This was -- he was broken. He wanted to get better. He didn't know how it could be. He might have looked very defiant on the outward. After all, he was the king with great power, but inwardly he was longing to be exposed and forgiven. So he says to the Lord this: Give me mercy, according to that mercy that You have in abundance. For multiplied sins we need God's multitude of mercy.

And David in these first two verses uses three words for sin.

We've pointed I think six of them out to you as we've gone through the Psalms, but I'll remind you of these three because they're important. He uses the word "transgression," which is a Hebrew word that means to willfully revolt. Best definition, you cross the line. God says don't go any further than this; yeah, I'm going to go further. Don't do this; yeah, I'm going to do that. Don't get involved; I'm getting involved. That's what the word "transgression" means. The word "iniquity" means to be perverted or twisted. It is usually a reference to a human nature that has been twisted by sin that can't see straight, can't make good decisions, can't head the right way. They're kind of all over the place because sin, it turns you around, if you will. And the last word, sin, means just that in both Hebrew and in Greek. It means to shoot for a mark that you miss. It doesn't even make a comment as to whether you were trying to hit it or not. You just miss it. You don't measure up. So willful revolt, corrupted or twisted in character or nature, and then not able to hit the target. That's what the meaning is, those are the three words that he uses here.

But notice in the end of verse 1, he says, "Blot out my transgressions" willingness to revolt, or if you will, take the record of my revolt out of the book; right? Erase the testimony against me of my willful stands to rebel against You. Wipe them from my guilt-ridden mind by Your mercy. And then he says this in verse 2, and wash me thoroughly from my twisted heart or my twisted nature. Now, the word "wash" in Hebrew literally means trample me under foot, but it is usually used to express a rough kind of cleaning. In other words, this isn't a prayer to be soaking in it, or to be rinsed of it. He literally says to the Lord, if you could just scrub me inside out of my perverted heart and my rebellious nature. And you get the picture that when the prophet came to David, David had to look into the mirror of God's word as delivered by the prophet, and he had to say of himself, I look filthy.

There's something interesting about unconfessed sin. If you hide sin long enough, you begin to minimize the importance. You begin to make excuses. Well, I'm not so bad. I'm certainly not as bad as other people. I know what I did was wrong, but a lot of people have done this. And it doesn't take long before you're no longer looking at what God has to say or having a right assessment of your sin. So David now gets to be face-to-face with how filthy his life has become. And he literally uses the strongest word. Lord, if you could just scrub me, take the brush to my heart, to my nature. Cleanse me from my sin. The word "cleanse" is -- I know it's in the Bible a lot, but this

word particularly is one that is most often used to ask the Lord to cleanse you of leprosy, which is interesting, because that's an incurable disease. You can't cure it. He has to. And so Lord, You step in and do what I can't do. I've been missing the center of Your will. Lord, cleanse me from it all.

He says in verse 3 the things that you want to read, "I acknowledge my transgressions." Right? Months had passed. If it goes back to the time that Bathsheba got pregnant to the time that the baby died at about a year old, this is almost 21 months of time that has passed by. And he could never, live a day without saying I did it. He could tell everyone else a lot of things, but he couldn't say it to the Lord. Months had passed. His hidden sins overtook and overshadowed his life. Notice what it says, "My sin is always before me." I think that that is always true of sin. If you don't confess the sin, it'll haunt you. I suspect, just trying to put myself in David's shoes, that I'll bet he saw his sin every day in the sad eyes of Bathsheba, because this must -- didn't necessarily mean this was her choice. Not in the culture anyway. She could have had very little to say about all of these things. But I think had he looked into her eyes, he'd have seen the sadness. I think he'd have seen his sin in the cynical eyes of Joab, who was his army commander, who got the letter to go put Uriah to the front, make sure that he dies, that he doesn't return to his family. I'm sure that he saw the sin in the furtive eyes and glances of the servants in his kingdom or of his soldiers or of his sons. Everybody knew. David knew. God knew. But no one could call David on it. "Lord, I acknowledge my transgressions." I can't shake, no matter how much I try, the -- the torment of knowing that I have sinned.

I want you to notice that David doesn't say my punishment is ever before me, or the consequences of my sin is ever before me. If you ever have a chance to go to do prison ministry, you're going to find a lot of prisoners sorry. Usually sorry they were caught. Sorry that I didn't plan better; sorry that I didn't have friends I could trust; sorry that I hadn't thought about that. Most of us are sorry about the consequence, but this is true repentance. David is sorry not about the consequence, because that's coming, but the grief over just the action of sin that he carried out. And I want you to notice, David was one the most powerful kings alive at the time, yet he couldn't get away from conviction. Because money and power and glory, they can't prevent or remove the torment of sin. So whether you're the monarch or you're the beggar, you're kind of subject to the same things. You know, God's spirit is going to come and

convict you. And David acknowledged that. He needs a scrubbing, he needs mercy. He confessed that it was him. His sin wouldn't leave him alone.

