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Respond in Repentance

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Series: Respond

Psalm 51:1-19

**BIG IDEA - ALL SIN IS ULTIMATELY AGAINST GOD AND TRUE
CLEANSING AND RESTORATION ARE FOUND IN CHRIST ALONE**

Good morning. See, ministry is moving toward the mess in people's lives. When you see a video like that... I bet some of you know somebody who is cohabiting. Eleven percent of couples in America today cohabit. Some of you in this room right now might be like, "This is a little awkward."

Guys, I want to give you hope. If you are cohabiting...some of you don't know me very well, so hear me say this in the kindest way possible, the most loving way possible, the most Spirit-filled way possible...you are settling for second best. We know this. Okay? We know it from Scripture. We know it now from even secular studies. You can't practice marriage. You can't practice lifelong commitment. You can't practice one bank account, one last name, one life.

Here's what I want you to know. Did you catch a couple of things in that story? They felt convicted but then didn't know how to get out of sin. I just want to talk to all of us. I hope nobody is self-righteous in here and thinks they're great because they didn't cohabit or something like that.

Here's what we do as a church. If we don't know how to help sinners get out of sin, what are we doing? Here's the way it works. Somebody gets up here (a lot of times it's me), and we preach the Word of God, and in the Word of God a bunch of stuff comes up. I mean, just get ready for what I'm going to talk about today. Who knows what's going to come out of this sermon?

People get convicted, and people confess things, and people need to change their... They had to move their wedding up a year. You know, it affects your budget. No wonder no one repents. It affects your relationships. It affects your finances. But here's what I want you to see happen.

So, what happens is somebody gets up here, we preach, and say hard things from God's Word, but here's the second thing that I don't emphasize enough. We say hard things from God's Word, and then we say, "How can we help?" You can't tell that story apart from our church and, particularly, a Community Group coming alongside them.

By the way, I don't want to just talk about couples that are cohabiting. I want to let you know that, as a church, we have a huge heart for marriages and families, so here's what we have. We're now launching a marriage prep class. You can text the word *PREP* to 39808. Listen. The best time to save your marriage is before it starts. G.K. Chesterton (he was a great theologian) said, "Marriage is an adventure...like going to war." We want to help you prepare for the adventure and war that marriage is.

By the way, if you're down in Lexington, you can talk to Pastor Luke afterward, and he'll get you the details. At the Winston-Salem Campus, next week, after every service, we're going to be having an interest meeting. This is particularly for couples that are dating, engaged, or newly married. We want to give you the resources and the relationships you need. Let's pray.

Lord, we just want to take a moment right now and pray for couples all over this room. In a room this size, across both our campuses, there are people in here right now who are living together and are not married. We pray that they would repent, that they would move out, and that they would follow the example they just saw in that video, Lord.

That's an obvious sin that maybe people can see as soon as we see one address and two different last names. It's all of the other sins in our hearts that are harder to see. Lord, we pray, as the psalmist prays in a different place, "Search me, O Lord."

Lord, I pray you would use the Word of God this morning, as we talk about Psalm 51, to search each of our hearts, that you would create in this church and among us a spirit of confession, a spirit of repentance, and that we would experience the joy that David does by the end of Psalm 51. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Guys, have you noticed that they don't talk about sin and repentance anymore? I mean, really anybody. It's not talked about in the church. It's not talked about in the culture. Where are you going to go and hear anyone talk about sin? Have you realized nobody sins anymore? Everybody "struggles." Right? You struggle. Nobody sins. Everybody has

baggage, but nobody is bad. Everybody is some type of victim, but nobody would ever write themselves in as the villain.

I mean, think about this. In your mind right now (I'm not going to name names), think about a high-profile person who gets caught in some sin. We're going to talk about confession today. There are two options: confess or get caught. Some of you *need* to confess and have *almost* gotten caught.

