

3. A Psalm of Penitence: Right Sacrifices from Real Sinners

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[0 : 00] But we're going to turn now to our Bible reading this morning, and you'll find that in Psalm number 51. If you have one of our church visitors' Bibles, that's page 474.

And it turns out that all our students and young workers were studying this Psalm on Thursday this week at Release the Word. So that means we have a church full of experts here.

So perhaps before we come to the sermon, I might just decide to give myself a rest today, and I'll just look around and pick on one of you, and you can come up and share with us. So don't fall asleep. Keep your wits about you. I may be asking your opinion.

So now that you're all awake, let's read together. Psalm 51, and we begin with the superscription, which is part of the psalm. And when, not the bit in bold title, that's a heading put in by the translators, but these words in small capitals that you find in front of all the psalms are part of the text of the psalm, part of the text of Scripture.

And in this particular case, it's rather important. To the choir master, a psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

[1 : 24] Have mercy on me, O God. According to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

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 and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

I'm going to read these next couple of verses slightly differently. You shall purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. You shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

[2 : 33] You shall let me hear joy and gladness, and make the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out 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.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, 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.

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.

[3 : 48] Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings, in whole burnt offerings.

Then bulls will be offered on your altar. Amen. May God bless to us this His Word.

Well, let's turn, shall we, to Psalm 51. One of the best known, perhaps, of all the Psalms of penitence that we find in the Psalter.

If the answer to the first question of the Shorter Catechism is true, and it is true, that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, then how are we to glorify God?

How are we to offer God true worship? Worship means worth-ship. It means giving God His rightful worth above everything else in our lives.

[5 : 12] And in the New Testament, it's very clear, isn't it, that this is the most important thing. It's the chief calling of all of our lives as Christian people.

We are to offer up our bodies, says Paul, as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. Romans 12, verse 2. Our spiritual worship is doing just that, Paul says.

We're to continually offer up sacrifices of praise to God, says Hebrews 13, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. But what does that really mean?

How are we to be true worshipers? Or in the words of this Psalm, verse 19, how are we to offer right sacrifices that delight the Lord our God?

And above all, how do we do that when we have made a real mess of things? When we're feeling very guilty? Because we are very guilty.

[6 : 16] And because we know we are. Perhaps we've fallen into some very specific sin. Some very bad behavior that we have been part of, and we know it.

Or maybe we've become entangled in a pattern of behavior that has a hold on us, that we know is damaging and destructive. We know it's displeasing to God.

Or maybe we've just realized that we have drifted a long way spiritually, that we've cooled off, that we've slidden away a long, long way from being the keen Christian that once we were.

What's the answer to that problem? What's the answer that gets us back in a better place spiritually? Well, often the answer that you find from spiritual refreshment books, or the kind of spiritual revival conference you might go to, the answer is a call to a rededication to Christ.

An act of decisive reconsecration and commitment. A renewal of effort and devotion. A pledge of a new discipline in prayer.

[7 : 29] A new discipline in Bible reading, perhaps. Maybe even a defined set of steps that take you on the path back to holiness. A decisive offering to God of a renewed sacrifice of praise in your life.

But if part of that new discipline in prayer and Bible reading takes you to Psalm 51 in your readings, it might prove to be rather disconcerting.

Because verse 16 poses something of a problem to that whole approach to getting ourselves back in the right place with God. It says, For you will not delight in sacrifice.

You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. It seems God isn't interested in what we can bring him by way of some kind of special spiritual exercise. The sacrifices he's interested in are verse 17.

Matters of the heart. Not what we can bring, but what we must be. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

[8 : 39] Now that's a real problem, isn't it? Because that does not describe the natural human heart. Nor, if we're honest, does it describe the natural Christian believer's heart either.

The beauty and the meekness and the humility it speaks of is the very opposite of what we know very often to be the truth about our own hearts. And these are things that cannot be produced by ourselves.

These things are things that happen to our hearts. A heart must be broken. It must be made contrite, literally crushed by somebody else.

We can't manufacture it by our own spiritual exercises or disciplines. That's just not possible. So then, must we despair?

Well, no. Because this psalm is here because David wants to teach fellow sinners, transgressors, as he says in verse 13, he wants to teach us to learn what he learned.

