

Depth of experience with God - confession of sin (Psalm 51)

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Psalm 51 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies brought out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts [00:01:01] and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than clean snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy [00:02:03] praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion. Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness. With burnt offerings and whole burnt offering, then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

The most of what I will have to say to you tonight centers on this psalm that has just been read to us, but I have another passage which I'm going to treat as a sort of subsidiary passage, which I would also like to read to you, and this [00:03:05] is found in the fifth chapter of Luke's Gospel.

Starting to read at the first verse, and it came to pass that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret and saw two ships standing by the lake. But the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said [00:04:01] unto Simon, launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishers on their net break. And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it,

he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draft of the fishers which they had taken. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when [00:05:03] they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.

In a sense, it's a slight surprise to me that nothing has been said yet about the way in which our topics for this week are a development and spring out of the topics that we were considering last year. But perhaps this is something that hardly needs saying about the Bible readings particularly. We were considering last year, those of us who were here know this well enough, those wonderful truths that have been recovered to us over recent centuries.

Things that are precious, things that we are right to value. And amongst these [00:06:02] things, this deposit that is entrusted to us, this thing which was called the treasure last year, were these wonderful truths about the revelation of the Father. And these subjects that we find expounded to us and gone into in these chapters that we are studying in the morning Bible readings this year. So that in fact our Bible readings are a straight development as it were, and treatment in a little more depth of the kind of things that we were saying were so valuable and so important last year. And one of the things that was also said last year was that while we were the possessors of this great light and needed to value it, and needed to appreciate it, needed to make a great deal of it, there were other sides on which we were ought to be prepared to [00:07:10] consider ourselves as rather weak. And our weakness in gospel testimony and our lack of impact, as it were, in the gospel is something that none of us really ought to be greatly happy about. It's the sort of thing that one can look the other way and hope it might go away, but in fact it does not go away, and our weakness in gospel testimony might be something that we need to be disturbed about. And that was certainly said last year, and though no more than that was said, just a very little about it was said, it wasn't because that was considered unimportant, but simply because the things that were on our hands last year didn't allow us to give any attention to that side of the [00:08:04] picture then. But of course the fact is still true that we are not so good as far as carrying a testimony to the wonderful things that we possess in our Lord Jesus Christ, to the outsiders, to the people that need to know about him, and that is something that people can adopt rather different attitudes to, but it should in fact disturb us, and it should in fact cause us concern. It's not something to be content about, and to be weak in gospel zeal and in gospel activity is not something that is like the great Apostle Paul, who brought all those other great truths that we were considering last year to us. His zeal, the [00:09:01] apostolic zeal for the gospel, is something that the New Testament certainly underlines. And if we are weak on these kinds of things, we are unlike the pattern that is presented to us in the New Testament. And if we are weak in that area, it's something we need to face. It's something that we need to be humble about. And so I would like to explain that these addresses during this coming week, the evening addresses, are going to finish up with suggestions drawn from the Word of God, of course, as to what the pattern of our activity ought to be. And we will have to face these issues, and we will be looking for scriptural guidance in overcoming these weaknesses that which must all admit do exist. We [00:10:05] will need to ask the kinds of questions as to what outward activity is lacking. And of course some of these addresses towards the end, you've seen the titles, I don't need to have to repeat these things to you, are definitely seeking scriptural guidance as to what kind of things we ought to be doing, which perhaps we are not doing in these days. But we felt it wise to begin not by talking about scriptural patterns of outward activity, but to speak a little about not only what we ought to be doing, but the kind of persons that we ought to be. And it could be, perhaps it is so, that we are inwardly in a poor state, lacking depth in our contact with God, lacking depth in our experience with God, [00:11:08] lacking

motivation in these directions that we have just been speaking about. We may have, and it seems important to realize this, that we may have to tackle the roots of our weakness, as well as the symptoms. And so you will see how this pattern of titles fits together, the inward experience leading to the outward activity later on. And questions arise about the reality and about the depth of our experience with God, and our inward life with the Lord. And I think you will find that these first two addresses, tonight and tomorrow night particularly, [00:12:01] will be talking about things which should be going on inwardly within us, and which will prepare us to be the kinds of persons that can be effective, and can make some effect and some impact in the areas in which we move. So that what we have to ask is, what underlies the life that has an impact for the Lord?