Think about this. A high-profile person gets caught, and they stand at the podium. Their wife or their husband and their kids are normally over *here*. That's part of the symbolic nature of all this. What do they say when they get up there? "I had a momentary lapse of judgment." They're all the same. I don't know who writes them. "I apologize for my..." They might use the word *indiscretion*. Here's another one people love to say: "I've let myself down."

No one talks about sin (we're going to talk about sin today for a while) and nobody talks about repentance. Let me be clear. Repentance involves guilt. There's guilt. You feel guilty, and then you repent. Now, what's interesting is we don't talk at all anymore about individual repentance.

Do you know what we talk a lot about? Group guilt. Am I supposed to feel guilty for being an American? Some people think I am. Should I feel guilty for being a man? Some people think so because of toxic masculinity. Should I feel guilty for everything done in the past by people who had the same skin color as me? A lot of people say you should.

Now, I need to be more sophisticated. We're not saying the Bible never calls a group of people to repent, but usually, the Bible calls a group of people, like the nation of Israel...the people right then who all together are doing the same sin. See, everybody wants everybody else to repent. The church is famous for talking about all of the sins that people "out there" struggle with, and we don't talk about any of our individual sins that *we* struggle with.

I think repentance gets a bad name. I don't know who has been in charge of the marketing campaign for repentance, but they need to be fired. *Repentance* is such a hopeful word. It means your life, your marriage, your family, your health, your relationship with God, and your self-identity could be completely different.

Guys, the reason I have to talk about repentance... Listen. Jesus Christ shows up. First words of Mark 1: "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." John the Baptist, who Jesus said was the greatest guy who ever lived... His message was repentance. Then you get to the book of Acts, and it's just a bunch of the apostles preaching repentance.

So, today we're going to look at one of only seven psalms of repentance. Turn to Psalm 51. Psalm 51 is so famous that William Carey, the great missionary, said years before his funeral, "I would like this to be the text for my funeral in the future." Let me read this to you. What I'm going to read to you is the very beginning.

Normally, I would say...you expect me to say right now..."Turn to verse 1," but I want you to turn to verse 1 and then look up. In your Bible, there will be a description or a superscription of this psalm. We don't get a lot of these. We normally get just who it's from. This tells you when this psalm was written. Let's read this. "To the choirmaster." The person who's going to put these words to music. "A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

Okay. I'm going to assume biblical illiteracy in this room, though I know a lot of you know the story of David and Bathsheba and all that goes with that. I'm going to just summarize it for all of us. Now, if you are in a Community Group (and I hope you are), what you need to do this week is, by yourself or with your group, read 2 Samuel 11 and 12. That's the story that leads up to this psalm.

But here's what I want you to know. David is one of the greatest people in the Old Testament. He's anointed king at 16 years old. He's a shepherd boy. God says to him at one point, "You are a man after my own heart." And he's the same one that all of your young boys... They love the story of David killing Goliath. This is the same David. But when David was in his late 40s or early 50s, he fell into grave sin.

What's interesting is that *is* when most men fall into grave sin. Sin often will come after a season of success, because success makes you lazy, and it makes you comfortable, and all of a sudden, you're by yourself a lot. You have a lot of discretionary time. You have a lot of discretionary income.

For some of you, this psalm is for you so that you will not do what David did. Listen. Satan is very patient, and he's waiting to take you down when it would have the greatest effect on the most people. This is why... Just watch it. Every time a major leader falls, everybody says the exact same thing: "Why right then?" Well, you can't say anything good about Satan, but you *can* say he's patient. He's waiting for the right time.

So, here's what happened with David. I'm going to keep it really simple, because we have to spend a lot of time in this psalm. David should have been out at war (this is what it says in 2 Samuel 11), but instead he stays home. He doesn't go to war. He was a warrior and a builder. He stops doing those things.

One day, he goes out to his window and sees this beautiful woman bathing. He inquires about her (her name is Bathsheba), and one of his friends says, "That's Uriah's wife."

Uriah was one of David's good friends, one of his mighty men. Instead of David going, "Okay, I'm going to stop. I was tempted, but I'm going to walk away..."