[9 : 46] That it is God alone that can make real worshippers of us. And that he can and he does. Even when we find ourselves in the most dreadful, awful mess of our own sin.

When we find ourselves in the midst of a disaster of our own making. He wants to teach us God's ways, he says. That is, God's way of making us broken and contrite in heart.

So that even though we are real sinners, we can make right sacrifices, which will delight the heart of God. And even though we've been paralyzed by shame and guilt and despair, we can come rejoicing again to the Lord.

Because he will rejoice again and delight in us. What this psalm teaches us is that what we need more than anything else when we're in a terrible mess of guilt and sin and shame and despair, what we need is not a fresh personal discipline in our work for God, but rather a fresh personal discovery of God's word to us.

And indeed his work for us and in us. Through his covenant of abundant mercy and steadfast love. That's what David discovered.

[11:10] And that's what this psalm wants us to discover also. That it's God's word of revelation that does God's work of renewal. And that leads us to his witness of righteousness in us and through us to the world.

It's the gospel alone when it invades our hearts personally and powerfully. It's the gospel alone that can elicit right sacrifices from real sinners.

And this psalm teaches us how that happens. And it begins by giving testimony to David's great discovery in the word of God's revelation. The gospel brings the word of God's revelation to us. And as we'll see, it's a revelation of both horror and yet also hope. The first words of the psalm are the superscription, as I said.

And they tell us about the occasion when Nathan, the prophet of God, went to David after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Well, if you don't know this story, read it later in 2 Samuel 11 and 12.

[12:21] It's a sad, it's a shocking story about Israel's great leader. In fact, Israel's greatest leader. And him falling into a disastrous conveyor belt of sin, which went from lust to adultery, to cover-ups, even to murder.

And then all hushed up as though life could go on just as normal after all of that. But, says the last verse of that story in 2 Samuel, but the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

It's probably as well that we don't dwell on the particularities of David's crimes. Because there's a danger, of course, that in doing that we miss the point entirely. We might think, well, that really is shocking.

And thank God I've never committed adultery or at least never murdered anybody to cover it up. But that is absolutely not the point. In fact, the point is quite the reverse.

The point is that if David, the greatest leader par excellence of God's people, God's anointed king, a man after God's own heart, who walked after the Lord's ways like no other, that if even he can sin so badly, and have to articulate the words of this psalm, then how could any of us, anyone, think that they could never be capable of these kinds of things?

[13:53] So what this psalm reminds us is that none, not even the most revered Christian leader, none is exempt from learning the lessons of this psalm. In fact, it was very salutary this week that I was reading words written on this psalm by somebody who was once looked to as a great preacher and Christian leader, but who very publicly fell into a very similar kind of disaster as David's, but to my knowledge as yet has not repented.

And as I was reading his words, it was chilling to think that I doubt today whether that man could even read the words, far less ever have possibly written them himself.

But in God's great mercy, he was not silent and abandoning David. The word of his revelation came to him through the prophet Nathan in a powerful fashion.

And he outraged David, you remember, by telling him a parable about a man in the story who had done great wickedness, so that David in the end cried out, in God's name, this man deserves to die. And then Nathan's rapier thrust. You are the man. And in a split second, everything that David knew about God and about himself before God became acutely and overwhelmingly true to him personally.

[15:25] And he was undone. Just a few words. But God's revelation came like a hammer blow to David. And the whole of this psalm, you see, expresses what God revealed to him in that encounter.

You are the man. Just a few words brought it all home. Think of Peter and the cock crew. Not even words, just the crow of a cock. But it brought right home to his heart in an instant, everything that Jesus had said about him. And he knew that it was true.

And all his own words of bravado, shown to be utterly false. Sometimes that's all it takes, isn't it? Just a few words. And like a great wallop, God's word is like an axe that cracks open our heart. A scornful challenge, perhaps to you, from somebody at work. You're not a Christian, are you? No, you see. Because you don't want to be mocked.

[16:33] And like Peter, you suddenly hit in the pit of your stomach. You're exposed. Just as David was.

Exposed with a revelation of real horror. Because you're face to face with the truth about your own heart. And that's what David is giving voice to in this psalm, especially in verses 2 to 6.

The words of God's revelation has revealed to him the absolute corruption of his own character. So often it takes an experience like this to expose the truth that so often we are hiding from.