And that is my subject tonight, depth of experience with God. We have also to ask the question, what activates the life that has an impact for the Lord? What are the springs of Christian activity? And that is the kind of subject that Mr. Tyson hopes to speak about to you tomorrow night. And then after that, we will be moving over to those other areas, our outlook and our sense of vision about what can be done in gospel [00:13:07] activity. And where does the energy come, and in what sort of channels ought the energy to be directed? And that is Ernie Brown's subject for Thursday night. And concern for the broader fields of gospel activity, and that is the kind of subject that this sequence of addresses is hoped to finish up on Friday evening. I thought it might be wise to help you to see what the minds anyway, and we have sought help from the Lord to get this right. And we trust it will prove to be as the week goes on that the Lord has directed us into these kinds of inquiries. These are subjects I'm sure I speak for my other fellow speakers on the evening addresses. These are subjects that are not easy to talk about. I've often felt as I've been preparing for this [00:14:03] tonight, who am I to talk about depth of experience with God? But nevertheless, this is a subject which is a biblical subject, and is an important subject, and is an important subject for all of us, older people as well as younger people. And we have to ask these questions. What kind of depth is there about our Christian lives? And I have drawn attention to this psalm, and I have drawn attention also to this passage in the gospel, because I don't think there can be any doubt about it that we have a scriptural description of a man going through a very deep experience with God in the psalm. And we have a scriptural description of a man learning new depths about the greatness of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, new depths about his own unworthiness and his own sinfulness as well, in that little [00:15:07] incident that I read to you from the gospel. So I'm going to talk to you about depth of experience with God using scripture, and not from my own experience, but to use these scriptural descriptions of a deep experience in the presence of God. I have a little quotation that I'd like to read out to you. On one or two past occasions, I've ventured to give an illustration of the kind of thing that I've been talking about. Sometimes these have been slightly lighthearted illustrations, but I have felt that this subject tonight doesn't suit a lighthearted illustration of any kind. And so I want to read a quotation from a book that I was reading fairly recently, a little book called [00:16:05] A Faith to Proclaim, by a man, James S. Stewart, who might mean something to those of you who live in Scotland. It's a rather good little book, or so I found it to be. But what he says in this sentence that I'd like to read out to you, he's speaking about the kind of churches that he knows about. He's not speaking about brethren meetings, needless to say, but he's speaking about the churches that he knows about. And he says, we have churches of the nicest, kindest people, who have nothing apostolic or missionary, who never knew the soul's despair or its breathless gratitude. That is a statement that we might be prepared to agree with, as the kind of thing that might exist in other circles. But I want to turn it in on to ourselves and ask to what extent, [00:17:04] if we were to translate that into rather more appropriate words for our own situation, how close to the truth, as far as ourselves, would that kind of statement be? Nice people, certainly that is true. Kind people, pleasant people, good types around. But in addition, having rather little apostolic, rather little of a missionary fervor about them, who never knew. Well,