We don't have all of the details, but basically, he takes Bathsheba, forces himself upon her, sleeps with her, and thinks he got away with it. But then he finds out she's pregnant, so he's like, "Oh man! I've got to get Uriah to come back and sleep with Bathsheba so that Uriah thinks the baby is his." So, he brings Uriah back, and he says, "Uriah, listen. You've been such a great warrior. I want you to go enjoy your wife." He says, "I can't enjoy my wife, not when all of my friends are at battle."

David goes, "This isn't going to work," so he writes a letter to Joab, the head of the army, hands it to Uriah, and says, "I need you to give this to Joab." In it, it says, "Put Uriah at the front of the battle, and then retreat so he dies." So Uriah dies. He then marries Bathsheba. He covers it up. He thinks he got away with it.

It had been at least a year that he was covering it up when Nathan the prophet comes and confronts him and says, "I know and God knows everything you've done." This moment in David's life is the lowest moment of his life. He is a murderer, an adulterer, and a liar, and he has put the very nation of Israel at risk. This is what David writes as a psalm of repentance when he finally feels the conviction of his sin.

So, my hope is that this would be a psalm you could go to daily for everyday sins you struggle with, or if you find yourself in a moment where you feel like, "I have sinned grievously," you could go here. I'm going to try, with our time left, to quickly go through this entire psalm. Here's what he says. Psalm 51:1: ***"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions."***

We're going to look at what it means to repent. First, it means going to God, the God of the Bible. Here's the thing. The reason the world can't repent is they don't know what to do with all their sin, so they self-medicate and rationalize and lie to themselves and compare themselves with everybody else. Instead, David goes to God, and he appeals to the mercy of God.

Here's what I want you to know: true confession is done making excuses. He doesn't say, "Yeah, I was getting old. Yeah, I was tired. Yeah, I drank too much. Yeah, I didn't have the best dad. This is why I did it." If you're going to have true confession, you have to be done burying your sin (that means hiding it even from yourself), and you have to be done blaming other people.

You have to be done blaming your genetics. You have to be done blaming your parents. You have to be done blaming your ex. You have to be done with all of that. Then you have to be done with all self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is a kind of moral

superiority that thinks you're better than other people. Instead, he appeals to the mercy of God.

He doesn't appeal to the *justice* of God. You do not want the justice of God in your life. I know you want it for other people; you just don't want it for yourself. If anyone is like, "I just want God to give me what I deserve," I'm normally like... "If lightning strikes, I don't want to be anywhere near here." We appeal to the mercy of God.

Here's what I want you to know. This is so great. And God reveals this. God relates to us based on mercy, not merit. This is important, because you have to run a society on merit, and you have to run a business on merit. The best thing for a business is clearly to be a meritocracy.

You know that because, if you want to get brain surgery or heart surgery, you don't want them to be like, "Here's the doctor. We've been very merciful to him. He was terrible in medical school and flunked out. He couldn't even do organic chemistry, but the anesthesiologist will be here in a few minutes." You're like, "Agh!" Right? You don't want anything to do with that. So, merit is how you run a society, but it's not how God relates to us. He relates to us based on mercy.

Here's what's interesting: the Bible offends both religious and rebellious people. If I got up here and said, "The Bible is going to offend you guys today," you probably would think, "Oh man. Kyle is going to be talking about marriage or gender or sex or the exclusivity of Christ or hell." These are the topics that someone is going to get up here, and we're going to preach on them, and it's going to be offensive. And those *are* offensive, but those are offensive to the rebellious.

There's a whole other part of the Bible (you see this in the ministry of Jesus) that's offensive to the religious. It's anytime you talk about grace and mercy, because religion is about earning. Religion is about being better than. When you say something like, "Listen. Anybody can be forgiven of any sin if they repent, turn to Jesus, and ask for the grace and mercy of God..."

