Blessing and salvation to you and your family

Long ago, the nation of Judah had to suffer punishment by being captured and taken away to Babylon. The LORD told them that they would have to live in this foreign land for a time, but afterwards they would be brought back to their home in the Promised Land. Also, the LORD let them know that they were going to be there a while so it would be best for them to help Babylon to prosper.

We Christians are also in a foreign land. Our citizenship is in heaven; in the Kingdom of God. But we live here on earth where the ruler is satan. It is like we live in Babylon: Godlessness and evil abound and we are forced to deal with it. Our hope is that God has promised to bring us home one day; home to heaven, our Promised Land.

Until then, it is in our best interest to help the world in which we live. The better things are here, the better it will be for us. This means doing good for others in spite of how they act; earning a living to support our family so that we help the economy instead of being a drain on it; and of course, we are called to pray for our government and its officials.

These things are pleasing to God and are actually His commands. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus and His Kingdom, but also be a benefit to this world.

*Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.*

*4“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, 5‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. 6Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. 7Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’*

Jeremiah 29:1,4-7

In Christ’s love

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9-13-20

Psalm 51(4)

Today we conclude our study of Psalm 51. This is a Psalm prayed by David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then murdered Uriah to try to cover it up. One of the main things to see in this is that you can’t hide anything from God. God showed this to David by sending Nathan the prophet to confront him regarding his sin. No matter how many people you manage to fool, God is all-seeing and all-knowing. When a Christian sins, the best, really the only thing, to do is to confess the sin to God and repent. Repentance actually involves changing one’s life to no longer include the sinful conduct.

Verse 14 begins “*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation*”. Specifically, bloodguiltiness refers to the shedding of innocent blood, in other words, murder. David realized the full magnitude of what he had done and that he was guilty. Only by God’s mercy could he be forgiven of the sin of murder. It would only come later with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that the guilt would be atoned for and he would be cleansed of the guilt.

Deliverance from guilt is salvation which can only come from God. God is the One who sent His Son Jesus into the world to pay the price for sin which delivers the believer from guilt. And so, David calls God “*the God of my salvation*”. Although he wasn’t aware of how God would bring about his salvation, he believed that God would do it.

This is the kind of faith we need also. We understand that there was a transfer that took place between Jesus and believers when Jesus was on the cross. All our sins were transferred to Him; His righteousness was transferred to us. What we really don’t know, is how in the world this took place. But the Bible tells us it did, so we believe it.

According to the Law of Moses in Leviticus 20:10, adultery was to be punished by death. Additionally, according to Numbers 35:30-31, a person who committed murder would also be put to death. So, why wasn’t David put to death? It was because after David confessed, his guilt was removed in Jesus Christ. We see this in 1 Samuel 12:13, *Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die*. Because God had taken away David’s sin and his guilt removed by Christ’s work on the cross, he had to be declared “not guilty”; and so, he was cleared of the death penalty.

This can be a little confusing. One of the main things to remember is that God is outside of time; He is not constrained by time like we are. We have to wait for something to happen before we can say it happened; God doesn’t have to wait. God knew that Jesus would perform His work on the cross and that sin would be atoned for and guilt would be removed from His saints. In the same way that Jesus’ death took care of all the sins that would take place in the future, His atonement was retroactive; it took care of all the sins of His faithful saints in the past.

Scripture tells us this in Hebrews 9:15, “*For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance*.” The first covenant mentioned here is the Sanai covenant or the law of Moses. God has offered us a new covenant of grace in Jesus Christ. Jesus’ death removes the guilt of those who sinned under the old covenant, as long as they had faith in God and realized that their salvation came from Him.

Upon this deliverance, David says he will be able to sing joyfully of God’s righteousness. Of course one should be joyful when they have been delivered from an eternity in hell and given an eternity in the presence of a glorious and loving God. The interesting thing here is singing of God’s righteousness instead of His mercy or love as we might first think. But it is God’s amazing righteousness that He will not punish us for sins that have been atoned for by Jesus. On the cross, our sins were punished in Christ, God’s justice was satisfied, and we won’t suffer the punishment for sins that have already been paid for. Praise God for His righteousness; because of it we need never fear that He will turn away from us.

David says that after he has been made clean, he will be able to sing of God’s righteousness. He goes on to say “*O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise*.” David wants to sing joyfully and praise God, but he is also aware that a lot of evil can come from our mouths. This is a good prayer: that God will direct what we say. How good for us it would be if the Holy Spirit would have constant control of our tongues.

The Bible tells us how dangerous our tongues are. The book of James has lots to say about our speech. In case we doubt the problems our tongues can cause us, James tells us very directly in 3:6, “*And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.*” This should wake us up so that we are careful to let the Holy Spirit guide our speech and not satan or our own hearts.

Jesus also gives us an important warning about what we say. In Mark 7:18-23, Jesus makes it very clear that what goes into a person does not defile them but what comes out. The reason is that what comes out, what a person says, reveals their heart. If a person speaks immoral words: slanders and gossip and murders and adulteries, it shows that inwardly they are unclean; when they express these things, they are defiled.