maybe that's not true. Perhaps it's an overstatement as far as ourselves is concerned, never knew the soul's despair or its breathless gratitude. But on the other hand, if you think about ourselves when we're back at home, when we're in the conference, when we tend to be rather more zealous and rather more devoted and rather more enthusiastic than perhaps we are when we [00:18:02] are at home, the question does arise, what sort of depth is there about our experience of the Lord's grace? Did we know, or have we forgotten, or does it tend to be something that sinks rather into the past a lot? That moment when we pass through that experience which is described there as the soul's despair, and I think David in this psalm is passing through that experience, and certainly it's not a shallow experience, certainly it's not anything but a deep experience. And I want to ask you here tonight whether that deep experience is something that is fresh in your mind, even if it is rather distant in your history, so to speak. It's something that seems to me to be important for older people to think about, as well as for younger people to think about. We all belong to the Lord, at least we make that assumption, though it may of course not [00:19:06] necessarily be absolutely true about every one of us. But we all purport to be Christians, and that implies that we have passed through an experience at the beginning of our Christian lives, which was not an easy experience, but was a deep experience. And I want to ask you whether the impact of that thing that you have experienced really still weighs with you, really still counts as far as you are concerned. Does this despair of soul that a Christian has passed through and found relief from, and this breathless gratitude that characterizes a person who has come into the good of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, does it really ring a bell with you? Is it something that you know about, or is it something that has got so far into the past? [00:20:04] As far as your own history is concerned, that it's lost its edge and it's lost its weight with you. I feel that's rather an important challenge to put out here tonight. We've been on the path a long way, a long time, some of us, and those days when we were freshly converted are a little bit remote, perhaps, and we get into a pattern of things when the life and the vigor that sprang from that deep experience that we once went through has passed in some degree. And it's a sad thing if that is true, but nevertheless it's a real thing to raise here tonight because there is a fatal possibility that in some measure it is true. And I want to draw attention to this psalm and this passage in the Gospels, particularly to illustrate that it's not an easy experience [00:21:03] that we have gone through, and I want to ask you this question, was there this kind of depth about that time when you were drawn to the Lord and that experience of repentance that a truly converted person has passed through? Certainly in these two passages we see persons undergoing deep experiences with God, and David in the psalm is a man who's really in the depths in this psalm. Here we have illustrated for us the deep and the real experience of repentance and of confession of sin and of entreaty for mercy and renewal. Here is a man face to face with the shame of his sin, the gross wickedness of his sin, the affront to God that his sin constituted, the vileness of those actions [00:22:10] of his, it all mounts up in front of him. My sin, he says, is ever before me. And then not only does he think of the things that he's done, grossly, outrageously wicked, they were these actions that David had committed. Not only does he think of that, but it lets him see what a vile person he really was. Those actions of his were not just temporary slip-ups, so to speak, little things that happened which were not characteristic of him, but these were things that were showing up what he really was and how totally wrong he was in the sight of God, inwardly as well as in his actions. The horror of his inward corruption, something that David is face to face with in [00:23:01] the presence of God in this psalm. And here is a man, David, broken, humbled, urgent, and desperate in his need, expressing it to God. The whole psalm is full of entreaty. He is looking on in parts of the psalm to moments when he might be free of the burden of his sin, but he never gets in the psalm right through to the point where he's in the clear with God. He's praying for it, he's entreating God for relief from this awful position that he's in. He's seeing beyond it in one sense, but he never really reaches the point where he's right beyond it. And here's a man pleading for restoration, pleading for a new start with God. And you know, one of the surprising

things in this psalm is that when it's all in the clear, as he looks on to it, he envisages a time when he might be able to be [00:24:07] helpful to others through the same course as he has actually passed. Look at verse 13. After asking for a restoration to the joy of God's salvation, he then says, verse 13, then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. And you know, that suggests to me that it's only persons that have gone through this deep kind of experience and know the depths of repentance, and the painful experience that repentance really is in the presence of God, face to face with one's sin and one's inward corruption. Facing that in the presence of God and seeing how obnoxious one is and one's actions are in the presence of God, when one passes through that kind of experience, [00:25:04] and when one has confessed it and seen how terrible it all is in God's sight, then having come through it, having found the way out of it, those sins having been put away in the way that we can understand, even though David perhaps could not understand so very well in his day, he's able to say that he's looking on to days when he will be able to teach others in these ways of repentance. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