In the abstract, that's like, "Oh, that's so great." But, no, I'm talking about a rapist could. I mean, many theologians and scholars argue that David raped Bathsheba. She was happily married to a great, godly guy, Uriah, and when David, the king, decided he wanted her, he took her.

I heard John Piper say one time he was sharing the gospel with a group of people and trying to explain the grace of God, and they said to him, "So, you're telling me a child molester could be forgiven?" He said, "Yes." A child molester, which is, I think we'd probably say, the lowest of the lowest of the lowest human beings.

I remember finding out what Jerry Sandusky did at Penn State University. I'm from Pennsylvania. I'm like, "That guy is the worst of the worst of the worst." But if the gospel can't forgive *him*, if the mercy of God can't work for *him*, it can't work for *any* of us. This is why it says he has *abundant* mercy.

If you read verses 1-3... Let me read it one more time. **"Have mercy on me..."** In other words, that's "God, don't give me what I deserve." That's mercy. *Grace* is "God, give me what I *don't* deserve"...forgiveness. *Mercy* is "God, don't give me what I *do* deserve"...wrath, judgment.

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." But then look here. Verse 2: **"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned..."** Uh-oh. Look at this word. This is a word we don't use much anymore. **"...and done what is evil in your sight..."**

Now, here's what's interesting. Outside of the description we read at the very beginning, you can read all 19 verses of this psalm, and do you know what's missing? There's no mention of adultery. There's no mention of lying. There's no mention of murder. There are at least two reasons.

First, David is actually getting deeper underneath all of this and going, "Why did I even do what I did? Let me confess the sin *under* the sin." And, I think, because this psalm is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit did not want to limit the sin that could be confessed and forgiven to the three or four major sins in David's life at this moment.

If you look at the end of verse 4... We're going to look at a couple of words. The first word I want you to see is the word *evil*. Here's what happens. We need to recover, as a church (and as a nation, I would hope), theological language. *Evil* is a theological word. You'll notice the mainstream media doesn't like to use it, but every once in a while, they have to.

There's a school shooting. They have to use the word *evil*. Hamas attacks Israel. They have to use the word, and it's right. They use the word *evil*. See, when you're confessing sin, first you have to go to God and appeal to his mercy. Secondly, you need to realize how serious sin is. We don't take sin seriously anymore.

A hundred years ago, if a guy lost his temper with his wife that week, he might consider not taking Communion. Who thinks like that? If a woman was struggling with being jealous of her prettier sister, she might say, "I probably shouldn't take Communion this week." We don't take sin seriously anymore.

What's happening in these verses is David is under conviction. That's what we want to have happen in our own hearts. Basically, if you're a parent, what you want at some point is not for your teenager or your 9-year-old to pray a prayer. What you want is for (make up an age) your 12-year-old to feel the conviction of sin in their life. That's the moment where you're like, "God, I think you're at work in my son or my daughter's life because they're under conviction."

Well, David uses three words. We'll go through each of them. He uses the word *sin*. He ends with *evil* as the junk drawer, but he uses the word *sin*, he uses the word *transgression*, and he uses the word *iniquity*. You can see those words in verses 1-4. He uses the word *sin* several times, so we'll talk about that.

Sin is an archery term meaning to miss the mark. Actually, when we say *sin*, technically and theologically, it's the softest way to talk about doing evil. It actually gives you compassion for people, because you go, "What's everybody who's lost in Winston doing?" At one level, they're missing the mark.

It's interesting, because we love it when people hit the mark. Almost every sporting event in the world is designed... It's like everyone is playing the same sport: hit the mark. If you're watching a football game, and the quarterback throws an unbelievably incredible pass to the wide receiver in the end zone...it's your team, and it lets them win...you freak out. It's involuntary.

If somebody makes a long putt and it drops in the hole, they hit the mark. If somebody hits a three-pointer, what are they doing? Everything is about hitting the mark. We love people hitting the mark so much we'll pay money to sit down and watch them do it. Ridiculous! That's all you're doing. Like, "What am I going to do this afternoon? Watch people try to hit the mark." That's all we're going to do. We love it.