He says in verse 4, "Against You only have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight." And I know if you've read this for the first time, you say, hey, time out. You sinned against Bathsheba, you sinned against Uriah, you sinned against their families and your family, and your children, and your country, and the kingdom, against your own body according to 1 Corinthians 6, which I guess hadn't been written yet. But you can only sin that way before -- but first you have to sin against God. In other words, sin starts with God. If you can set God aside, you can hurt a lot of people. You can violate relationships to the right and to the left. If you honor the Lord, you're going to be a lot less harmful to everyone that knows you. Right? Sin starts with God. When the prodigal son was sitting in the slop there in Luke 15 and he was so sorry about the decisions he's made, he finally said to himself, no one else to talk to, "I'm going to go home and I'm going to say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and also against you.'" But it starts with God. I first sinned against God. Because He's the one that if we would listen to and follow, then we're going to be a blessing, not a trouble or a curse to others. "I've done this evil," verse 4, "in your sight."

I think that's a horrible understanding to get -- my mom used to say to me, "God is watching you." And I hated it. I would honestly say to the Lord when I went to parties and I was a high schooler, "Lord, if You could just stay home, I'll be back like 12:00 pm." "If you could just stay here, I'll be all right." Yo "But you don't want to go where I'm going." And yet here's this recognition for David, and it had to be kind of overwhelming to hear it coming out of the mouth of the prophet, I know what you did. I know what you took. I've given you so much. I've given you -- I'd give you more if you needed it. But you took a man's wife, you took a man's life, you took a man's honor. You took him all for you. You're that rich guy who's stealing the lamb of the poor man. And David realized God was watching.

All of the sordid things he did in the eyes of Almighty God: The actions in the king's bedroom, the votes in the king's boardroom. Wherever he turned, God was watching, and David had to realize now that God had been there every step of the way. He was genuinely sorry. This is a man truly repentant, sorry over sin, sorry over the passion that burned in him for such a long time. He missed having God in his life. He hated himself

for what he's done. He needed God's grace.

He said to the Lord at the end of verse 4, whatever Your decision is about me is right. I'm the sinner. You're right. You're blameless, You're just. If I'm going to survive this, I need Your grace. And then he goes so far in verse 5 and 6 to identify the problem. He literally says in verse 5 and 6, "I was born in sin." I am plagued constantly by it. It wants to destroy me. It works from within. The source of my sin is my soul, not my surroundings.

I know so often people like to blame how they've turned out on their upbringing, their family, their socio- or economic status, whatever it might be. We never had a chance. We've had a hard life. Sin comes from the heart. We are born sinners. You sin because you're a sinner. You are born -- you are a sinner by birth, and then you become a sinner by choice. And the corruption runs deep. And David says that here. I know that You want truth within. I know I was born this way, and that You want to change me from within. You desire holiness within, not this desperation that I've been doing.

Now, look, David wasn't thinking like this at all with Bathsheba in his arms. For those hours, whatever they might have been, nothing else mattered. But since then, everything's mattered. The payoff was horrible, based on the action. So his confession, he knows who's at fault. He asks for God's mercy. He recognized himself as a sinner that God has seen his every action, that he needs to be scrubbed from within.

Beginning in verse 7 down through verse 12, he then makes a list of what sin has done to him. I'll give you six words to -- you can write them down through all. They all start with the letter "D." I tend to do that a lot because it's the only way for me to remember them. But he asks God to restore what sin is destroying.

Verse 7, Sin's Defilement. "Purge me with hyssop, I shall be clean; wash me, I shall be whiter than snow." One thing about the defilement of sin, David when he got confronted and heard what he had done, I mean actually heard it from somebody else, he felt contaminated. It was almost like there's nothing on this earth that could remove this stain. Religion can't do it, ritual won't help, resolve isn't enough. He saw himself as vile. And what he reaches for is kind of interesting. He asks to be cleansed with hyssop. Hyssop was a very common, and still is for that matter, herb in the Mid East. It was used primarily

in the Bible to take the blood of the sacrifice at Passover and sprinkle it upon the house, upon the people and all. And it became that place of cleansing, something that only God could do. The word "purge" comes from a Hebrew word for sin, but they threw a couple of more letters at the front. If you wanted to translate the word for purge directly, the word would be de/sin, or de-sin me, which I know doesn't make much sense in terms of its use, but it is a cry from David that God would take his rebelliousness of wanting to cross the line and defile his life and turn me back the other way. In fact, here's his cry of faith: If you'll wash me, I could be whiter than snow.