And it's rather similar, and this is really the reason why I coupled these two passages together, rather similar in the other passage too, isn't it? Yes, we have another man going through a deep experience with the Lord Jesus, Peter, the Apostle Peter, going through a deep experience [00:26:05] with the Lord Jesus. And again, you see, at the end of all this, we discover that he is a man who's on the way to being a fisher of men. The Lord Jesus at the end says, fear not, from hence forward thou shalt catch men. And here is Peter, launching out into the deep, the Lord Jesus Christ told him to do it, and I suppose in the first place that meant move out from the shallow waters of the Lake of Galilee, move out into the deeper waters. But it does seem to me that that statement that the Lord Jesus Christ made to Peter was a picture of what was to happen in Peter's experience in a way that Peter never expected. He was moving out into the deep waters of Lake Galilee, but he was also moving into a rather unforeseen experience of the depths that there were about the person of [00:27:08] the Lord Jesus Christ, and the capabilities, the greatness of those capabilities that the Lord Jesus Christ possessed. He's discovering new depths about the person and the abilities of his Lord. He'd been following him, but he's learning more of the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only is he learning deep things about the great person that he's in touch with, but he's learning deep things about his own experience and his own state as well. He's discovering a profound awareness of his own sinfulness. You know, it's a surprising thing. It's remarkable, this to me, anyway, that Peter is drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of what he finds in this great person that he's already a follower of, and yet he finds that he has the power to speak the word for Peter to obey, [00:28:07] and to cast the net into the lake, and a great multitude of fishes was going to be hauled in.

I suppose one doesn't usually get a vast haul of fish in the early morning. They'd been toiling all night, so we know it was in the morning that this was happening, but it was an unusual experience for Peter, this, and it focused his mind on the person that he was in touch with. And at the same time, not only did he see the great person that he was in touch with, but he also saw the profound unsuitability that was present within himself, so to speak, for contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. Depart from me. He comes up to the Lord Jesus Christ and falls at his knees and says, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. And here's Peter going through a dark experience, [00:29:04] an unexpected experience, learning the greatness of the person of the Lord Jesus, but learning the hopelessness and the unworthiness and the sinfulness that is so characteristic of himself. Feeling the incompatibility of his presence with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, so great is the person of Jesus, and so sinful and unworthy is the person of Peter. Peter feels the tension between the two persons that are there, so to speak, and yet he's drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ as he senses his

greatness and senses his grace, and he says, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. You know, Peter had to learn a lot of the Lord Jesus Christ and a lot of his own weakness in several experiences of this nature. There were other rather similar experiences [00:30:03] ahead, experiences in which Peter had to discover how weak he was. Experiences of self-discovery, things happened, as you know, you know as well as I do, things that Peter did which he bitterly regretted. When we were in Israel, we went up those steps that lead to Caiaphas's house, the high priest's house, and moving up those steps in itself was an experience in its own right, but at the top there was the place where the cock crew, where Peter denied his Lord. He said so firmly that he would never do it, that he would be loyal though all the rest might fail, and yet he had to discover how incapable and how weak he was. As soon as it had been done and the cock had grown, the Lord turned and looked at Peter, you know, and that look, it discovered to Peter his unloyalty, [00:31:05] his disloyalty, and his weakness. Peter realized at that moment what a weak and bitterly disappointing person he must be to his Lord in one way, and yet he felt the bitterness of that unsuitability and disloyalty that he had shown in following the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet he learned the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ and he learned the constancy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his weakness and out of his weakness, there came that ability to serve the Lord, relying not on himself any longer, but on the grace and the power that the Lord Jesus Christ would supply. He learned his own weakness. He bitterly regretted those experiences that he passed through. In a sense, they were a shame in a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they worked to his good [00:32:07] in another sense. Jesus had prayed for him that his faith should not fail, and that prayer and that grace of the Lord Jesus Christ enabled him to discover the true source of strength and the true ability to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, it seems to me that he discovered himself in these misdoings of his, and it seems to me that when he writes in the epistle, you know, when he writes that first epistle, Peter says, speaking generally about Christians, he says, we've been begotten again. We've experienced the abundant mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we've been begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. It's true of all believers, of course, but it was almost a bit of autobiography [00:33:07] as far as Peter was concerned. When you think of the misery of those days that must have followed the denial of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you think of the bitterness that was in Peter's experience as he found how disloyal and how weak he had been, and when he thought of the greatness of the person that he had been following and the weakness of his own loyalty, it must have been a harrowing experience. It must have been a bitter experience, certainly a deep experience that Peter passed through. We're not told, of course, what went on during those hours that followed the denial of Peter, Peter's denial of the Lord Jesus Christ. The veil is drawn over all that, but we can guess what a deep experience that must have been. But what a marvel it was that the Lord Jesus made a special visit to Peter on the [00:34:06] resurrection day. You know, he appeared to the eleven, but he'd also appeared to Cephas, and there isn't any doubt that that moment of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was a marvelous experience. We might well say that he'd been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. He not only was restored by marvelous grace, but he was entrusted with a service for the Lord Jesus Christ, too. It's one of the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ that he picks up worthless people, shows his grace to them, and not only does he rescue them, and not only does he bless them, but he entrusts them with things to do. So weak and hopeless though they are, he provides the power, he provides the grace to help them to be true witnesses to him. And there [00:35:01] Peter stands on the day of Pentecost, and he says, you denied the person that you've rejected. Peter had done the very same thing. He knew what repentance was, you know, in his own experience, and he was able to talk about the need for repentance to those that he spoke about. And I want to say this, that if we are going to preach the gospel, if we're going to speak about the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are going to call men to repent, we better know what we're talking about, you know, and therefore it is so important that these things that we

recommend to others are things that we've gone through and know a bit about in our own deep experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I would like to just turn for a moment or two, the remaining moments, to the 51st psalm, briefly move down this psalm, just to pick out one or two things in it.

[00:36:01] The psalm begins, of course, with this sense that there's something momentous that David has committed that suddenly takes on such a magnitude in his own mind. My sin, he says, it's ever before me, and he's speaking to God. And I've already said that we don't know a great deal about the experiences that Peter went through in those dark moments before the Lord Jesus restored him, but we do know a bit about the experiences that David went through in these dark moments of confession of sin and repentance for sin. And here it is all explained to us and explained in the experience of this man that's going through this deep experience with God. My sin, he says, is ever before me. If you look in the first few verses, you'll find that he repeats the fact that his sin is the great thing that he's face to face with, and the magnitude of that act, those acts that he has committed, something that rises up in [00:37:07] front of him in the presence of God, and the horror of the fact that he could have been that kind of person and committed those kind of acts, thinking about those things as God sees them in the presence of God. The weight and the burden of his own sin is a thing that mounts up in front of him, and it humbles him and strikes him down, so to speak, that he should have committed that kind of thing. And a little further down, he's back at it again. Five times over he speaks about his sin, his iniquity, his transgressions. My sin is ever before me. He comes back to it later. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Not talking about other people's sins, there's no question about other people's sins in these verses. His own sin, his own actions, [00:38:02] overwhelmingly evil, wicked, though they were, they mount up in his own thoughts, and he sees them as God sees them. He takes God's side against himself in the presence of God, and the weight of the problem faces him. And yet, surprisingly enough, though he's faced with the magnitude of his own sin, there's something that he can speak about that almost matches it, and more than matches it in another sense. He's something that he can cling to. The abundance of thy tender mercies, the multitude of thy tender mercies, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. His great sin in all its magnitude, and yet God's great mercies in all their tenderness and in all their multitudinous nature, is something that saves him from complete [00:39:07] despair, so to speak, and something to cling to in the presence of God in spite of the burden that he is facing. He appeals to the mercy of God, and he confesses his sin. He knows that it's personal. He's not talking about somebody else's sin. He's talking about his own sin. He knows that it can't be blotted out in any other way than if God can blot it out. It's irretrievable. It's irreversible. It's shocking. It's an outrage, this thing that he has done. Treason against God. It's self-assertion against God, and he sees his sin in all its greatness. Sin is a culpable thing, and he knows that very well. Sin is a thing that's right for God to judge, and he knows that very well at this moment of confession, and he confesses it, and he feels it deeply, and he takes [00:40:03] God's side against himself. But he fastens on this one other thing that saves him from complete despair at the thing that he had done, and he speaks about the multitude of God's tender mercies, and this is something that's not less in scale than the very grossness of his sin. And you know the thing that had transformed David was the word of God. God sent his prophet. God sent Nathan the prophet to speak to David. Nathan fastened his sin on David. He said, Thou art the man. What a change it brought about with David. He was a man that committed those sins without ever thinking about it. He did it and hardly ever thought about its guilt or its grossness. He indulged in cunning actions, and he engineered the thing to go his own way.