I've never been able to get into fishing. I just don't get it. If you're a fisher, praise the Lord. I like hanging out with my friends and talking. I just don't get it. You drop this thing in the water. You can't see it. You hope something bites it. Whatever. That's my understanding of fishing. I know it's not very sophisticated. I'm willing to learn. If you have a boat, I'm willing... No, I'm kidding. But hunting I got right away. When the big, ugly hog walked out, I said, "I get it." There's something primal about it. There's something ancient about it.

So, we love hitting the mark. Here's the thing. We have to realize that part of what sin is (and we'll talk about the three parts of it) is we're not hitting the mark. Like I told you earlier, it gives you compassion, because you're like, the average person... I don't mean

this in a patronizing way. The average person in Winston-Salem or Lexington or North Carolina doesn't even know what to aim at.

Why don't you hit the mark? Well, you're not aiming at anything or you're aiming at the wrong thing. You know, a whole generation... I mean, we told the Boomers the greatest thing you could do was aim at the American dream, and then we're so upset that they hit it

By the way, you hit the mark by having the right standard and the right motive. What happens is in every culture, the standard changes and usually lowers. The standard should be, and technically is, the Word of God, and then the motive... See, it's both. We can have the right standard and have the wrong motive. The motive is love simplified...love for God, love for other people.

I want to talk about the second word. I'll show it to you. The second word is *transgression*. Verse 3: "**For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.**" This is where you realize sin is a big deal. Listen. If *sin* is missing the mark, *transgression* is crossing the line. It's basically the same word as *trespass*. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Now imagine that you are hanging out... You're somewhere in North Carolina, and you're hiking, and you see a sign that says, "No trespassing," but it looks like an awesome area to hike. It looks like it actually is more beautiful than where you currently are.

Now, you could have two conclusions when you see a "No trespassing" sign. Like, "What rich dude owns this property and doesn't want to let me see how awesome it is?" Or you could think, "Somebody knows more about this property than me and there's danger over there."

I think those are the two ways you can look at God's Word when it says, "Don't trespass." You can think, "God is holding out on me. It's a lot of fun over there, and he doesn't want me to go over there." God is like, "Actually, no. There are lions and snakes and bears, and it's very, very dangerous. That's why I'm here."

I think what leads a person to conviction is realizing the willful nature of their disobedience, which is exemplified in the word *transgress*. I cross the line. In other words, it's when a high schooler realizes, "I don't just struggle with looking at things I shouldn't look at; I wait for Mom and Dad to leave the house, and I've asked to have them on 'Find My Friends' so I know when they're coming back." It's when you realize (this is what Proverbs says), "I've been planning this sin."

I knew a pastor. He was counseling this couple that had gotten... They weren't married. They got caught somehow. I don't know the details. They'd been having premarital sex, and he confronted them about it. They said, "Well, you know, it was just a moment. It was an act of passion. We were weak in that moment." He said, "Well, did you use protection?" They said, "Yes." He goes, "Then it was planned."

A friend of mine, not in our church, not in our city... He had an affair. This was the first time I had a friend have an affair. I asked him, "How did this happen?" He said, "Well, there was a moment when I decided I liked this girl, and I encouraged my wife to become friends with her because I figured that would bring her closer into relationship with me and give me an opportunity." You start to realize that seed of wanting to transgress is in all of us.

I remember being a 14- or 15-year-old boy, and my parents told me I could not get "parental advisory" CDs. A CD is this little thing that's like *this*. It's hard to explain. Basically, you needed to be 17 years old to get these, or something like that. All I know is as soon as they told me I couldn't have it, man, did I want it. There's willful.

The third is the word *iniquity*. It shows up one time. Verse 2: "**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity...**" So, if *sin* is missing the mark and *transgression* is crossing the line, *iniquity* is to be twisted or perverted. That's what it means. Here's how you get to iniquity: you cross the line all the time, and you get lost in the woods.

