

Session 6

November 18, 2018

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Matthew 6:12-13; Psalm 51:1-7,10-12

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).

Forgiveness of sin is central to salvation. When we come to Christ, our sins—all of them—are forgiven; past, present and future. So why does the Bible tell us to continue confessing our sins to God if they are already forgiven? It’s because sin always separates from God. Isaiah 59:2 says, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Prior to salvation, our sin prevents a proper *relationship* with God. After we are saved, continued sin prevents a proper *fellowship* with God. So while confession and repentance are necessary to *begin* our Christian walk; they are equally necessary to *maintain* our Christian walk.

Psalm 51 records the mournful prayer of King David crying out for forgiveness following his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. The prayer teaches us important truths about the consequences of sin in a believer’s life, and the necessity of confession.

God’s forgiveness is a product of His mercy (v. 1). David rightly first appeals to God’s character as the basis of His forgiveness. Thankfully, salvation is not based on God’s *justice* but on His *mercy* (otherwise, who could be saved? See Titus 3:5). His choice of the words *gracious, faithful love, and abundant compassion* all indicate David’s understanding that God’s ongoing forgiveness is based on His mercy as well. To “blot out” is to remove completely all traces of the writing against him. By admitting that his sin is active, open “rebellion,” he also admits that any compassion afforded him by God is absolutely undeserved.

Confession and repentance are willful acts (vv. 2-4). We don’t sin by accident...we sin intentionally. Consequently, confession and repentance must also be intentional. Dr. Adrian Rogers used to say, “Sorrow is a clean wound...it heals over time. But guilt is a dirty wound...it must be cleansed.” While we can’t cleanse our own sin, we can adopt the attitude and initiate the actions needed to bring forgiveness about. David begins with a humble plea (v. 2), confesses his guilt and shame (v. 3), and then acknowledges not only the offense that holy God must feel, but His right to feel that way (v. 4).

We continue to sin because we are sinners (v. 5). Here, David is referring to more than the depths of guilt that he is feeling. Instead, he is stating an important theological truth: he was born a sinner! The doctrine of *the total depravity of man* does not mean that man is always as bad as he possibly can be, but rather that every aspect of the human constitution has been tainted by sin. This is part of man’s sin nature, inescapably passed down to all people (see Rom. 5:12). So David is tracing the sin he committed back to the fallen sinful nature he was born with. He is not insinuating that it’s not his fault; rather he is confirming it is indeed his fault. After all, we are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. It is in our very nature.

Confession leads to restoration (vv. 6-7, 10-12). In these final verses, David expresses the results of confession and repentance. With forgiveness, the barrier between us and God is broken

down, and our relationship with God is restored. With that restored relationship come all the benefits of what we like to call “being right with God.” These benefits include integrity and wisdom (v. 6); purity and cleanness (v. 7); a clean heart and steadfast spirit (v. 10); His continued presence and the power and anointing of His Holy Spirit (v. 11); the joy of salvation and a compliant, liberated spirit (v. 12).