[00:41:01] He was oblivious of the gravity of what he was doing, covered his tracks up. He was casual about it, and he was insensitive about his sin. But suddenly the word of God exposed David to

himself, and from being the kind of man that was covering up and rather careless about the kinds of things that he was doing, he became the man who had the eye of God on him. And he was totally broken in the presence of God. He confessed the effrontery of that sin of his, and he had no words of excuse, no words of mitigation for the thing that he had done. He openly confesses it, and he has no excuse for it. And I want to say in the light of these kinds of verses that we ought not to be forgetting, and we ought to remain aware of our own inward corruption. And Christians, though we may be, we'd better not be leaving behind us this experience. It is something that belongs to [00:42:07] the past in one sense, that we have repented towards God and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But the effect of this experience that we have gone through with God should be something that remains ever with us. And we should be freshly aware day by day of how much we owe to God, and how much he has done for us, and how much the Lord Jesus Christ has rescued us from. David knew very well that this sin of his needed pretty radical treatment, you know. There was to be nothing easy about this process of removing his sin. He knew that it would be an act of great mercy if it was done at all. He knew that sin was not going to be just brushed aside and waived as something of unimportance. Sin was not going to be overlooked. It wasn't going to be lightly dismissed. [00:43:01] These words that he uses in these opening verses let us see how a radical process he saw to be needed. If his sin was to be removed from the sight of God, it needed to be blotted out. The record of it need to be wiped clean. Its guilt had to be expunged. It needed to be thoroughly removed. Wash me thoroughly from my sin, almost like removing filth from a garment. It needed to be done by an exhaustive process that totally took away the offending article, so to speak. He knew that God could do it. He asks to be purged. He asks to be washed. He realizes that inward cleansing is needed. He expresses these needs. Perhaps he doesn't know how it's going to be done. You and I know how our sins have been put away. David lived in a day when he wasn't able to think about the blood of Christ, you know. We have been thoroughly [00:44:05] cleansed from our sins, and a thorough work, a deep work has been done, an expensive work, something that cost the Lord Jesus Christ everything, has been done on our behalf. But it doesn't belittle that, the process that we in spirit have passed through if we are to be in the good of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. Confession and awareness of sin is something that we need to realize, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is accompanied by repentance for all that we are. And I want to ask you here tonight whether we have passed through these deep kind of experiences and can remember them, and whether we really realize what sort of depth of process that was that we have gone through on the way to clearance from our sin, freedom [00:45:01] in God's presence. God can do this great thing. David seemed to sense that God could do it, and he knew that God could do it in a thorough going way as well, although perhaps he didn't know how God would do it. He says, I shall be clean. He seems to have a confidence about that. If God will do it, he shall certainly be clean. We read a verse this morning that said, we will be clean and are clean, every with those of us who have been washed in the blood of Christ. I shall be whiter than snow, he says. You can't think of anything that's whiter than snow, but he says, I shall be whiter than snow. He has a confidence in God, even if he doesn't know how it's going to be wrought about. He sees himself inwardly foul, and he sees his actions as the symptoms of an inward wrongness that needs to be recognized, and he sees that at root he is utterly wrong. And he asks for a new beginning. He prays for creation of a new heart. He seems to [00:46:10] know that something new from God is needed. Only the word creation can describe what is necessary. At the close of the psalm, there are these words that speak about what he will have when God has done this great work. He will have a clean heart. Let me just draw attention quickly to these verses. He's going to have a clean heart, and he's going to have a new spirit, and he rises to the belief that this new start is possible, and that God can effect this action. He realizes that he is not outside the long arm of God's salvation, and he's thinking about return to the joy of God's salvation. And he dwells on the joy and the relief that a full restoration would bring. He's looking on to the prospect of freedom in the presence of God, though he seems [00:47:06]