So, imagine we go back to that illustration, and you're like, "I'm going to trespass." The first time you trespass... Maybe you even trespass with a friend, and you go, "Remember where the sign is, because we have to get back here, because we shouldn't be here."

So, you trespass the first time. Then one time you go, "Well, hold on. We could go a little farther." Some of you have been here spiritually and morally. You get lost. You go, "I don't know how to get back to the sign that said, 'Don't trespass,' which means I don't even know how to get home."

Being in full-time ministry is a great blessing because you get a front-row seat at the *best* things in people's lives, but being in full-time ministry is hard because you get a front-row seat at the *worst* things in people's lives. You might know this from your own life or from other people's experience. People can get in such deep, dark places.

Now with access to the Internet, there's no guard, so people find themselves visiting places, looking at things (this is probably the most common), and they're like, "I have no idea how I started to look at something so gross and perverted." The answer is you didn't start there. You didn't get there overnight; you got there over time. If you ever ask the question, "How did I get here?" the answer is "One step at a time."

Well, David goes on. Look at what he says. After he has confessed those sins, he says this. Verse 4: **"Against you, you only, have I sinned..."** You go, "Really, David?" He only sinned against God? What about Bathsheba? You know, Uriah is in heaven. "And me!" Right? Bathsheba's dad is probably upset. If Uriah's mom is alive, *she's* upset. He lied and tried to cover it up to Nathan when he was first confronted. Nathan is probably like, "You sinned against me also."

What he's saying is sin is primarily vertical, not primarily horizontal. Here's what I mean. All sin is against God, and that's good news because it means God can forgive it. Like, if before the service I was in the lobby, and two guys were yelling at each other, and one guy, out of nowhere, just punched the other guy in the face, and I said, "I forgive you both," they'd be like, "What are you doing? This has nothing to do with you. You don't get to step in and forgive it."

This is actually good news. Because all sin is ultimately against God, he *can* forgive it, because the only sin you can forgive is the sin done against you. This also tells us that sin is such a big deal. Every parent knows there are certain things that, if a kid says to a sibling, it's like, "Don't say that to your brother," but if he says the same thing to Mom or Dad, he's in really big trouble. This is a principle. It's not just what sin you committed; it's who you committed the sin against.

When I was at Duke, there was this... These Duke students, you know. They'd try to trick me. I remember this one Duke student said, "So, you're telling me..." He had to read this. This was before AI, so I don't know where he got it from. He basically said, "So, you're telling me that a sin committed in a finite period of time will receive an infinite punishment?" Doesn't that sound like an interesting philosophical question?

What he's basically saying is "You can commit something in a 70-year period and be punished eternally?" He's not the first person to think up that question. The answer is it's not the time period you did it in; it's who you did it against. If you sin against an infinite God, there is an infinite punishment.

So, David says, **"Against you, you only, have I sinned..."** Then look at what he says. **"...and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."** In other words, here's what David is saying. This is actually really important. David is saying, "I've learned a lesson through my sin, and the lesson is you were right."

See, here's what happens. Whenever you sin, you disagree with God. That's another definition for *sin*. Like, what is sin? Disagreeing with God. What is confession and repentance? Agreeing with God again. That's what he's doing here. Look. I want you to

see what he says next. **"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."**

Now, here's what he's *not* saying. He's not saying, "My parents had me in a sinful way" or "My parents committed sin in having me." He's not saying that. He's talking about the depth and origin of his sin. Let me give you one big doctrine, or kind of two doctrines, maybe, for a Sunday morning. He's talking about the doctrine of original sin, which teaches that Adam (I'm talking about Adam from Adam and Eve) was not just our biological father; he was our human representative.

So, I want you to put your theological hat on for a second. He's not just our biological dad. Okay? He's not just, like, our great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather. He is the human representative, which means, in the mind and heart of God (and that's what matters), somehow when Adam sinned, he represented us, and then somehow (it talks about this in Romans) we were in Adam. I don't know how it all works. Because of that, we have inherited a sin nature and the guilt that goes along with it.

