May you ever become more like our Lord Jesus

As we watch all that goes on with the world’s governments, it is very easy to become discouraged. All the nations seem to be bent on resisting the God of the Bible and His Son, Jesus Christ.

They claim their independence from Him, believing they can solve all problems themselves. In defiance, they make laws contrary to the Law of God. They oppress the people they were put in place to serve; forgetting that God established them to serve in the first place. To varying degrees, they oppose the word of God and the people who cling to it.

We who are Christians must keep in mind that God is not the least bit worried about any of this. He does not sit on His throne and fret that governments are turning against Him. Nor does any of this surprise Him; His prophets wrote of this long ago.

Maintain your confidence in God and Jesus; avoid undo concern about the nations of the world. Just stick with God; hiding behind Him will be the safest place to be when He comes to establish His rule over the nations.

*Why are the nations in an uproar  
And the peoples devising a vain thing?  
The kings of the earth take their stand  
And the rulers take counsel together  
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,  
“Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!”*

*He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.  
Then He will speak to them in His anger  
And terrify them in His fury, saying,  
“But as for Me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”*

Psalm 2:1-6

In Christ’s love

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9-6-20

Psalm 51 (3)

We continue our study of Psalm 51. This is David’s prayer after he was confronted by Nathan the prophet for committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering Uriah. Christians still fail; we still sin against our holy God. This Psalm is a good look at sorrow, repentance, and confidence in God’s great mercy. We must never take God’s mercy for granted; but it is a comfort to know that if we truly repent, God will forgive in Jesus Christ.

In verse 10, David asks God to create a clean heart within him. David has already asked to be washed and to have his sin blotted out; he has asked God to not look on his sins. Sin pollutes our bodies, souls, and spirits; we need to be cleansed of this guilt and David asks God to cleanse him. When God looks upon us, He can see our sin so David asks God to blot it out so that it is erased. Even when washed and blotted, the fact that sin took place remains. By God not looking on our sins, they are cast into that sea of forgetfulness; as far as God is concerned, they never took place. For us, this is all accomplished by the blood of Jesus.

Now David asks for something more; a clean heart. Notice the word “create”. This is the same word and idea used in the creation story in Genesis. The thought here is to create something new out of nothing. David isn’t asking God to clean up his old heart, he’s asking God to make him an entirely new one. He wants a new heart that is focused on God, one that is eager to avoid sin and be pleasing to God. David is asking for something that is later promised through the prophet in Ezekiel 36:26.

*Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

Part of the promise given through Ezekiel is that God will put a new spirit within His people. This is something that David asked for also; to “*renew a steadfast spirit within me*.” Remember that David is also a prophet. Even here in his prayer of confession, he is led to ask for a new heart and spirit, which God later promises through Ezekiel.

This new heart will be one that wants to please God. Of course, this means that the person will have a deep desire to please God. Furthermore, this new heart won’t simply be blank, waiting for us to fill it up with something. God already has it full. Earlier than Ezekiel, the prophet Jeremiah had revealed another part of God’s plan for a new heart. This is Jeremiah 31:33.

*“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

The reason a person who has received this new heart will want to please God is because God’s law will be written on it. Sometimes, when there is something that is important to us, we say that it “is on our hearts”. With God’s law on our hearts, it is important to us and it will direct our lives. It is important to see that none of this is our doing; it is all God’s doing, He gets all the credit, all the glory. God is the One who is able to create out of nothing. He is the One who can replace our stony cold hearts with one made of flesh and with a desire to do His will.

For we who are Christian, this happens at the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Our spirit, which was dead because of sin is renewed; it is given new life; it is born again. When we accept Christ, our hearts are changed; our old one is replaced with a new one. Because we are still fallen people, we do not become perfect immediately. This perfection is a lifelong process that will only be completed when we pass from this life to the next.

This is also when the fight begins. Our new spirit wants to do right, our new heart tends that way; but our flesh still wants to follow its own lusts. There is a constant battle between our spirit and our flesh for the rest of our lives. Part of this battle is repentance and confession for sin. Just as God is entirely responsible for our new heart and reborn spirit, He brings about our sanctification. To be sanctified we must be in fellowship with Him, so sin must be gotten rid of.

David’s next lines express a very real fear: *Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me*. Surely David is thinking back to King Saul. In the book of 1 Samuel we read of Saul being anointed king of Israel by the last judge of Israel, the prophet Samuel. Saul received the Holy Spirit. Not long after Saul was made king, he became disobedient to the LORD. Because of his hard-hearted disobedience, the LORD rejected him. 1 Samuel 15:26.

*But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”*

Even worse than that, the Holy Spirit left Saul: 1 Samuel 16:14.

*Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord terrorized him.*

David now realized that he was in a very similar situation; he had blatantly disregarded the LORD’s commands. David could have lost his kingdom over this. And this was Old Testament times; the Holy Spirit didn’t have to stay with anybody.