Because sin anesthetizes us. It makes us deceive ourselves. We know that we do wrong, but of course we make excuses so, so easily. We say things like this.

Oh, I know I'm not perfect, but... Meaning, well, I'm not that bad, really. We do it when we apologize, don't we? Because more often than not, we don't actually apologize.

[17 : 35] We say, I'm sorry if I've upset you. But what we really mean is it's your fault for being upset, not mine. Or we say, well, yes, I'm sorry, but, you know, I'm very stressed.

Or, well, you know, you have to understand my background. Can't help it. Or, you know, I was just born like this. It's in my genes. Or it's, well, with all the pressure of society today, with the media and so on, anybody else is to blame, really, except for me.

Or more subtly, perhaps, we do it. We go around saying the opposite thing. We go around blaming ourselves all the time. Oh, it's my fault. I'm so, so bad. But you see, deep down, we know that if we say that sort of thing, it prompts somebody else to say, no, no, no, it's not your fault.

Don't beat yourself up. Instead of justifying yourself, you get somebody else to justify you for you.

And you can absolve yourself of responsibility for your wrongdoing.

You see, the ways that the human heart can minimize and mitigate our sense of sinfulness are absolutely legion. And they're given plenty of help today by psychologists and sociologists and other ologists galore.

[18 : 53] But God's word of revelation cuts right through all of that. And it faces us with the truth.

And the truth is an X-rated picture of real horror. And that's the picture that David has been forced to view and what he describes for us. It's not that he's just describing for us here that particular action.

Not at all. Rather, that that action, met with God's penetrating revelation, has torn his heart open and shone a bright beam in there to show that that is what his heart is like all the time.

And it's always been like that. Imagine if these projectors upstairs here and downstairs, instead of showing a blank screen there, just suddenly started to show on that screen all the secrets of your heart.

But that's what it feels like, isn't it, when God exposes us by his word, up close and personal. And that was David's experience. He had to face the fact that his sin was not an uncharacteristic lapse.

[20 : 08] It was not a slip-up so that he could say, oh, that's not really me at all. No, his sin was profound and perverse and pervasive.

And worst of all, it was personal. It was a scandalous affront to God himself. And suddenly you see all the teaching that he knew in his Bible about sin.

It came right home to his own heart in that deeply personal way. He uses all the great words the Bible uses for wrongdoing here. Verse 3, my sin is ever before me.

Verse 2, cleanse me from my sin. That word means a falling short, utterly, in every possible way, missing by a mile what he ought to truly be as a human being.

He's full, verse 2, of iniquity. That means a perversity, a twistedness in his character. And that perversity, verse 5, is pervasive from his birth, from his very conception.

[21 : 15] It's been there. In sin, my mother conceived me. He's not saying his birth was illegitimate. He's not saying that sex is sinful in itself. Not at all. He's just saying that sin is utterly basic to his personhood, that it's woven into every single part of his whole life in history, and that it always has been.

The sin is profound. It's deep. Verse 6, where God delights in truth in the innermost being, in the secret heart, he knows that he's absolutely rotten to the core.

And above all, and worst of all, it's deeply personal. Verse 3, transgression. That means sinful and willful rebellion against God himself.

Against you. You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Do you see what a horrible, horrific revelation that is for David to come to terms with?

He's seeing the true David for who he really is, and he can't deny it. As Derek Kidner says, David now sees this crime was no freak event.

[22 : 34] It was in his character, an extreme expression of the warped creature that he had always been. The absolute corruption of his character.

And God was teaching him as he acknowledges in verse 6 the truth about his secret heart. Such a common thing to hear, isn't it, when perhaps somebody has been arrested for an awful crime, and you hear a friend or a relative interviewed on the TV, and they say, well, I know it must be a mistake because I know him, and he's just not capable of doing such a thing.

But friends, never, ever believe that. None of us will ever believe on our own what we are really capable of doing and being.

But God's word reveals that truth to us. It exposes us. The truth about our hearts. Very often, when we have done something wrong or said something or sought something, it leaves us exposed, and we can't hide from that horror.

We can't gain the fact that our heart is deceitful above all things, that it's desperately sick, as Jeremiah the prophet reminds us. You see, learning the truth about our own hearts, coming to terms with the absolute corruption that is in our own character.