You're like, "Why is this important?" Here's why: you don't sin, so now you're a sinner; you sin because you *are* a sinner. You and I are sinful by nature and by choice. This is the doctrine of total depravity. *Total depravity* does not mean you are as bad as you possibly could be. Thank God that that's not true for us, because there's the restraining grace.

Total depravity means every part of your life has been infected and affected by sin...your mind, your heart, your will, and your emotions. Here's why Adam being our human representative is good. It's called (I know I'm giving you a bunch of phrases) *federal headship*, that Adam was our federal head.

If you don't like the reality that you were guilty in Adam, you need to hold on to that, because it's the same paradigm, same thinking, that says you can be righteous in Christ, because Jesus is also (for those who turn and trust in him) our federal head. Somehow, what he did 2,000 years ago in his life, death, and resurrection... When we trust, the Bible says we're in him.

So, what he's saying here is, "God, I'm realizing that when I sin, it's against you. I do it because I *am* a sinner, and I realize that I was wrong and you were right." Quickly, we'll go to some of these other last ones. He says, **"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."**

What we need is confession and cleansing. Here's how it works: we confess; God cleans. You cannot clean yourself up spiritually. As we raise our kids, we're trying to teach them to clean themselves physically. Right? Especially middle school boys. Like, "Some deodorant would be helpful every once in a while."

But it's interesting. Think about the idea of cleaning or cleansing. Some of you have done a juice cleanse. Or before you get a colonoscopy, you have to do a colon cleanse. Those are not very fun. Here's the whole point: sometimes being cleaned is very painful. He's saying, "God, I want you to clean me. I'm going to confess it, Lord, but I need you..." Hyssop was something only the priest used. He goes, "God, I need you to be my priest, and I need you to clean me." Look at what he says here.

"Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."

The cleansing starts at the heart level. Years ago, when I first became a Christian, I read a small book called *My Heart—Christ's Home*. In the book, Jesus comes to this man's home, which is his heart, and the guy is so surprised to see him. He's very startled but happy that Jesus is there, and he starts to show him all of these different rooms. Then Jesus says, "I'd like to go upstairs," and he says, "I don't think you want to go upstairs."

As the story progresses, basically, Jesus goes up there, and there are different rooms the man will not let Jesus into. If Jesus knocked at the door of your heart, what rooms are you not letting him in? In the whole story, the guy is afraid that Jesus is going to see the mess. Jesus is like, "All I need you to do is open the door, and I can heal the mess. I can clean up the mess, but I can't open the door for you. You have to open the door and let me in." That's what he's saying.

Look at what he says here. This is the key verse. Verse 12: ***"Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."*** Most scholars believe this is the very center of the prayer. "Lord, restore unto me the joy of..." Often, by the way, we say "...my salvation," which is fine. I know what you mean when you say that. But what David says here is "...your salvation." "God, you are the one who saves." He basically says, "God, remind me what it felt like when I was first forgiven."

He says, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation." Listen. This is so important. Sin is what we do when we're not satisfied with God. Another reason he doesn't mention the adultery and the murder is it's not the main issue. The main issue in David's life was he had lost the joy of his salvation.

When you lose the joy of your salvation, that's when you start being short with your spouse. When you lose the joy of your salvation, that's when you start looking at things you shouldn't look at. When you lose the joy of your salvation, that's when you start

buying a bunch of things you don't need. When you lose the joy of your salvation, that's when you start comparing and competing and contrasting with everybody else.

So, David says, "Restore unto me the joy of my salvation." Look here. ***"Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you."*** He says, "God, I've realized that you can turn my mess and my misery into a ministry. So, here's my promise, God. I confess, you clean me, and I want to be used in the lives of other people." I've told you this for years. I promise your greatest suffering, your greatest weakness, your greatest struggle, *will* become your greatest ministry.

Last week, I was talking to you guys, and I was like, you know, *this* struggle on the phone that people have, and *this* struggle on the phone that people have, and I mentioned sports gambling. It wasn't even a big part of my sermon, but a young man came up to me afterward and said, "I've been clean from an addiction to gambling for two years." He said, "Man, it was really hard."

