



YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 4: God Leads His People

Lesson 6: God Demands and Desires our Salvation—Psalm 51

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)

GOD'S STORY

Psalm 51 begins with an attention-getter in its superscription that reads “For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.” This declaration is a direct reference to events in 2 Samuel 11 when David sinned by committing adultery with Bathsheba, orchestrated the murder of her husband Uriah, and hid it from the people. The prophet Nathan confronted him with a charge to own up to his actions. When David did, the prophet assured him, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die” (2 Samuel 12:13).

In as far as the record shows, David bore the blame for his sin. He looked at a beautiful woman and lusted after her, then carried his sinful desires into action. An entire chain of events of iniquity took shape, for as things got worse the cover-up became greater.

Beyond the drama of this story in itself, what makes Psalm 51 unique is that it was a public confession from David. As king, he could have asserted his authority and instituted a huge cover-up of the events. Instead, he confessed his sin and made sure everyone else could have foresight from his hindsight.

God regards all sin as serious, for it is both a moment of rebellion as well as a rejection of His Word. In that single instant it's as if we unconsciously despise truth and believe the Lord doesn't know what He's talking about. If David had been more conscious of God and how He sees everything, there may have been more restraint involved and the sin could have been avoided. What the Lord wants most isn't our good deeds or sacrifice, but us.

OUR STORY

The forgiveness of God seems easy to take advantage of. If you sin, you may feel as if all you need to do is ask for forgiveness to sidestep any consequences. This isn't what the Bible teaches, for we're called to turn away from our sin and realize how broken such broken choices can make us.

It's likewise easy to consider some sins more refined than others. We may veil certain offenses while exposing others, creating confusion in our relationship with God. David had to own capital crimes involving murder and misuse of power, but he also lied and corrupted others.

God can lead us into a type of wholeness we may not think is possible. It requires keeping a short account of our sins and taking responsibility for them as soon as we become convicted of them. If we hold back, we will create a gap in confidence and our connection to the Lord; however, if we cry out to Him we develop a clean boldness in our faith that we were created to have.

Unconfessed sin in our lives doesn't necessarily limit God. What it does do is limit our understanding of what God is trying to do. We may misinterpret Him being our faithful Shepherd and become as stubborn as sheep. Even then He is faithful to offer forgiveness and cleansing, maintaining His authority to lead and guide us.

David states in Psalm 51:5 that he was "sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." We are born with a bent toward sin from birth. Furthermore, the Bible states that salvation is a gift of God's grace through faith in Christ. No one comes to the Father but through Christ (John 14:6) and there is "no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

A clean mind will produce right desires. Right desires will produce right habits. Right habits produce a life of power and joy. Together, this creates a life that is pleasing to God and full of purpose. The old adage is true: "Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny!"

Perhaps you have stumbled, fallen, or are struggling with a secret sin that only you and God know about. You may even begin to wonder if a change is possible in the midst of your depravity. God's unmerited favor remains a reality, even though we may not always be consistent. When we foul up or fail we may be tempted to hide it, but we must always confess our failings to God and allow Him to work in our lives.

OTHERS' STORY

Not many people would think twice if you did nothing about your wayward choices. It's common for others to assume the little trivial things don't matter if you hit a church service every so often and ask God for forgiveness. Consequently, the people around us end up living as if they can do whatever makes them happy without any real consequence.

The inverse effect of this is when you take steps to be a person of integrity or own a backward decision, your relationship with God will stand out more to them than others who may imitate their own behavior. They may not always admire you for this kind of honesty, though—some people have no problem talking about their religious baggage or their inconsistency with church; but if you offer them something more authentic it may make them feel awkward. There are those who will respond with interest immediately, others who will come around over time, and yet some who will remain resistant.

Reminding others that God is always with them is something simple and powerful we can do to address this attitude in a way they might receive it. When others overlook His presence they may be more inclined to repeat destructive patterns, behavior or sins. If we offer them something relational by example, our conversations can be less debate-centered and more invitational. We may find sharing what we have with God is more fulfilling and fruitful than debating morality with those who don't yet have a foundation in Christ to receive it. Simply put, offer others a true look at Jesus in you and let Him do the inner work on them.

THE WORLD'S STORY

It is so easy to let the impurities of this world become commonplace in your life. Sometimes our thoughts are consumed with words of gossip, a trashy novel, movies that exalt everything that opposes God or our own deliberate choice to think thoughts we know dishonor God. It's often easier to say nothing than take a stand for purity, but remember that silence tends to imply agreement.

Another matter is we live in an increasingly mobile and global society. It's possible to use technology to experiment with sins virtually that we'd never think to try in person. It's also possible to hop in a car or on a plane and presume that because you do something outside of your hometown God doesn't take note of it.

We may recognize at least two types of sorrow in the world when confronted with our choices. “Worldly sorrow” involves feeling sad because you got caught doing something wrong or may have to suffer some hard consequences to your choice. Those who experience a damaged reputation, shattered relationship or nagging guilt know this experience full well. Unfortunately, worldly sorrow dies away as the consequences fade and people end up going back to behaving just as they did before. Instead of changing their thinking and behavior, they just try harder not to get caught again.

“Godly sorrow” is about feeling sad because you have offended God. When you realize that what you did was wrong, you want to grow through it, whether or not you suffer consequences. Such a change in heart is only possible when you realize sin is a personal offense against God himself. It may not always involve intense feelings, but it implies a change in thinking that can lead to outward changes in behavior.