Notice the childlike faith of David: He had grievously sinned, yet he not only asked forgiveness, but asked for lots of other stuff too: cleansing, for God to forget, for a new heart, for a steadfast spirit, that God would keep him close and let His Holy Spirit stay with David. We see here the riches of God’s mercy. We must never be afraid to come to Him and ask for those things He has already promised.

In this New Testament age, when we accept Jesus, He speaks to the Father and we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is different now: once we receive the Holy Spirit, He will never leave us. Our fleshly thought is that now we can do whatever we want because we are forgiven and the Holy Spirit will not be taken away. Now, if we ***act*** on that thought, it is a sure sign that we are not saved; that we didn’t truly accept Christ as Saviour. The reason is that if truly saved, we are given a new heart that has God’s law written on it. Our new heart and reborn spirit will resist that fleshly urge to think in those terms.

Scripture warns us to not resist the Holy Spirit, not to quench the Holy Spirit. If we do these things, the Holy Spirit may not leave us, but He will cease to work on our behalf. Our sanctification process will not progress. And don’t forget that the Lord will chastise His children. He will not chastise us in anger, but in love; He wants us to progress in becoming more like Jesus. Keep in mind that chastisement in love is no less painful.

As Christians, it is a good exercise for us from time to time to prayerfully consider whether we might be quenching the Spirit. He gives us guidance and leading that we should be inclined to follow. For the most part, that guidance is simply following Scripture. We don’t have to think it is always some ‘out of the ordinary’ leading. Sometimes it may be; but mostly it will be the urge to follow what’s in the Bible: the commands of Jesus, loving God, and loving neighbor.

Next David prays: *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit*. Again, this is before Jesus. David had sin on his soul that was not accidental. He had committed these sins in direct defiance of God’s Law. He was in danger of losing salvation. He reestablished his faith in God and confessed his sin. He asked forgiveness strictly on the basis of God’s mercy. On these grounds, his salvation would be restored.

To be saved is to have joy. There is joy in what we are avoiding and joy in our eternal destiny. So, if God restores David’s salvation, David’s joy will be restored. His sin had separated him from God and he wasn’t feeling that closeness he was accustomed to. He wanted it back and asked God to make it so.

Sometimes we feel distant from God; when we feel that way, we want things straightened out so we are close to Him again. Even though our salvation is secure, sin will affect our fellowship with God and our becoming more like Jesus. If we start feeling a distance from God, the first thing to do is make sure that there is no sin that we have ignored or forgotten about. If found, confess it and repent.

If we don’t have any unconfessed sin, then God is doing something else. He has some reason for seeming distant to us. It may be testing you; it may be strengthening you; whatever the reason, we must maintain our faith in Him. During these times we continue in prayer. It is fine to ask God to remove the feeling of distance and for it to have His desired effect. But then we must wait patiently for God’s timing. We must also remain faithful in Bible reading and fellowship with other Christians. Maintaining our faith through Jesus Christ is the most important thing for us to do.

This goes along with David asking to be sustained by a willing spirit. He wants help for his own spirit to remain faithful and to desire to be pleasing to God. It ought to be the same for us when we consider all that Jesus has done for us and that God has blessed us by sealing us with the indwelling Holy Spirit. We should be willing to do anything our Lord wants us to. May He give us strength to do so.

David says “*Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You*.” David is not trying to make a deal with God by saying he will do these things if God will forgive him. That is something we must never do. We don’t have anything God needs. What David is saying is that this will be the consequence or outcome of God doing these things. He is reminding God that He will be glorified in restoring David. Certainly, God doesn’t need reminding or help being glorified; but it shows part of David’s motive; to bring God glory.

Who is better suited to work with a drug addict than somebody who was one themselves? Who is better suited to work with an abuse victim than somebody who has been through it themselves? Having experienced a great fall from grace, David has come back and experienced all its pain. No one can help others better than he. In fact, this Psalm is doing just that, even now. Any painful experience we have is something we can help and comfort another with later. This is part of our Christian calling. Learn from your hard times and then be willing to help another going through the same.

In doing this, we can win a hearing for Christ. While helping another, we can mention how much Jesus helped us during our own trial. Eventually, the other person may be more willing to listen to you about Christ once they see that you really care about them. Thus, sinners will be converted.

Prayer

Lord God, how merciful You are! Before Jesus atoned for sin, You graciously set aside the sins of Your saints until they could be redeemed by Christ. And now, the price has already been paid for our sins. The blood of Jesus Christ has made us clean; His righteousness now covers us by His work on the cross.

We confess that we still fall to temptation. We proclaim that it is only by Your grace and mercy that we can be saved. Your justice was satisfied by Christ; we receive Your mercy. May this bring You glory; You are worthy and deserving of worship and praise.

Everything we have and are has come from You; but it is all we have and we offer it back to You to use as You see fit. Jesus bought us with a high price so we belong to You. We ask that Your Holy Spirit guide us so that we may be useful servants.

We pray these things in Jesus’ name

Amen