With these things in mind, let us pray that our hearts will be cleansed by God and that He will direct what we say. It is good for us to think a little before we speak. Make sure that what we say is uplifting to others and pleasing to God. And this can only be accomplished by a Christian, because nothing done or said by a non-believer can be pleasing to God.

Next, David talks about sacrifices. We might think that this doesn’t apply to us, but it does.

*For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

We have to understand what David is saying here. It seems kind of strange because God Himself had commanded all kinds of sacrifices: Why would He not be pleased with what He commanded? The direct answer is that God doesn’t want the sacrifice if the heart is not right.

The sacrifice mentioned in the first line would be a peace offering. A peace offering shows communion. It shows communion or fellowship between God and the one offering the sacrifice. If one’s heart is not right; if there is sin in the person’s life; there cannot be communion with God. God will not associate with sin. So, if a person who is in sin would offer a communion sacrifice to God, it would not be acceptable to Him.

In the New Testament age, our communion ritual is the Lord’s Supper. It is during this time that we experience a special closeness with our Saviour; it is a time of fellowship with Him. The Bible warns us that we must partake of this special communion with a pure heart. We are to examine ourselves before the supper to make sure that there is no hinderance to our partaking with Christ. Jesus will not delight in fellowship with us if we are defiled by sin.

The burnt offering was a sacrifice that was totally given to God. The entire sacrifice was burned up on the alter; nothing was kept by the priests or the people. This was an offering of dedication. The person declared their dedication to God by this sacrifice. Again, God wasn’t interested in their offering if their heart wasn’t entirely dedicated to Him. Going through the motions of the sacrifice while living contrary to God’s will was odious to Him.

Some of the ways we show our dedication to God is by attending church or by doing good works. But if we do these things with the wrong motives or while living in sin, God is not pleased.

David has gained a deep understanding that sacrifice is worthless without being true to God. God Himself later speaks of these things in Scripture. The prophet Malachi speaks to the priests who are making offerings to God but their hearts are far from Him. Malachi 1:10. “*Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord of hosts, “nor will I accept an offering from you*.”

God will lovingly lean down to us and graciously accept us when we come to Him with a broken spirit and a broken and contrite heart. We must realize that pride has no place in us; all we have is given to us by God. We have earned nothing good, nor have we created anything that God needs. There is no room for pride. When our hearts are broken and contrite, we have realized our sin. We have sinned against a holy God who deserves nothing but our praise and worship. We have wronged One whose love is beyond us and whose very goodness ought to make us feel ashamed. How wonderful Jesus is; He has made it so that we are acceptable to God and we need not feel shame as we approach Him.

At the end of his prayer, David thinks about Zion; his earthly kingdom and God’s chosen city in the Promised Land. As king, David’s sin could affect the nation. Again, looking only to God’s favor, David asks for blessings on Israel. One of David’s projects was building the wall around Jerusalem and this was not yet complete. The wall symbolized protection and David asked for God to protect the city.

David had also envisioned the temple. God told him that although He was pleased with him in wanting to build the temple, it would be his son Solomon who would get to build it. David is concerned that his sin may affect the new temple, so he looks forward to what will take place when it is built. Sacrifices will be offered according to God’s design, and these will be pleasing to Him because they will be offered in righteousness.

David hopes that the hearts of the priests and the people will be right before God so that peace offerings will show communion with God and burnt offerings will show true dedication. David has written this Psalm for public viewing so that others in his kingdom can learn how to confess sin and depend entirely on God for His mercy. They have been given guidance on how to have pure hearts so their sacrifices will be pleasing to God.

Under the new covenant, we are not obligated to offer the animal sacrifices that the nation of Israel was called to offer under the law. We no longer need any sacrifice for sin because Jesus was the final sacrifice for sin. His work on the cross was absolutely sufficient to remove the guilt from all His people. However, we are still called to sacrifice. From Romans 12:1, “*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice*.”

We are called to offer ourselves as a sacrifice to God; not a sacrifice of dying, but of living a holy life, one in service to God. We are called to sacrifice our time, energy, and possessions when called to do so. We are called to spend time with God in prayer, Bible study, and in church attendance. We are called to do good works in which we can give of what we have to others, but we do so to give glory to God. And just like the sacrifices David mentioned: If we have sin or impure motives, God will not be pleased with our sacrifices.

So, keep focused on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, with a heart always ready to confess and repent of sin. In this way, we can be a joy to the One who has paid a heavy price to make us right with God.

Prayer

Almighty God, we can see by everything that is happening on this earth, how terrible sin really is. We can see its effect on Your creation; the creation You pronounced as being “very good”. Sin is unacceptable to Your very being; it is against who You are in Your holiness. Help us to despise sin also.

We confess that we add to this destruction by our own sin. We confess that our hearts tend toward evil and evil is advanced by our words and actions. We repent of these things and ask for Your mercy. You have offered us forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. We recognize that this is only by Your grace and mercy because we don’t deserve any good gift from You.

Praise You Lord for all Your love and grace. Our eternal life has been secured on our behalf by our Lord Jesus. May we be profitable servants of Yours. You have purchased us and we belong to You. Guide us, Holy Spirit, into loving action for God and for His people.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen