

A Deeper Spiritual Life

by Keith Price

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of recognizing our sins and seeking a deeper relationship with God through confession and renewal.

Duration: 58:54

Scripture: Psalm 32:3, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of confessing our sins to God. He emphasizes that keeping our sins hidden will ultimately lead to failure and a paralyzed spiritual life. The first verse discussed is Psalm 51:3, which highlights the presence of a condemning conscience when we are aware of our transgressions. The speaker then introduces the concept of petitioning, confessing, cleansing, renewing, and serving as the different sections of the sermon that will be explored in detail. The overall message is that God needs to work within us before He can work through us, and confessing our sins is a crucial step in this process.

Transcript

To God, on your knees, that thought. When did you say, God, I've learned an awful lot about you over the years, but Lord, I haven't changed very much myself. I want you not only to restore that capacity that I once seemed to have to praise you, not only with the fruit of my lips, but with my life as well.

But Lord, I don't not only want that to be restored, but I want to grow, to go on and on, further and further, deeper and deeper into the heart of God. Well, that's the longing that's expressed in this beautiful hymn that I'm so delighted that Alan and Jack and whoever else have been responsible for picking the hymns here have gone out of their way to choose hymns that express the concepts in this marvelous psalm we're looking at together. But I hope that the Lord will, before the night is out, not only make us conscious that we know a little more about what something means, which is the terrible tragedy of evangelical Christianity today, but rather that my heart will be so touched that even though I can't explain what it's meant, my life will be changed and God will be there in a new way, which will mean that I'll be more conscious of my life before him, more conscious of his holiness, more conscious of what it meant to Jesus to suffer and die, more conscious of any little thought of sin, even in my life.

That's surely, that's surely the evidence that God is close and that I am close to him is my own consciousness of sin. So with that in mind, I want us now to turn to that wonderful psalm again together

that we started this morning, Psalm 51. Let me read it from the New International.

Again, let me remind you that it says in the superscription that not only is it a Psalm of David, but he wrote it when the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. And as I said this morning, the story is told in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. And indeed the sequel to writing this is probably Psalm 32 when he says, wow, I should have written Psalm 51 12 months before I did.

If only I had, I wouldn't have gone through this terrible, terrible pressure, the weight, the burden of the guilt of my sin upon me. Can you relate to this tonight? Is there something you're holding in? Something that you know should have been dealt with? Oh, may God open our hearts, open my heart. I often get very convicted for my own words.

Isn't that terrible? No, it's not at all. It's very right because hopefully it's God through this word by his spirit is taking hold of me to say something that may be primarily for Keith Price. So I'm not only standing four square on this word, but I'm also underneath its authority like you are.

So let's read. Have mercy on me, says David. Have mercy on me, oh God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions, wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Surely you desire truth in the inner parts. You teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean.

Wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, oh God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me. The better translation, preferred, I believe, over the King James in that line. Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will turn back to you.

Save me from blood guilt, oh God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Oh Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it.

You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, oh God, you will not despise. Again, as I said this morning, either written by David before the walls of Jerusalem were built or more likely added by another inspired writer, perhaps after they were broken down as the nation took this psalm for its corporate prayer.

In your good pleasure, make Zion prosper. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you.

Then bulls will be offered on your altar. Now then, this morning we had a look at the first two verses and indeed it's the first of various sections that the psalm is broken down into. I suppose whoever's spoken on this psalm down through the centuries really could hardly stray from a pretty normal, straightforward flow through the psalm.

You've only got to look at the way the river of this psalm makes its way through the terrain of life and you can't really go far off. And whatever headings you come up with, it's quite likely that hundreds of other people have come up with those same headings before because it's quite straightforward, isn't it? So let's put them in the participle form. The first paragraph, one and two is petitioning.

We saw that this morning. The second paragraph, three, four, five and six that we'll deal with tonight, confessing. The third paragraph, seven, eight and nine, cleansing.

The fourth paragraph, ten, eleven and twelve, renewing or restoring. And then thirteen, perhaps right to the end but certainly to seventeen, serving or telling or worshipping or whatever it is, that outflow from what has happened in my life. God has got to do something in me before he can ever do anything with any real effectiveness through me.

God has got to touch my inner being and that's what this psalm is about. We're used today to being touched in our outer being. We're used to having someone say something, it bounces off this ear, scrapes just on the surface of my mind.

I sort of respond superficially to it and wonder why I'm not changed. But God wants us to be changed in the very depths of our being. And so we're going to have a look at the second section tonight.

