

Reforming the Evangelical Soul, Part 2

Selected Scriptures

Let's move on in point number three and we see in this a prayer for pardon. A prayer for pardon. David as he continues on is expressing still another aspect of dependence upon the faithfulness of God. As he enters into a time of confession of sin. Look at verse 6 and 7 with me. "Remember O Lord your compassion and your lovingkindnesses, for they have been from of old."

God your, your compassion is eternal. Your loyal love is eternal. Nothing that has happened in time has changed who you are. Nothing that has happened in my life could possibly change your disposition of love toward me. And so God I appeal to your compassion, I appeal to your loyal eternal love, and the context of that is that he's bringing his sinfulness to the Lord.

Verse 7 he says, "do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions." God don't, don't hold my, don't hold my sins

against me. Scripture says in Hebrews 10, you know, their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1:7. And I'm, I'm quite confident that, that many of you in this room need to come back to these things and to apply them personally to your hearts and appropriate the cleansing of conscience and the settled peace of, of heart that comes from recognizing that what Christ purchased for you in, in purchasing your justification, your sanctification, your glorification with his redemptive work at the cross, he also purchased for you that the implication, better stated, the implication of this is, is that you can be at peace and be at rest even in light of the past sins that you've committed.

The whole point of redemption, the whole point of atonement, is that your sins would be carried away from you so that you bare them no more. Your sins were placed on Christ at the cross where God punished him for what you had done. What you had thought, what you had said, even the darkest things who knows how many abortions might be represented in a room like this, even that kind of dark sin, dark perverse things of, of an

immoral nature that are surely represented, multiple times over in a room of this size.

For all of us to realize that our darkest sins, that, that we wouldn't want, and we should not discuss publicly, to realize that, that all of that was laid on Christ at the cross. God punished him and was perfectly satisfied with his Son. And, and in place of your sin, the righteousness of Christ was credited to your account. So that God accepts you not on the basis of who you were, or who you are, or who you will become.

God accepts you exclusively and only, as we'll see tomorrow morning, God accepts you exclusively on who Christ is and what he has done. The immutable Christ, the finished work. All indicating that God has accepted his Son and if you are in his Son then he accepts you as well. And therefore we have the prerogative, we have the privilege of peace of mind, peace of conscience as we come and confess our sins.

And David here is confessing in a way that is confident that God will remember his own character. You and I confessing

now look on the other side of the cross, looking back at the cross, confessing our sins and saying, God, even though I don't deserve this I'm confident that you have not changed in your disposition toward Christ. So I ask you to forgive me in light of what my savior has done for me. In light of what your son has done for me.

Listen. This is essential to the well-being of an evangelical soul. And the nature of the kind of teaching that's being carried on and perpetrated upon people in the name of Christ, giving people the sense that you're pretty good, you know that we don't need to talk about depravity too much, and we don't need to take sin too seriously, after all God loves everybody and God loves you. You know but it's, but it's a, it's a, it's a sentimental definition of it that, that avoids the cross, that avoids substitution and, and people just get this sense that, I'm a, I'm a good enough person to go to heaven. That's not the ground of our hope.

The ground of our hope is that Christ is good enough to go to heaven and he's had mercy to include us under the robe of his

righteousness. He had mercy as I believe it was Machen that said and expressed it in this, in these terms, but when he was dying on the cross he was thinking of you by name. Because he was dying as a substitute for you. He was thinking of you and your sins and that, and, and appropriating and receiving the wrath of God for what you had done even on the cross. That's how perfectly symmetrical his substitution for you was, when he gave his life on the cross, and bore your sins in his body at the cross.

Somehow our savior had in mind his people individually by name when he gave himself up for us. Think about that. Think about the majesty of that. That's a shepherd for you. Laying, the good shepherd, laying down his life for the sheep. So much so that the apostle Paul could say in, in Galatians chapter 2 verse 20, there's a biblical basis for expressing it this way. You know he loved me and gave himself up for me, first person singular.

He didn't die for a blob of humanity and hope that later someone would believe in his death. It wasn't a potential

atonement, it was an actual one. He actually accomplished redemption for us by actually dying for us by name two thousand years before we were born. That kind of theology leads you into a confident prayer for pardon that is both humble and confident at the same time. God I don't deserve forgiveness but Christ has purchased it for me and based on who you are, based who on who your Son is I ask you to be merciful and not remember my sins against me any longer.

And so David appeals to the character of God as we appeal to Christ as the basis for forgiveness. What does this say about the evangelical soul, what does it say about the Christian soul, the genuine Christian soul? Not these false versions that we've been talking about over the past twenty four hours or so. The truly Christian soul knows its own spiritual poverty and acknowledges it openly before God.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The bankrupt, the spiritually bankrupt, blessed are those who acknowledge their bankruptcy before God for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said in Luke chapter 5, "I did not come to call those who

think they are righteous, I came to call sinners to repentance.”
And so the very sense, beloved, and some of you I, I hope this
will be an encouragement to you.