Now, I would suggest to you just after years of counseling with people that get in trouble, that there are very few even Christians who totally believe that God can make them as if they haven't sinned. Somehow the grace of God never gets that far along the line in their understanding. And I think it's because we don't know how to do that. Someone will say to us, forgive us, and we go, yeah, I'll forgive, but I'm watching you. Oh, yeah, you say you're sorry, but I don't know. Right? That's pretty much the way we deal with mercy. And yet when we go to the Lord, His promise is not just to forgive us, but to make us as if we'd never done that, to justify us. That's a hard way to go. And for David in his mind, I've killed a guy, I've taken another man's wife, the baby's about to die in judgment. I've gone a long way in the wrong direction. And God -- but if you begin a work. You could bring me from here to there. It's an amazing story. It's an amazing understanding.

We did several services years ago with Tex Watson, the guy from the Manson murders who is still in prison. He's still walking with Jesus. One of our pastors for a long time, Lyle, does his website still. A man that I know God has forgiven, but man, try to get anyone else to explain that to you. He doesn't hardly hang onto that for himself. He goes, "I know I just got to be here till I die and rest in God's grace." But to listen to him speak, it's almost this faith prayer of David. How do you clean this up? How do you make this right? If it isn't for God's grace, you don't make it. So sin had defiled David. He asked God to take care of it.

Verse 8, Sin's Deafness. "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones that you have broken may rejoice." One thing that happened with this unconfessed sin, David had become deaf to God's voice. I mean, if you know a little bit about David, you know that he could bring a harp into the room and rock the palace with worship. That's what he did. Ask Saul. He chased



away evil spirits from a wicked man's life. That's how he could play. But that's not happening anymore. His joy was gone. In fact, it was replaced by this inner agony that David poetically compares to the pain of broken bones or crushed bones. And he says to the Lord that the conviction of the Holy Spirit upon him has been so heavy that he needed the Lord to take sin's deafness it brought and remove it. Remove it from his life. "That the bones you have broken may rejoice." Could you restore the tenderness that I once had, the ear that I could hear? He asked God for the impossible. Right? He asked God to give him his hearing back, to bring music for his crushed bones. Sin's deafness.

Thirdly, verse 9, Sin's Disgrace. He said, "Hide your face from my sins, blot out all of my iniquities." It is terrible to be caught in a sin. We had a workday here several years ago when we were first moving in, and there was a lot of guys doing stuff that we weren't used to doing, but we were all doing it anyway. And one of the guys smashed his hand with a hammer; I mean, good. Like, he broke his thumb. He uttered a word very loudly that he probably wouldn't use in church normally. And I was just glad it was him, because I would have maybe done the same thing. That looked like it hurt big time. But he was so embarrassed. Worse than his broken thumb was everybody going (looking around). That was worse. I have a good friend who's a pastor of a very large church in the area -- won't tell you who it is -- who went to England with his wife for their anniversary, and he ordered a bottle of wine. He figured, I'm in England, who's going to know? And then somebody from his congregation walked into the restaurant in England. He'd like to have died. Not that he was convicted personally, but he was very interested in not being a stumbling block, and it cured him once and for all. I mean, if he tells you this story, he will hang his head. I don't know if you've ever seen people arrested on T.V., but don't they always hide their faces? Not because they're ugly -- well, they might be. I don't know -- but I think it's because they're ashamed; right? So here's what David said: Lord, I know you've been watching. Stop looking. Don't look. Don't look at my disgrace. Hide your face from my shame, from my sin. David realized the Lord had seen him. He doesn't want the Lord to have to look upon him like this anymore.

Verse 10, Sin's Damage. He says this: "Create in me a new heart or clean heart, Lord, and renew a right spirit or a steadfast spirit within me." Sin's damage. The word "create" here is in the first verse of your Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It is the Hebrew word

"bara." And "bara" is interesting because it only applies to God. It literally means to make something out of nothing. Out of nothing. There is another word in Hebrew, "asah," which means to assemble and to make something from existing materials. We can do that, but only God can make something out of nothing. That's the word David uses here. He literally says to the Lord, Lord, I need a miracle. I need a new heart. I know you want truth in the inward parts. I need you to give me a new heart. I can't -- just don't rebuild the old one, give me a new one. It is the Old Testament cry for the New Testament born-again experience. Create a right spirit within me.