[24 : 06] That's the very first lesson in the class of Worship 101. Without that, there can be no hope, none at all, of restoration to God.

Didn't Jesus make exactly that point in a story he told in Luke chapter 18? Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, a very upright man, and the other was an absolutely rotten tax collector.

But he was the one who knew his own heart. He was the one who beat his breast and said, be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus said, it was he and not the other who went home right, right with God.

Because you see, when we've been left reeling by this revelation of horror about our own heart, that and that alone is when our eyes are opened and our ears sensitized to a revelation of real hope in the truth about God's heart and in his absolute commitment to his covenant.

What possible hope can there be for us in the face of a horrific realization about the pervasiveness and the permanence of sin and evil in our hearts? What hope can there be?

[25 : 33] Surely, if we've begun to be honest with ourselves like that, we must know that God knows and we can't deceive him. He knows what's in here. How can he possibly forgive me yet again?

On what basis can I even ask God to have mercy upon me yet again? Well, the answer, you see, is in verse 1 of the psalm.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy. The same authoritative revelation that exposes our absolute complete corruption reminds us of God's absolute commitment to his covenant.

Steadfast love, his hesed, is his unflinching covenant loyalty. The whole story of the Bible is that utter commitment to his people.

It's a story, isn't it, of the repeated tragedies of the sin of his people and the repeated triumphs of God's grace. That's what we saw again and again and again in our studies in the life of Jacob and his sons.

[26 : 45] He will not let his people go. his hesed, his covenant loyalty, his steadfast love is utterly tenacious and his abundant mercy, his love, is utterly tender and compassionate.

That's the mercy and the compassion that was also reflected in the life of Joseph. Do you remember in Genesis 49 verse 30 when his compassion welled up in his heart for his brothers? Despite all that they had done for him, he had to run out of the room and weep so tender was his mercy towards them.

Your abundant mercy. You see, the same scriptures that brought home to David's heart waking him up to the horror of his sin, the same scriptures also awoke him to the great hope in God's covenant mercy.

mercy. That's why Miles Coverdale's version of this psalm in the English Book of Common Prayer is right to translate verses 7 and 8 as indicative rather than imperative as I read them.

You shall purge me with his hope and I shall be clean. You shall wash me and I'll be whiter than snow. You shall make me hear joy and gladness that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

[28 : 07] He had a promise of God's mercy. in the scriptures. And the very chapters in Moses' law that gave him these words to describe his own sin, they showed him the way of cleansing that God had promised through the washing, through the purging of God's appointed sacrifice.

Read Leviticus 14 or Numbers chapter 19 for example later to see exactly what he means. But that's why he had hope. hope in the midst of horrible and horrific honest truth about his own sinful heart.

Isn't that a wonderful mystery of God's providence? We've been learning it in Genesis, haven't we? That what God means, what man means for evil, God himself intends for good so that even here through David's manifest evil and sin, he comes nevertheless to a greater knowledge not only of his own sin and himself but a greater knowledge of the love and the mercy of his covenant God. Isn't that sometimes so with us too? That it's out of a pit of our own making that our eyes are lifted up to God because we've nowhere else to look and we see a new vision of the wonderful covenant mercy of God in the gospel of Christ.

You see, if that covenant mercy blessed David's heart with a wonderful hope in the midst of the misery of his mess and his sin, if the sprinkled blood of bulls and goats of the sacrifices he was given, if that gave him a wonderful assurance of cleansing, real cleansing from God, then says the New Testament in the book of Hebrews, how much more, how much more does the blood of Christ purify our consciences?

[30 : 16] How much more do we, who have the fullness of the revelation of the cleansing blood of the everlasting covenant, how much more do we know of the abundant mercy and the steadfast love of our God?

We have so much more than David had. Every time we sit around the Lord's table, as we'll do next Sunday morning, we are reminding God of his absolute commitment to his covenant.

We're calling him to have mercy based upon his steadfast love, his abundant mercy poured out in the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, sealed forever, unbreakably, immutably, unshakably, in the blood that was poured out at Calvary.

The gospel word of God's revelation that has filled us with horror about our complete sinfulness. It fills us too all the more with a hope of our complete salvation.

It's not just a future hope that the psalmist speaks of. It's clear that the word of God's revelation is bringing about the work of God's renewal in David's lives and in our life as we respond in trusting faith to that word of revelation.

[31 : 47] It's the gospel that does the work of God's renewal in us. And it's a renewal that's marked both by the humbling of true repentance and also by the healing of true relationship.

It's David's grasp of the gospel, isn't it, that draws out his response in confession in verse 1. It's always, always God's revelation that elicits from our hearts a response of truth to God.

That's what faith is. That's what faith means when the Bible is speaking about faith. Faith is the rightful response of humble obedience to God's word to us in the gospel.

David is convicted. He's full of the very godly sorrow that Edward was speaking about last Sunday evening from 2nd Corinthians 7. The godly sorrow that leads to the humbling of real repentance. It's full of the grief of sin. It's full of a desire for real restoration. It's the knowledge of sin and the knowledge of God's grace that moves David to seek that grace.

[33 : 00] Blot out. Wash me. Cleanse me. And you see, it's a sovereign grace that he is seeking. He's seeking it with real and true heart humility.

He's absolutely clear that all of this is something that only God can do. He can do nothing. Nothing. It's so clear, isn't it, in verses 9 to 12. Do you see? Only God can blot out his iniquities in verse 9. He, God, must hide his face, hide his face of personal wrath and anger against this sin. Only God, verse 10, can create a new heart.

That's a word that's only ever used in the Bible of God. It's the word from Genesis chapter 1 when God created out of nothing the whole world. And he must create holy and new heart in David.

David's praying for a miracle. He can't do it. God must do it. And only God can renew him and make him new.

[34 : 06] See, there's no thought anywhere, is there, of him saying something like this, all right, Lord, please, please forgive my lapses. I promise. I promise. I promise. I'll atone for my sins.

I promise. I'll turn over a new leaf. That's not what he's praying. No, no, no, no, no. It's the opposite of that.

Real repentance is marked by the utter humbling that says nothing in my hand I bring. Only to your cross I cling.

Stained by sin to you I cry. Wash me, Savior, or I die. God's renewal humbles us always with a humbling that characterizes all true repentance.

And his gospel heals. It heals the broken relationship that lies at the very heart of the tragedy of sin. [35 : 09] Heals and restores our joy in the Lord and our knowledge of the Lord himself. See, verse 11 shows you that David's greatest fear is for what the guilt of his sin will do to his experience of the presence of God.

He feared, no doubt, what happened to Saul, do you remember? Saul was chosen by God. Saul was anointed as king. But Saul was rejected by God because of his sin and his rebellion against God.

We're told that God removed his spirit from him. But you see, this very desire for the joy of the Lord, for the presence of the Lord, it's evidence that God has renewed a spirit within him, it renewed a willing spirit within him.

It's evidence that God has not abandoned him. His tears and his fears, you see, are the testimony to the healing of reconciliation, not the hardening of rejection.

The difference between David and Saul is exactly the same difference as between Peter and Judas. Both sinned, both denied and betrayed their Lord.

[36 : 23] But where Judas went out and hung himself with the worldly grief that only produces death, Peter, do you remember, wept bitterly.

And that was a godly grief that led to salvation, like David here. That's something so, so important for us to distinguish, isn't it? So important for us to know.

Sometimes there are Christians who are so filled with fear and anxiety and shame, they believe they've sinned against the Holy Spirit. They believe perhaps that they've committed an unpardonable sin that Jesus speaks of.

So they think, God has taken his spirit from me and I'm lost. But you see, that cannot be so, can it? Can't be. Because the tears and the fears of that are the very evidence that that is not so.

They're the evidence that there is an ongoing relationship with the Lord himself. A desire in the heart which is alive for the presence of God.

[37 : 26] A yearning for the joy of his salvation. A godly grief that leads to repentance and restoration, not a worldly grief that leads to death. The one from whom God's spirit has withdrawn has no such fears, no such tears, no sign of humility, no sign of penitence.

Just haughtiness and pride, the very opposite. But where the gospel is bringing the word of sovereign revelation, God's spirit is at work, bringing about a work of sovereign renewal to his people.

Humbling them in true repentance. And healing them. And restoring true relationship with God himself and therefore with all God's people. Who together will rejoice in the love and the mercy of a covenant God like this.