to me that he hasn't quite arrived there, even by the end of the psalm. He realizes that renewal at the very core of his being is essential, and he needs a frame of mind, and he needs an attitude of heart. He speaks about a clean heart, a new spirit, a contrite and a broken heart, a willing spirit, a steadfast spirit. These are things that he sees to be necessary, and this is the effect of going through this work of repentance, and this work of being under the hand of God to cleanse us from our sins. And there are these inward urgings which are so characteristic of the psalms towards a holiness which is suitable to God. And those kinds of inward urgings are as appropriate now as they have always been. One of the things that strikes me when one reads the psalms, [00:48:03] and almost with this I must close, that these writers of the psalms, they didn't have the New Testament light, they didn't have the 13th to the 17th chapters of John, they didn't have half the wonderful things that we have in our New Testaments, yet they had an awareness of God that made them pant after God and urged them towards a holiness that would be suitable to God. One of the things that disturbs me a little bit is that along with the new light of the New Testament, sometimes there's also, accompanied with it, rather a weakness in our feelings after God of the Old Testament sort of pattern. And these Old Testament saints expose to us some of our weaknesses, and the God of the Old Testament saints is the God of the New Testament saints as well, though the God of the New Testament saints is known to them in a way that exceeds what the Old [00:49:04] Testament people knew. Well then, at the end, David says, God's not looking for sacrifices, God's not looking for token responses, God is looking for a broken and a contrite heart and a spirit that is right in his sight, a spirit that is transparent in the presence of God. God desires truth in the inward parts, according to this psalm, and there needs to be a sense of indebtedness and a sense of total genuineness in the presence of God. And without that personal humility and without that personal reality which David is showing in this psalm and moving towards in this psalm, all the rest is valueless. God doesn't desire sacrifices, he says. Token responses, going through the motions of Christianity, you know, following the pattern [00:50:05] only, doesn't really count a great deal with God. Token responses, however correctly done, not enough for God. They're even distasteful to him, I believe. Some of the Old Testament passages confirm that. But formalism, without any deep personal involvement, is something that God finds objectionable, even. And we have to be a bit careful, you know, we have not to be going through the motions, we must not sink into a pattern. Even in gospel activity, we must not sink into a pattern. Even in assembly activity, we must not sink into a pattern. It's not enough to follow the correct procedures, even to follow scripture, but there has to be a transparent and a genuine heart, an honest open heart. Truth in the inward parts is the first requirement for a proper response to God. And as we have drawn attention [00:51:08] to these passages, we have been thinking about things that happen at the beginning of our life as Christians. And I want to draw your attention to these passages because I think that these passages are those that are the key to a proper testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

A person that's been through a deep experience with the Lord is a person that is fitted to be a proper representative and a proper testimony to him. And without this kind of experience continually kept fresh in our lives, there's not going to be much possibility of us being witnesses to him or recommending the Lord Jesus Christ to others when we're not in personal, fresh contact with him day by day. Well, may it be that we can be, as these passages suggest to us, [00:52:07] persons that have truth in the inward parts, persons that are right and genuine in the sight of God, kept in the constancy of that experience as the days go by. Mr. Tyson, of course, has the positive side of this subject to present to you tonight. It's not sufficient to have gone through these dark experiences, but one must have the thing that impels one in the Christian life. And that's left to him. In a sense, that's a fairly severe curtailment on me here tonight. But nevertheless, deep repentance and deep experience with God, not a shallow experience, but a deep experience, is one of the requirements amongst those that can be effective for him in other channels and in other spheres. No use talking about things that we

don't know about. [00:53:01] And Peter says here, or David says here, that he's looking forward to a day when he will be a good example and a good mouthpiece for God to help others in this process of repentance and in this process of conversion to God. Well, may it be that these statements tonight may be of help to us. Can we then sing hymn number 264?

One of my problems in this hymn book—this is a good hymn book, and the one which will replace it will be a better one, we can be sure—but one of my problems in this hymn book was to find hymns that are suitable to this kind of substance that I have to present to you. I've done my best, but I have to admit that there was hardly a hymn that seemed to be bang-on the kind of thing that I have to present to you here tonight. Hymn number 264, enthroned on high, eternal word, a son of man, a sovereign lord, tis now by faith on thee we rest, till all thy title have confessed.