He said, "People don't talk about it a lot, because it's hard, and it's very, very private." He said, "I used to just be addicted for football games. I was telling myself, 'I'm done. I can handle Monday. Sunday, Monday, I gamble. I don't gamble.'" He says, "Then basketball season comes. Baseball season comes. I couldn't stop."

He told me the story of how Christ set him free, and he said, "I wanted you to know who I am so if anybody ever struggles with gambling you could send them to me." I thought that's powerful, because people want to be ministered to by people who've suffered or struggled in the same way. He says, "Restore unto me your salvation." Look at what he says here.

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Look at verses 18 and 19. ***"Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar."*** There's a lot at the end, but here's what David says.

David says, "Here's going to be my message to people: 'God loves a broken heart. God is near those who are broken in spirit.' My message is going to be 'I walk with a limp the rest of my life.' I know I'm a sinner saved by grace. I know I only appealed to the mercy of

God. I've been brought low, and my message to other people now is 'No matter what you've done or where you've been, God can extend mercy and grace to you.'"

In fact, verses 18 and 19, if you read it... The first time you might go, "This is strange." It's all about personal repentance, and then he's like, "Be good to Zion, and be really good to Jerusalem." Here's the whole point: when God has saved you, when God has rescued you, when you've confessed your sin, you want God to be good to everybody.

I mean, what did Jesus say? "Love your enemies." It's like, could God do such a work in your life you could say, "God, would you be good to my ex?" "God, I didn't have the best relationship with my dad. Would you save him?" "The worst boss I ever had...God, would you do something great in his life?"

Here's what we're going to do. This series is called *Respond*, and in just a minute I'm going to ask you to respond. We only do this a couple of times a year in this way. We're going to have the elders up front. Here's the thing. I want you to come forward if in any area of your life you want the joy of your salvation restored.

This is not a call (it *could* be) for somebody who has done some big, bad, dark sin. You may want to come forward as well. This is just a call for anyone who says, "You know what? There's something in my life I need to confess and repent of, and I just need a fresh start today. I need to be forgiven, and I need to be set free."

Some of you might walk up here and go, "You know what? I just have a terrible attitude, and I need to say it out loud. I need to repent." Some of you may say, "You know what? We were going to leave when we saw the cohabiting video, because *we're* cohabiting, but maybe we could go forward and say, 'Could you help us? We don't make a lot of money. It's hard.'"

Some of you may need to come forward because the fruit of the Spirit is not in your life. If you can go through love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness, and they're not up and running in your life, you have to go, "I have to repent." There might be an area of your life where you're like, "Lord, I need you to heal me." Cleansing and healing are very much connected. You might say, "I just need healing in this area. I'm coming out of a bad relationship. I'm coming out of a broken home. Would you just pray with God to heal me?"

See, here's the thing, guys. David could pray a prayer like this, and he knew the hope of the Messiah by faith; we know him by name, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ loves to heal sinners. He loves to forgive sinners. He loves to set them free. The hope is that you would be set free so you could say, "You know what, Lord? Would you help me to tell

transgressors your way? Would you do good in all the world?" Let's pray, and then I'll have you stand.

Lord, as the elders come forward, we just want to pray. I want to pray for different people in here who need to step forward in some area of their life. They may need to come forward in a minute and just say, "I'm missing the mark. Help me find the mark. Would you pray that I could hit the mark? I'm missing the mark in my marriage. I'm missing the mark with money."

Some people need to come forward for somebody else, because when we talked about transgression, they thought about a prodigal. When they thought about a relationship they don't even have anymore with someone in their family, they're seeing how sin has twisted that person and twisted that relationship.

Some people might need to come forward and say, "Lord, could you help me be a Nathan? Could you help me lovingly confront the person who's the David in my life?" Lord, would you do it? Would you do it for our good and for your glory? We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.