The first section, then, petitioning. Let me remind you that we picked out three triplets, didn't we? We saw the nature of God. We saw it was described by his, he's merciful.

He's filled with unfailing love and he's a God of great compassion. Then having seen the heart of God, we saw something of the heart of man, which was the opposite and we couldn't understand how man would respond this way. He was filled with three things in the last three lines of that first paragraph.

Transgressions going across the line, iniquity, that deep root of moral perverseness and corruption within me, and then sin, failing to reach the line. I suppose if you take those three things again and you say transgressions and sin and iniquity, they would be summed up in the words of the prayer book, wouldn't they? We have done those things that we ought not to have done, transgression. And we have left undone those things that we ought to have done, sin.

And there is no health in us. And then it says, because that great gulf was between what God was, merciful, loving and compassionate. And what I had within me, transgression, iniquity and sin, Jesus bridged the gulf.

And now I can come to him like David and I can use those three expressions in my plea for mercy. Blot out, wash away and cleanse. Blot it out like wiping the slate clean.

Wash away like a filthy, dirty garment, like the miners in Wales used to come up from the mines. Goodness me, not only all over their faces and hands, you can hardly see anything except the light in the eyes sometimes, but the filthy, dirty sort of garments. Or I suppose like being sprayed with a skunk, which you couldn't be in Vancouver Island because there aren't any there, only skunk cabbage.

And I don't know if you sprayed with a skunk, I guess it wouldn't do too much good just to kind of wash it in this way. You'd have to bury it, wouldn't you, for some days or weeks or years or whatever it is. But it's, Lord, I want you to do business.

Wash me thoroughly in such a thorough way and then cleanse me, Lord. Cleanse me, anything else that's left you have to do by burning, by whatever else you have to burn up within me. Then Lord, I want to be pronounced guiltless before you and God, I will do anything for this.

This is David's plea. He's really summing up the whole of this marvelous psalm in those first two verses. There, if he didn't come this morning, that will encourage you not to come next Sunday morning because you get a synopsis of it at night.

All right, now let's go ahead to the next section. The next section, then, is the one we'll deal with tonight. Not petitioning now, but confessing.

I want you to notice that there are four verses there and I'm going to give you, very simply, one heading for each of the verses as we come to it. These four things are involved in my confessing. You see, you can't go on keeping it in.

You're going to learn it just doesn't pay. It won't pay ultimately when you'll have to face God as judge. But frankly, it won't even pay now because you're going to see that your life is going to be absolutely threatened with failure and paralyzed for real action for God because your whole being is consumed with the thought of this thing that you haven't confessed.

So that brings us to our first verse, which is verse three. For I know, or acknowledge, I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. So the first little heading I call a condemning conscience.

A condemning conscience. Just last Thursday, I was speaking at a morning session in a senior citizen's home in Victoria, which are the things I love to do when I'm home, just do those local things and get to meet local people. But I had a lunch appointment with a pastor, or who was it, I think it was a pastor, I'm forgetting who it was.

I had a lunch appointment at 12 and I'd finished this thing at about a quarter past 11. And I knew that my wife had to go down to visit my daughter and incidentally, some of you that know my daughter, Julia, we have two little graves in the cemetery in Victoria there where she's lost the two little ones that she had before. She didn't have any children.

Well, last Thursday, I think it was, or the way she gave birth, Thursday week, I'm sorry, that's 10 days now, gave birth to a wonderful little baby boy. So at last that has happened. And so my wife, I knew had to go down last Thursday.

And so I thought, well, I don't know whether she needs the car cause I'm going to be away at lunch a long while. So I called her to see whether she needed me to bring the car home and then she could drive me back to the place I had to have lunch and then this other person could take me home. So I thought, well, where's my phone? I really need a phone.

Couldn't find one anywhere. I couldn't find one of these nice big British telephone. See anything that looked like a telephone.

Didn't even see a duck there. You have a duck in my room for a telephone. Isn't that something? Anyway, here I didn't know what to do.

So I saw a store here and I thought, well, I'm sure a store has a phone. So I didn't know what kind of a store it was. It turned out to be kind of a store for old people.

So it was quite suitable. And it was kind of paramedical equipment and chairs and levers and things we could sit down and go back and get in the bath with and sit on all kinds of things in the bathroom with. And all kinds of different little gadgets for people that couldn't move their fingers with arthritis, little clippers to clip and little big magnifying things to make the page become huge.

Everything like that. Never been in a store like that before. Maybe I wasn't old enough.

But anyway, I valued it last week looking around. But anyway, I just went in and make the phone call. But when I went in there, I went to the store, I said, excuse me, do you know whether there's a phone booth anywhere? I just want to make a local phone call.

And of course I was already feeling badly because what I was really saying was, would you mind me using your phone? Oh, he said, you can use ours. Come in here. So I went in and as I was on the phone call, my wife went in and took a second or two.

But boy, did I ever feel guilty. I felt that I had said, you know where a phone is? And I wasn't expecting him to say, well, come and use ours. And all the time, that was my purpose.

I felt so guilty that I walked out of that store quarter of an hour late. It was \$25 worth of little gadgets. Conscience is something terrible, isn't it? It gets at us.

This man knew what conscience was. He says, the thing I've done, this sin with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite, my sin is always before me. I'm preoccupied with it.

I can't stand it. It's there in front of me. Whatever I try to do, my mind keeps going to it.

Every time anybody preaches, my mind goes to that. Your mind's on it right now. And he says, that's the problem.

Like the tribal woman who said that conscience was that three-cornered piece of tin inside of her, that every time there was danger around, it started to spin. And the three corners really hurt her inside. And if she didn't do anything about it, it would spin faster.

And then if she still didn't do anything about it, it would spin so fast that she said, eventually it spun so fast that the corners got worn off and I didn't feel it anymore. Isn't that what conscience is? The seared conscience that no longer is a guide for us. Indeed, somebody has said that conscience is like a watchdog, a watchdog.

And it will bark when there's danger around, but if you don't do anything about it, it turns into a bloodhound and chases you at night. If you've got a conscience tonight that's heavily laden with something or other, don't you find it's the nighttime, when you're alone, before you go to sleep, when you wake up in the morning, you have to face the day. Conscience is like Big Ben, I used to think.

Goodness me, I've been 10 miles away from Big Ben, sleeping in London and England at night. And if the wind's in the right direction, I could hear it. But I passed Big Ben underneath it at 12 o'clock midday to watch it strike as if you could see anything.

And I thought, well, it's about time it struck. And I look up and it's two minutes past 12. Well, I never heard it.

All the noise and the hustle and the bustle of the traffic around, that's what happens in the daytime. And at nighttime, our conscience gets us. This man says, I know my transgressions and my sin is forever before me.

And my conscience needs to be my guide. But a couple of weeks ago, we'd gone 20 years without buying a decent bathroom scales. And we thought somehow the thing, one of the top came off or something.

At least I see it out there by the garbage. I haven't carried it out yet. But my wife decided it was about time to buy a decent bathroom scales and she did.

Well, I went and incidentally, she put it in the wrong bathroom. She's not utilitarian. It depends on the color, which bathroom it goes in.

So I had to go all the way to the other bathroom now just to sort of weigh, you know. So I stood on this thing and I said, dear, this one's no good. It's 10 pounds too heavy.

Terrible one. She said, well, you've got to set the thing first. And I looked at it.

It was already set on 10 pounds before I got on there. So I moved it back. I had to set it like you have to set a compass and conscience is like that.

We have to set our conscience. It must be geared to the word of God for conscience that's not conditioned in that way is a totally unreliable conscience and will take on that sense of values and those priorities and presuppositions and all other kinds of things, which are a reflection of the world around us. We have got to train the conscience, condition the conscience.

It needs to be conditioned by the word of God. In fact, the word conscience is just in itself. Again, like the prefix that we had this morning, con is the together with again, wasn't it? Like compassion, same word, con together with science.

Knowledge, con science, knowledge held together with another. Who's the other? It's God. And the knowledge that I have in my conscience that dictates to me must be held in conjunction with another person.

That person is God and God has told me how to set the scales of my conscience. And I'm to make sure it's set to this standard. Then and only then it will be a good guide for me.

I wonder if you think conscience is a reliable guide when it's really not. You know, one time in our lives, adult lives, we had a lovely couple living next door to us. Oh my, they were a wonderful couple and we enjoyed them so much.

Very happily married couple, you know, and just youngsters. They hadn't got any children, but very pleasant people. And after we'd been living next door to them for two years, the fellow came to me one

night, picked up the phone.

And he said, he said, I wonder if I'd come and see you. I said, sure, by all means. I said, would around seven be all right? He said, fine.

So came in our house about seven. He sat down and he said, we're wondering if you'll marry us. My eyes on, I mean, I didn't know what to do.

I couldn't believe it. Here was this happily married couple and they weren't married. And they've been living together there for a couple of years.

Well, when I agreed to marry in the house on condition that we could have three counseling sessions first, because neither of them, as far as I knew, were committed Christians and there wouldn't have been an unequal yoke. I won't do that. So I went into there, I went in and I had the first counseling session.

And when I shared with them, you know, how good it was that they wanted to get married because how wrong this thing was. I shall never forget the look on his face. He's on his wife, is it? Is it wrong to live together like this? Is it wrong? I mean, he never thought, it never crossed his mind that there was anything wrong with it.

What happened? He was sucked in. And he had just imbibed the very standards of the society in which he grew up where it's all right to do that. And that's what happens with us.

And your conscience may not be a reliable guide. It'll only be reliable as your mind is transformed and transfixed by God and transformed by the Word of God and as the principles of the Scripture are then programmed into your mind and you deprogram the standards of this world and you get an up-to-date proper program that's properly approved. Then it is, your conscience can be a good guide.

Well, that's what it says here. Then this man says, now, my sin is always before me because he was conscious all the time of this wrong that he'd done because he knew that this was wrong because he knew in God's eyes he shouldn't have done this. He knew the Word of God and the laws of God.

I think conscience would be four statements put together. They would be this. Number one, I have sinned.

Number two, I know I have sinned. Number three, God knows I know I have sinned. Number four, I know God knows I know I've sinned.

That's what conscience really is. So this man really is a man who knows that he has sinned for I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Can I ask you, if your conscience is troubling you, is it primarily because of the nature of that sin within you, what you've done, or is it a conscience that's bothering you lest you get caught, lest you get caught? Not only that, but are you absolutely serious about knowing what this thing is, the terrible heinousness of this sin which has gripped you and taken hold of you or maybe something that you fell into? Do you realize the seriousness of that so much so that God knows your heart and you only have to get down by your bed and you hardly have to say anything and you know you got through to God and God knows? Or do you work it the other way, as some people do? They don't take seriously this sin except that they want to be sure that the books are clear before they depart from this earth.

So they keep short accounts, but their short accounts aren't based upon a deep recognition of what sin is. So instead of coming to God with that deep sense of sin when God would understand, they try to make up for it on the other end and they work up that terrible fervor and say, oh God, with that great intensity and beat them, smite their breasts and they have that pious look about them and oh God, I'm really a penitent person. You see, that is not good enough.

No matter how much you act like that, it does not make up for the seriousness of the sin that we have committed. Not only that, but when you sin and when you're forgiven, are you a superficial person that as soon as you're forgiven, goodness me, you can get up and forget about it within two minutes. Imagine committing a murder and having it weighing heavily upon you, forgiven by God and man and the whole thing is finished for, goodness me, in five minutes would you be jumping with joy and dancing with song? I would say there's something very wrong, you see, but why should there be? God has forgiven you, it should be.

I know, but you know and I know when there's something weighing heavily upon us, we can't do that. It's something that we're almost reluctant to accept this forgiveness. I know that's bordering on heresy by saying that, but I know you understand what I'm saying.

I tell you, I can understand if any of you saw that film, *The Mission*, which had some very wonderful scenes and good things in it, as well as two or three things that warped biblical theology. But I can imagine, I can see that man now carrying that tremendous burden up those steep cliffs at the side of that waterfall there in South America. No, he struggled with this burden, I don't know how long, for days or weeks until he eventually got to this monastery and then had to give himself as an act of penance.

He'd done his penance walking up and down with this thing and struggling along with this burden. I tell you, you can understand a man that feels so burdened. He just doesn't want to accept this free forgiveness.

And in fact, that often is the problem when we try to explain this to people who've grown up as nominal Christians. They don't want to accept this, they've worked hard for this, and they're not about to let anybody who just believes to have it. For goodness me, look at this thief.

Just, you mean he could just say, I'm sorry like that and today you'll be with me in paradise? No, no, no. That's why the elder brother couldn't stand the younger prodigal son, for the simple reason that you just can't be forgiven like that. But you see, nevertheless, there's something within all of us that shows us that if we're superficial in just bouncing back like that, there wasn't a true understanding of the reality and seriousness of sin.

Yet at the same time, we want to do penance. But penance has already been done. Jesus paid the price.

He took the wrath for me. He paid it all. The debt is cancelled.

I can be free. I can rejoice, but because I'm human and because I realized how serious it was, it's going to take some time before I gradually enter into that. I've never quite explained it in this way before, but I've been thinking a lot about that in the last couple of weeks.

Do you understand what I'm saying? You do, don't you? How many would be human here tonight? Nobody, all right. Well, all right, I think most of you understand what that is, and that's, of course, the meaning of the whole thing. And here it is, we just don't want to confess for that reason.

You know, we do have an aversion to confession. David, in Psalm 32, you'll remember the psalm that he wrote after Psalm 51, saying, I wish I had confessed before because wow, did I ever go through it. And if only I'd realized how that could have been relieved and that forklift could have come along and picked that heavy car that was pinning me to the ground and picked it up.

Oh, I could breathe again, relieved and released. If only I'd done that before, he said. And he says in Psalm 32, when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. That's conscience. My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

That's what happens to your life. It loses everything. Then I acknowledge my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.

I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin. You see, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

And of course, when we think of that verse, we think, oh yes, it's terribly deceitful, desperately wicked, and we'll do all kinds of things to other people, but we don't do anything to ourselves. Do you know the heart is so deceitful, so desperately wicked that it will deceive you yourself on the need to confess that sin. And it'll find all kinds of reasoning.

It will rationalize and do everything it can think of to make you say, well, it's all right. I don't have to confess that. Conscience, a condemning conscience.

I know my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Look at the second thing that's involved in confessing. Verse four, not only a condemning conscience, but now an offended God.

An offended God. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. I can imagine some of you sitting there and saying, hmm, the Bible didn't think very much about the value of women, did they? Look, he violated that woman and look what's happened.

He said against thee and thee only have I sinned. What about that poor thing? You know, we're sort of, that's the way that we would think. I don't think it means that.

I think God knows the value of a human being more than any of us. He knows that he made each one of us in his image and although it's been warped, that human being is precious and there is no difference in that way between male or female. The preciousness is all the same.

Bruce Waltke, who had some part in the translation of the NIV, happens to be a good friend of mine. And sometimes in years past, he and I have traveled together preaching, doing conferences one day at a time with groups of pastors and then we'd travel for three or four hours a night to the next city and then we'd get ready to go on the next day and do it all through the day again. But once we arrived at the other place about two, eight or 8.30 at night, we'd have eaten something along the way.

We'd go to the motel room. He'd check into his room and I'd check into mine. He'd count the number of paces to the fire escape because he'd been caught once in a fire and then he'd walk all the way back, check the number of paces, pick up his bag.

As he'd go into his room, he said, see you in the coffee shop in 10 minutes. Why? Well, because he knew that I had thousands of questions on the Psalms and he was the expert in Canada on the Psalms. So I had all kinds of... I would pump him with questions till midnight.

They'd throw us out of those cafeterias in the motel there or they'd say, go sit in the lobby or something, but we would have so many questions. Well, Bruce, actual fact, said to me once that the reason he thinks this is here, that against thee and thee only have I sinned is that God sets the standard and sin is a failure to reach that standard. Therefore, all sin is against God.

Other people get hurt in the process. We sometimes call that sinning against them, but not in the same sense because they didn't set the standard. Sometimes crimes are committed against humanity or against other people.

We call that sin too, but it's not quite the same because the nation or the standard is different. It's been set horizontally rather than vertically. And so he says in that sense, against thee and thee only have I sinned.

That's one of the few things I'm not too sure that I've yet have seen in quite the same light because I feel that the primary emphasis here, and I think he's certainly right in God setting the standard and the primary sin being against God, but I suppose it would also say elsewhere that I've sinned against heaven and against thee, although that was a prodigal that said it. Or Saul said about Samuel, didn't he, about sinning against him and that, but not in the same sense. But what I believe it means here is this, that my sin looms so large in my mind and in my vision before you, a holy God with whom I have to do and with whom I am in union and enjoy happy communion.

This sin has done something to me that I realize above all, it's cut off fellowship with you. It's hurt you. It's offended you.

Everything else, sin against everyone else, all the hurt and all the crime pales into insignificance in comparison. You're the one that I've sinned against. Against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Then it is that David says in the same verse, so that God, you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. He wasn't saying, well now God, you know, I think I'll give you 10 out of 10 when you judge. And then that means you're okay, you're in.

If I didn't give you 10 out of 10, you wouldn't be God. It doesn't mean a thing like that. If every man on earth were blind, the sun would still continue to shine.

If every man on earth were an atheist, God would still be God. It wouldn't make one iota of difference. But what he's saying is when you judge me, however heavy that judgment is, however much of a terrible blow and punishment that is on me, I want you to know, God, you're right and you're justified because the terribly serious nature of this sin demands that you, the one that set the standard and said, the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

You, the one that set that standard, are the one that has every right to condemn me to death. So whatever you do, God, I want you to know, I'm not gonna fight against that. I'm more concerned about getting my sin forgiven than about questioning you.

I know the seriousness of it and how terrible it is. Isn't it marvelous in the last part of verse four that he says that to God when in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, all he'd been doing is trying to cover up this sin. Now, isn't that an amazing thing? Here it was a year or maybe six or eight or nine months before that, he'd been trying to cover it up.

Here he has this terrible sin. As I said this morning, when the spring of the year, when kings go forth to war, David sent Joab. So he looks down from his bedroom and he sees this beautiful lady and he commits adultery with her.

So then he says, well now, some days later, sometime later she sent to him and said, I am with child. And so he said, well, how can I cover this thing up? I don't want this to be known. So I know what I'll do.

I'll send for Uriah the Hittite, her husband, send for him from the battlefield. So send for him, let him come. I want him to bring a message.

I want to take a message back. I want to find out how the war's going on. So he came to the king's palace and David said, well, how are things going? And the children back and forth a little bit.

He said, okay, well, that's fine. You come home and you pass the news on to me now. Just go and enjoy yourself and go down and spend a night or so down with your wife there and everything will be fine for David that is because he'd have a cover now.

But Uriah the Hittite was a loyal person. And he said, should I go and do that and go down into my house when the ark of God and the people of God are fighting in the field? No, he slept at the door all night. David thought his plan was foiled.

He tried again. He got him drunk the next night, but the same thing happened. Even when he was drunk, he wouldn't give up that loyalty.

So David sent a letter back to Job, the commander in the field said, put him in the front line and kill him off. And he did. But still David had that terrible conscience.

And then Job sent back and said, yes, I've got a conscience now doing what you told me to do. David said, don't worry. This is life.

This is the way things are. But David's conscience couldn't be quietened. Then he thought now I'll be quietened.

He went to marry Bathsheba, but it still wasn't quietened. His conscience was not quietened, even though he then tried to forget about it. He said, stick a band-aid on it and cover it up.

Your conscience will never be quietened. Once you know who God is and what he is, it's only when you come in confession to him as David did in response to Nathan that then, I confess my sin unto the Lord and he forgave the iniquity of my sin. You see, all sin is against God.

God is the one who's offended. Against you and you only have I sinned. We always sympathize with the sinner.

How good that is. We've got to comfort people that are in need and show them there's hope, which is your theme I understand in these days. How wonderful that there's hope.

But listen, we're living in a day when we're much more interested on those horizontal relationships and comforting people from all the lessons we've learned and all the secular courses we've taken. And we've forgotten completely that we've offended a holy God and his honor is at stake. My brother, my sister in Christ, or those of you who are searching to become Christians tonight, God wants us to keep these in balance.

But the first and foremost thing is against thee and thee only have I sinned. I tell you because we don't recognize this anymore, is it any wonder that people don't go on to love the Lord? They can't say so that you're proved right when you speak and justified when you're judged. Goodness me, they don't think that anymore.

They don't bother with that now because they don't realize how serious their sin was. They don't realize they've offended God. But sin is an offense against a holy God who created us, who is our Redeemer, our Savior, and who one day is going to be our judge and you and I are going to have to stand before him in one place or the other and God is going to demand from us.

Either that we say Jesus paid the price or that we will have to give an account of our life. We had better preach the gospel message so that this offense against God is brought in or else we're not going to get a consciousness of sin and people will treat it so lightly without any seriousness that we'll keep on sinning, repenting, sinning, repenting. As I often say, there's no worse sinner than the one that spends half his life sinning and the other half repenting.

Keeps on doing the same thing over and over. An offended God. Look at the third thing.

Incidentally, I should say, if you want to take something practical to do now tonight, I would spend the next 12 months making a goal for yourself and your goal will be to try to understand the seriousness of sin. And if you will do that and in your quiet times have some little plan, even if it's just 15 minutes or so a day or whenever you can to understand why this offends God, then it is our lives will become much different from what they are because we treat it so lightly because everything's treated lightly in society today like that. Look at the third thing.

A condemning conscience, an offended God. And now thirdly, in verse five, a rotten core, a rotten core. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

This verse is absolutely nothing to do with the act of procreation. And this verse, what's more, is certainly not an excuse that David says, well, you know, I sin, but so what, you know, I've been like this all through life and that's the way things are and I'm rotten from the very core and that's it, you know, it's an excuse. No, no, that's not what he meant.

And C.S. Lewis rightly says, if you have an excuse for your sin, don't even bother to confess it because you obviously don't think it's sin. And if you don't think it's sin, then you can't repent. And if you don't repent, then God isn't gonna forgive it.

So he's not excusing himself. He's saying, God, I'm so rotten that it's not just a single sin that's right here now, it's the whole thing within me. I'm rotten to the core, absolutely rotten.

I've come from absolutely rotten putrid stock and the seed that was inside the core, the seed I came from was rotten when it was conceived. Here it is, absolutely rotten. And not only that, God, but all the way through, I've come from stock.

My parents are rotten and my grandparents, not in the wrong sense, of course, but all of them, all the way back, all the way back to Adam again. The whole thing is rotten and nothing else can come. And that's what's happened here.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. I mentioned this morning that when Adam sinned, it was instead of me going through the test because I would have done the same thing and so would you, festive God. And when Jesus, the second Adam came and went to the cross, he too paid the price for you there.

The more we realize how much we're vitally linked in rottenness with the first Adam, the more we're going to cling to the second Adam because we realize this is our only hope and here, indeed, we have salvation in Jesus Christ. How wonderful it is when we know that. So don't think about some single offense.

You slept up. Oh, I sinned, you know, two or three days ago, I sinned. Don't think of it, idiot baby, that you're sinning all the time.

And the very thought of foolishness is sin. I often ask myself the question, how long do you think I could go without any conscious sin? Do you ever ask yourself that question? Could I go one minute? One minute, I say, I should be able to go two. If I go two, and if I can go five minutes, I go an hour.

It's only 12 times that. And if I can go an hour, why can't I go a whole day? And maybe I'm not conscious of, really, but it's only they're pointed out objectively, but my heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked, refuses to allow me to recognize it as sin. I'm sinful to the core.

You see, I know that most of you believe that. I know I'm sinful to the core. But I believe most of us believe it is a doctrine, and we haven't experienced it in the contrition of the experiences of life.

Sinful to the core. When did we last weep on our knees about our utter sinfulness? These days, we don't preach doctrinal things. We only scratch people where they're itching.

We give life situation preaching. You're itching, you're lonely, you're depressed, you're friendless. Oh, well, I'll scratch you there.

And that's all right. That's in Scripture. But what we're doing is being selective and missing out the doctrinal parts that show us the evil at the very base of the problem.

No wonder we're truly interdenominational. We can go to any denomination now, as long as it's evangelical, they all preach the same, because we don't go into detail anymore on these things. We don't want to disagree with our brothers on these theological things.

In any case, people aren't interested in that today. Only give them modern stuff. Only give them stuff to do with baseball and hockey and cars and motorbikes and aeroplanes and things that really don't have too much to do with original sin, at least not overtly.

Oh, may God save us from the error of failing to understand that terrible, terrible thing that we're in that root of Adam. Sin has got a grip on me from my very core. To avoid that danger of not understanding that and the other danger of saying, yes, sure, I believe it.

I've grown up, you know, I'm in proper evangelical circles. I'm going to go to Thorn Valley Bible Chapel. How can you grow up here and not understand? Sure, I believe that.

But why aren't we different? Because it's words have replaced works. The lip has replaced the light. The creed has replaced the character.

The seriousness of the last part in verse six. A condemning conscience, verse three. Verse four, an offended God.

Verse five, a rotten core. And verse six, an unchanging truth. Unchanging truth.

Surely you, God, desire truth in the inner parts. You teach me wisdom in the inmost parts. In the inmost place.

God, you desire truth at the very core of my being where this iniquity is. This root that makes me sin, that makes me transgress. This is where you want to bring your truth and have a tremendous bathing effect upon my life.

Absolutely cleaning me up and showing me your standard. Reprogram me the right way inside with your truth, the right database. It's interesting that the word that's translated here in the second line, you teach me wisdom in the inmost place, is the almost identical word, the sister, in the same close family as that word in Psalm 139, which you needn't turn to, but where it says there in verse 15, I think it is.

Let me read from verse 13. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful. I know that full well.

Now look at this, here's the verse. My frame, my body, my unformed being, my frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. That's our word, the twin sister to it.

When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. Again, my dear friend, Bruce Waltke believes that that expression, the inmost place, which is translated the secret place in Psalm 139, is as contextually Psalm 139 would lead us to believe, the Jewish description for the uterus. It's the womb.

It's the place where I was formed. You saw me there so that this verse, in verse six now in our Psalm 51, would mean surely you desire truth in the inner parts. You teach or you taught me, for it's very hard to know what tense is being used.