Verse 11, Sin's Doom. "Do not cast me away from your presence, don't take your Holy Spirit from me." Look, the ultimate doom is that God removes you from Him, that you have no access to Him. David wondered if that would be his plight. He'd been around when King Saul had the Holy Spirit taken from him. An evil spirit from the Lord had bothered him -- right? -- and tormented him, and David wondered if he was next. He had certainly done some horrible things. In the New Testament you receive the Holy Spirit when you are saved permanently, but not so in the Old Testament. The Lord fell upon you for service, for power, for insight, and sometimes for time to time, not as a possession, if you will, or a confidence. David didn't want that to happen to him. Please, don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

By the way, in the Bible this is the first place you will read the words Holy Spirit. So if you're playing Bible trivia, here, this far in, 7-800 pages into your Bible, we run into the name of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Finally, verse 12, Sin's Depression. Sin's depression. "Restore to me the joy of my salvation, uphold me with your generous spirit." I think a lot of difficulty in our walks can be traced back to sin that we haven't been giving up to the Lord, and so it gnaws at our hearts. Not that you can lose your salvation; you can't, but you can lose the joy of your salvation. Lord, I want my joy back. I want the relationship that we used to have back.

Sin's defilement and deafness and disgrace and damage and doom and depression. I think that's six.

Well, beginning in verse 13, then he quickly just says Lord, use me. I don't want to now end up like -- worthless. Verse 13, if the Lord will do these other things, "then I will teach

transgressors your ways, sinners will be converted to you." Long-term effective ministry always proceeds in a life that is in fellowship with God. If the Holy Spirit is not taken from me, if you'll change me, I can be useful to you again. In fact, I want to reach the lost. I want to see the salvation of many. But you should know that fruitfulness follows faithfulness, always. Can't get those backwards. Can't go, I'm going to just do stuff for the Lord and then God's going to bless me. No, you just be faithful to the Lord and then God will bless. Then He will bless. Truthfulness follows godliness.

Verse 14, "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, God. You're the God of my salvation, and my tongue can sing aloud of Your righteousness. And You can open my lips, Lord, that my mouth can show forth your praise." I think for a year-plus, David's guilt over this murder and these actions had taken it out of his life. His lips had been sealed with guilt. He couldn't sing worship songs. He wasn't sure of God's forgiveness. He had a guilt-ridden heart and a mind that wouldn't allow him to worship. He was quiet by shame. Now he says to the Lord, forgive me so I could sing again. Worship comes from a heart that is right with God.

But then he says this, and I want you to see the next two verses, "You don't desire sacrifice, I give that to you. You don't delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken contrite heart -- these, God, you won't despise." Look, with two capital punishment crimes on the list, and no adequate sacrifice to appease God of them, isn't it glorious to know that God still had a way for David to be restored? The law didn't have an answer, but grace and mercy did. Right? So when Nathan says to David, you're not going to die, God is going to forgive and restore you, he gave that promise to David without any attached requirement. He didn't say to you, as long as you find an ox, or as long as you find a lamb, or you're going to have to offer lots of money, or you're going to have to bring lots of things to the Lord. He offered it completely to him solely because of His mercy and from His grace. Sin is an issue of the heart, and God's mercy is found through repentance, not through ceremony. Found in a person, not a religious ritual. Found because it's the heart issue. David was brokenhearted over his sin. God said to David, "You're not going to die." Why? Because true repentance brings God's forgiveness. What is God looking for? A humble, broken, sorry, bowed-over heart before Him.

And so David ends with two verses that pray for his kingdom, his

oversight. "Be good in your good pleasure to Zion; to build the walls of Jerusalem. And then if you'll do that, you'll be pleased with the offerings of righteousness, the burnt offering, the whole burnt offering; and the bulls upon the altar." David knows he'd failed. He'd failed as a man, as a husband, as a father, as a king, but he ends his prayer by praying that God would bless the kingdom. And David's point is this: If I walk with God, my leadership will bring God's blessings to the people so the walls can be built, and when we go to the tabernacle or to the temple later to offer sacrifice, it's going to be received because it comes from a heart that's pure like mine is in terms of my repentance. So these last two verses are not to go back to the offerings, but to say that God is interested in sincere confession that will forgive us. And so bless me and bless my kingdom.

Let me say this to you before we stop this morning: If you're harboring sin in your life, you're not going to do well. Everything in your life is going to go south. It won't last. You won't get away with it. There won't be some days of rest. It'll just be more miserable than it was the day before. God, however, is really good at forgiveness. So why hide it from a God that forgives? Why not just clear the air, and lay it at his feet, and get back to doing the right thing? That's what He's looking for, a humbled heart. And then sin can't destroy you or damage you or embarrass you or disgrace you. It can just -- you can be a life that God can use and He can be honored through. David learned it well. It's a hard way to learn. If you go back and read chapter 12 of II Samuel, he loses a lot in the process: Family, influence, children. It was horrible. He was forgiven. God forgives. But why risk all that for hiding some stuff?

If that's your deal, then look, we'll have some people in front to pray with you, but you don't really to have come and tell us; you just got to make sure you tell Him. Because like David's confession, God will answer yours as well. You can go home with joy instead of a big secret.