You see, that is what brings about true worship. That's what will result in the right sacrifices from sinful people. The fruit of lips that are opened by God to declare the praise of the God of steadfast love, the God of abundant mercy.

And that's so evident in the psalm. Do you see how in verses 13 to 19 they're all about the witness to God's righteousness. It's the gospel that brings the word of God's revelation to sinners.

[38 : 54] It's the gospel that does the work of God's renewal in sinners. And it's the gospel that draws out the witness to God's righteousness from sinners. As that righteousness is declared to the world and demonstrated in his people in the church.

Verse 13, then I will teach transgressions, fellow sinners, your way. 14, then my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. My mouth will declare your praise.

One writer's put it like this, the saddest thing about sin in the believer is that it closes his mouth and negates his testimony. You could say exactly the same, couldn't you, about the church as a whole? Of course. And the spirit of the Lord is grieved away because of unrepented sin. Where there's pride instead of penitence. Where there's hiding of sin and even laughter at sin instead of horror at sin.

Then no amount of offerings and sacrifices can possibly do any good at all. There'll be no living and powerful witness to the glory of God from his people.

[40 : 12] No amount of empty religion like that can ever, ever build up the church or impact the world. The sacrifices God wants are not pathetic manifestations of empty ritual and empty religion.

He wants powerful manifestations of his righteousness in his people. Do you see where sinners know the truth about themselves and their sin?

When they've been faced up with the horror of it, with its depth, with its pervasiveness, with its perversity. When they've been floored by that.

And yet, when they've tasted, despite that, again and again and again, the joy and hope of a gospel of abundant mercy and steadfast love.

That there is grace abundant to cover all their sin. That there is grace to create and renew and keep renewing a clean heart within them.

[41 : 24] That there is grace to restore and to keep on restoring the joy of the Lord's saving presence. Well then, then, there will be witness.

powerful witness, personal witness, public witness to the righteousness of God through his redeemed people. Then, verse 19, there will be right sacrifices that the Lord delights in.

There will be the fruit of lips and of lives that truly confess his name and his greatness and his goodness and his grace. God's righteousness, God's saving mercy made known now all over the world in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be declared in the world's hearing.

My tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. You can't suppress the joyful testimony of a sinner truly forgiven and made new in the Lord Jesus Christ, can you?

Nor can you hide the witness of a church where the true gospel revelation is working, true gospel renewal throughout the assembly, deep in people's hearts, slaying pride and conceit and all pretensions among the Lord's people, humbling them all in true and real repentance, uniting them all and healing and restoring broken relationships caused by sin, broken relationship with the Lord and broken relationship with one another.

[43 : 02] and so demonstrating God's saving righteousness in living human hearts. You see, when the people of this world encounter a community like that, men and women deeply conscious of the abundant horror of their sin, but deeply conscious also and deeply grateful and thankful for the super abundant mercy of God in Christ, then they will see that they're not encountering vain and empty religion and ritual, but they are encountering the power and the beauty of the God who washes the filthy until they're whiter than snow, the God who makes them dance for joy because of his saving righteousness.

righteousness. Isn't that so? Isn't that the truth? That's why this psalm ends with a prayer for Zion, for the whole of God's city and his people.

In our language, for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do good to her, verse 18. Build her up through this gospel of abundant mercy.

May the word of your great revelation do the work of your great renewing so that all your people will, like this, witness to your great righteousness so that sinners like me will return to you so that transgressors may know your marvelous ways.

For these things, these signs of the living work of the Spirit of Christ spilling out from among his people, these are the sacrifices and the burnt offerings and the whole burnt offerings that the Lord delights in.

[45 : 16] Well, isn't that a prayer that we will all want to echo today for our own lives and also for our congregation that we who all know that we are great sinners should find ourselves leading other great sinners to our great Savior.

Let's pray. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Have mercy on us, Lord, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy poured out for us in the great cleansing stream of Calvary.

Cleanse us anew, we pray, through the blood of our Savior, and use us. Use even us, O Lord, to teach others the way into your kingdom of joy.

Open our lips and touch in you our lives, that with all we are we may declare the praise of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

[46 : 42] Amen. Father Father ■■■■ God Hag favor Goddom Son call tay Âu Amen.