You know those of you with particularly sensitive
consciences and, you know, you could, you catalog and you know
and you rehearse the things that you’ve done. And you know that,
and you start to wonder, Am I even a Christian, or not. As
you’re thinking this way what you have to understand is that the
whole point of salvation is to deliver you from that. The fact
that you are sensitive to sin, that you hate sin, that you’re
repentant of sin, is the mark of a work of grace in your life.

The very fact that you see yourself as a sinner is an
immediate invitation into the presence of Christ for mercy and
for the kindness and love that he promised to us in Matthew
chapter 11 because he’s “gentle and humble in heart and you’ll
find rest for your soul.” The evangelical soul doesn’t boast in
its own goodness. It freely confesses its own unrighteousness
and goes to Christ and rests in him for forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,” 1 John 1:9, well that means something. I mean that’s the, that’s the word of God! That’s premised on the credibility of Christ. The person and the work and the faithfulness of Christ. And so, and so we have this blessed gift given to us by our savior that we can go to him, go to him in our sin, go to him and confess our laziness, go and confess our lust, go and confess the angry words that we’ve said, go and confess the, the other things that we’ve done. We can go and confess it all, believing in Christ and knowing that he receives us favorably.

You know, one of the things that I’ve been teaching through all of the Psalms, it’s taken me eight years and I’m not done yet, but one of the things that recently we’ve just been kind of rehearsing at, at Truth Community Church is this. To be in Christ, means this about your relationship with God. To be in Christ, and Scripture is filled with this, to be in Christ means that we understand that God is with us. And God is for us.

God is with me as a Christian and he is for me. He is not hostile to me. That's contrary to the Gospel. When Christ died he reconciled us to God, "while we were enemies Christ died for us," it says in Romans 5. In Romans 8, I want to get this exactly right, in Romans 8 the apostle Paul after saying we've been called, justified, glorified, he says, "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?"

Beloved, if you are in Christ, God has reconciled you to him whether you feel like it or not at any given moment is beside the point. It's premised on the objective work of Christ, not your subjective apprehension of it. And if Christ has reconciled you to God then God is for you. God is with you in the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And so this is greatly liberating. This is greatly producing of confidence in our hearts.

And so the evangelical soul, when it remembers its sin, it remembers Christ, it remembers the blood atonement made at the

cross, and it clings to that shed blood for mercy. And Lord, if you died for me once, and you died for me once for all, then, then we're reconciled. And yes I hate my sin, and yes I need present forgiveness. I need cleansing of my soul. I need my joy restored to me. But I'm not trying to manipulate Christ into loving me again. He already does.

Because his love is eternal and if you are in Christ, God is with you, Psalm 23 verse 4, "I fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me." Ah, Christian friend don't you see it? Don't you see how precious this is? If you are in Christ, God is with you and God is for you. He is on your side.

How could he be more on your side than he was when he interceded for you at the cross? How could he be more on your side than he is as he intercedes for you at the right hand of the Father in heaven? Oh we just need to, we just need to put away our stingy thoughts about God. Our stingy thoughts about his love and his goodness toward us.

God is far more good, far more gracious to us than we can comprehend. And we need to rest in that. Do away with some of our, our destructive introspection of ourselves. Look outside of your heart. Look outside of yourself. Look up to Christ, look up to him in glory. Look up, see the heavens opened. See Christ looking down with his arms opened wide, which they are after the cross. Look up and see those wounds still visible above. Those wounds suffered for you and recognize the reconciliation is accomplished, pardon is given.

So that we go and we pray for protection and guidance and pardon with a full assurance and confidence that God receives us well when we do. This is what it means to be a Christian. This is what the Christian soul understands and acts upon and trusts in. And you start to see how utterly impoverished the evangelical world is as it divides us on racial lines and things like this. And totally diverts our attention from the very point of reconciliation, the very point of redemption, is a soul resting in the mercy of God and loving and glorifying him in response to that.

Well, fourth thing, fourth aspect that we see about the evangelical soul from Psalm 25 is you see David moving from there into a prayer of praise. There's a certain progression here that makes sense, uh, a man who has been pardoned and knows that he's been pardoned is going to respond in praise. He's going to offer worship to God, offer worship here in the New Testament side of the cross. Offer praise to Christ for what he has done.

And this is exactly what David does, look at verses 8 and 9. He says, "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in justice. And he teaches the humble his way." And then he goes on and says in, in verse 10, "all the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. For your namesake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity for it is great."

So what David has done here is he's turned his attention away from himself and he's, he's turned his attention to simply extol the character and the attributes of God. What he's saying here in this passage, he's extolling God for his justice. He's

extolling God for his moral purity, for his holiness. And from that position of excellence, that position of divine supremacy, and divine excellence, he is able to teach his people the proper way to think, and the proper way to live.