Some have future, some have present, some have past. It's not always easy. You taught me wisdom in the secret place when I was being formed in my mother's womb so that you were already imparting that information and my conscience was being formed even then because there was something of you that was in there.

You created me. Now, just because we're pro-lifers, don't say, ah, ammunition. Ah, now I got it.

Boy, now am I gonna ever let them have it. I'm gonna load up my pea shooter and I'm gonna really, hump it over to the pro-choicers now and I'm gonna let them have it and show them what the Bible says. Listen, not only do they don't care what the Bible says in many cases or they wouldn't be what they are, but in actual fact, you don't win people by ammunition like that.

You win people by love. For you and I to know that God has put us together and informed us and taught us wisdom in the inmost place, maybe right there, maybe it isn't there, but whatever it is, I'm sure God did

do it there. I'm sure God has already done that.

I go down sometimes to Long Island to an assembly in Comack and there every single mother of young children in that assembly trains their own children at home. And most of them train the children while they're in the womb with songs of praise to God, with talking and reading the Bible. How on earth? You say, well, they can't understand.

But they are convinced that this makes a difference in the life of the child. Anyway, I'm not gonna get into that. I know nothing about it.

I'm not an authority on anything. Leave alone that. That's why I have to have this book in my hand because God's the authority, isn't he? And all I'm doing is plagiarizing, borrowing God's ideas.

So anyway, whatever it is, God does impart wisdom and he wants it in the inmost place, not just outwardly, not just going to church. Well, I go to the break and the bread service so I must be really spiritual as if, you know, we have got our certain form. I'm a Roman Catholic.

I go to the mass. I can do it. I like the rest of Sunday, but I go to the mass.

You see, gotta be careful in all those things. Every denomination has its little areas that it worships. And of course we've all got our reasons why one thing is more important than another.

But often it's very much outward and the inward heart, as I'm speaking tonight, if you push that thing, you're in for change now. I haven't talked about this. I'm listening to it.

You're out for change, I tell you. Can I ask you, if you're going to push some side or the other, look inside your heart and say, God, am I pure? Are my motives right? Is there something in my conscience that needs to be put right? I haven't intended to say that and I have none of my business, so let me pass on to finish. God wants us to have that wisdom in the inner parts.

That is true integrity. We're going to be reading about this a little later as we come in our psalm, I suppose, likely tomorrow. Maybe I'm going to try and finish it tomorrow.

I think I can. Well, anyway, we'll see. And I'm going to possibly deal with it tomorrow or the next day or something anyway, on the inner parts, because it tells us in verse 15 and 16, or 16 and 17, that it's not the outward sacrifices, but the inward ones of a broken spirit, verse 17, which is the key verse, surely, of the whole psalm.

That's the crux of the matter. That's where it is. God wants to see truth there, inside, so that what grows from that life will be real.

What's on the outside won't just be stuck on like an apple tied onto a dead apple tree. And you can look at it for two or three days and swear it's growing there, but you look at it after several weeks and it's rotten and the birds have pecked away and the thing may have dropped off. It's rotten.

You can't keep up that. It's got to come from the core. So let me ask you, as I conclude, what about conscience? Is there something on it tonight, verse three, that you need to put right with God? You're never gonna find peace of mind and you're never gonna satisfy God's demands until it's covered by the blood of Jesus.

The second verse, verse four, that we looked at, do you realize how serious our sin is and that we have offended God? And will you take on some course of study at your level to try to understand in a greater way the seriousness of sin? And thirdly, that I am rotten through and through and it's just not these little acts that somebody points out or somebody notices. Here and there I sin and I slipped up, you know. Slipped up, goodness me, you just did according to what your nature was.

We're rotten through and through. Oh, to realize that and then to realize that God wants truth in the inward parts and the way, the life, I am the way, the truth and the life. Jesus Christ Himself, who is the truth, came to earth.

He was the word. He was God speaking to me and He came and brought me the truth and God wants that truth in the inward part. As Jesus Christ, the truth will come into my life as I respond to Him in repentance and faith and say, God, I'm rotten through and through, but tonight there's forgiveness with you.

You can cleanse me. You can make me white as snow as that song that we've been singing. You can do it and Lord, according to my personality, it may take me a while to accept it, but Lord, I know from Scripture and I know by Your Spirit speaking in my heart, You can do it.

Lord, take me. Make me one of Your own. Set me free from that guilt of my conscience and put that new spirit within me that we're going to read about tomorrow.

Create in me a clean heart, God. Then I'll be able to spend my life usefully with a purpose which will please You. May God teach us these things for His namesake.

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