And so he leads us in the right way for those of us who humble ourselves before him. Now notice there in verse 11, David is not speaking here as one who is boastful in self-righteousness. You would not find David in the pulpit of current evangelical churches. With the proud boastful worldly spirit that animates that. David's soul was nothing like that.

He says in verse 11, "For your namesake O Lord pardon my iniquity for it is great." David is writing it as an earnest man of God and in the midst of that nobility of his spirit he was conscious of his sin. And beloved let me just reemphasize this again because I know that, I know this is, this is where people of tender conscience that are under the strong preaching of the word of God, this is, this is a particular pitfall for those of us that are like that.

An awareness of sin is not a reason to doubt your salvation when it comes in the context of trusting and loving Christ. Awareness of sin is, is the mark of spiritual life. John MacArthur has said, you know, that the more, the, the more you grow in holiness the less that you sin but the more that you feel it. The more that you're, you know you're more conscious of it even if you're growing in holiness, you've grown in holiness to a point where the, the remnants of sin that are in you pain you even more than they did at the start of your salvation in the early moments of your conversion.

This is a mark of spiritual life. Paul expressed this in Romans 7 didn't he? He speaks about that in verses 14 through 25, we won't turn there. But here's the point, here's what I want you to see, here's what I want you to take away from this part of it. Thinking of multiple people from our, from Truth Community Church, where I had to say exactly these words to them. Or words like them.

Just stop, and now I'm saying it to you, stop collapsing into that heavy introspection that says, I'm not good enough,

and what about this, and sorting out, trying to sort out, all kinds of unsortable motives. You know, why did I do this, why did I do that? You know the thoughts of man are very deep, you can't sort all that stuff out. The point of Christ and the point of trusting him is, is that I'm not finding my confidence spiritually, in, in what I see inside myself.

'Cause I look in there and I see the remnants of evil that are still clinging to me. Rather we look outside ourselves, we look to the cross, we look to the Son of God and we trust outside of ourselves in him for our righteousness. In him for our sanctification. In him for our wisdom. And it, it directs you from trusting in what you see inside yourself, outside to who Christ is. And you look outside yourself, you look up to Christ rather than in at self.

And that's what David is doing there in verse 11 he's calling upon the Lord. "Pardon my iniquity, it's great. And so Lord I'm asking for pardon based on the goodness and the greatness of your character." And so there's this prayer for

pardon. Now, that's just to review the point so that we keep up with where we're at here.

We saw first of all a prayer for protection. A prayer for guidance. A prayer of praise. A prayer of confession that we called a prayer for pardon, yes. A prayer for protection, a prayer for guidance, a prayer for pardon, a prayer for praise. Point number five we see now a prayer of fear.

A prayer of fear. Elsewhere in the Psalms it says there is forgiveness with you that you may be feared. The way these things build on one another is just fascinating to me. The grace of God does not make David casual in his approach to God. Not overly familiar, you know, he, he, he still takes care to reverence the name of God. He fears the name of God. He lives in worship of God.

And you see that beginning in verse 12. Having just confessed his sin and asked for pardon he says there in verse 12, "Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. His soul will abide in prosperity and

his descendants will inherit the land. The secret of the Lord is for those who fear him and he will make them know his covenant.”

Notice how the word fear brackets those three verses. At the beginning, the man who fears the Lord, verse 14, the secret of the Lord is for those who fear him. This passage, this section of the Psalm is about fearing God. And so, forgiveness does not lead us into irreverence. Forgiveness does not lead us into an abuse of grace, or an acceptance of sin in our lives. Rather we are so struck by the majesty and goodness of God for having done this for us that we respond in fear.

What is that fear of which he speaks? Well you’ve probably heard it defined many times as reverential awe. I’ve never found that phrase helpful and so I don’t define it that way. The fear of God, as you read through scripture, the fear of God for those who are reconciled in Christ is this. The fear of God is the life of humble worship.

The life of humble worship that you render to God in response to his saving mercy in your life. Genuine salvation

produces a man without exception, produces a woman without exception, genuine salvation produces a man or a woman who responds to God with a life of worship and a life of adoration.

A life of seeking obedience to him because we are so grateful for the gift in Christ that's been given to us. And we are so struck by the holiness and the justice and the mercy and the goodness and the grace and the patience and the mercy of God shed abroad in our hearts. When the Spirit gave us new life and led us to faith in Christ. We're so astonished by that that we can't do anything other than live a life that in principle is marked by gratitude and a desire to obey.

Let's pray together. Father for these precious brothers and sisters in Christ that are in front of me, and hearing this through other means of media, I pray that you would grant us redemption from every sin and every trial of this life. Until we enter safely into your heavenly kingdom. O God, O Christ, O great and tender Holy Spirit, restore this evangelical soul to your people for their good and preeminently for your glory, through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.