

Series: Psalms

Title: The LORD's Mercy and Judgment

Text: Ps 101: 1-8

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Psalm 101: 1: «A Psalm of David.» I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. 2: I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it shall not cleave to me.* 4: A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked *person.* 5: Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer. 6: Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. 7: He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. 8: I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

There is a way carnally religious men understand this Psalm—even how God's child, at first, understands it. Then there is the way the Lord makes his child know the truth of this Psalm. It is the lesson only the Lord can make us learn. It takes our whole lives to learn it. The first verse is key. David wrote,

Psalm 101: 1: I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

David penned this Psalm when the Lord first made David king over Israel. But at the time that David penned this Psalm, he did not understand what he was writing as he would by the end of his life.

David is a child of God born of the Spirit. Therefore, from his new heart, David, indeed, sang unto the LORD of the Lord's mercy and judgment toward him. But at the time David wrote this, he had no idea how truly he would sing unto the Lord of the Lord's mercy and judgment toward him. He will go through many troubling times. But by the Lord David would learn more and more that the Spirit of God had given him the words of Christ his King!

Christ is the King and Savior. These are the things the LORD worked in perfection when he walked this earth. He laid down his life bearing the sin of his people--bearing our sins for not doing these things. And our Redeemer justified his people so that he is just to show us mercy.

So he worked mercy and judgment toward David. All the days after God called him, the Spirit of Christ taught David, corrected David, and kept David looking only to Christ. This is what Christ works in all his own. David will, indeed, give all the glory to the Lord for the Lord's mercy working judgment toward David. At the end of his life, David gave God all the glory for doing for David what is right and good.

Proposition: All God's children shall indeed sing of the Lord's mercy and judgment. But it will be because Christ the King keeps showing us mercy by working judgment in us and for us. Thereby, beholding Christ our only Righteousness and Holiness, we behold Christ saving us and we learn to depend more upon Christ our King and less upon ourselves.

John 3: 30: He must increase, but I must decrease.

A SPIRIT-WROUGHT RESOLVE

This Psalm was penned at the beginning of David's reign as king. When a sinner is born of the Spirit of God, we behold Christ and God creates a new spirit within us. The Lord creates in the new man a strong resolve to serve the Lord and honor him in all we do. We say as David,

Psalm 101: 2: I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way...I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

All the things David wrote here is the resolve of his new heart. It is the resolve God creates within all his people in regeneration. And God's children shall behave wisely in a perfect way and walk within our house with a perfect heart. But the Lord will teach us it is now how we thought at first.

At first, there is too much “*I will*”. There is too much self in our resolve in the beginning. At first, when we read v3: *I will set no wicked thing [of Belial, of the devil] before me; I hate the work of them that turn aside*, we are thinking too much of others, too highly of ourselves, too little of Christ. At first, when we read v4: *A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person*, we think too much that the perverse, wicked man is someone else.

The Lord revealed himself to David. David resolved v2: *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way*. Notice, over and over, he says, “I will, I will, I will”. It truly was the resolve of his new heart created by Christ. He makes us willing in the day of his power.

But in a little while the Lord showed David mercy by working judgment for David. When we say God worked “judgment” for David we mean God worked what was right and good for David. David erred. God let David see his old, fleshly sinful man was still with him. But by that the Spirit of the Lord made David cry out to the Lord for mercy like David cries in v2: *...O when wilt thou come unto me?*

Then the Lord comes in mercy and judgment and shows us that he is our King and Savior. We resolve. But Christ performed the things we resolve in perfection. Doing so, our Savior justified God's elect from our sins. It is by the will of our Lord Jesus that we are made the righteousness of God. It is by God's mercy and judgment meeting in harmony in Christ crucified that we are saved and being saved.

And each time the Spirit shows us this, the Lord renews our resolve. But each time the peaceable fruit of righteousness he creates is that we know a little better it is only by Christ coming to us that we walk with a perfect heart, v2: *O when thou wilt come unto me, [then] I will walk within my house with a perfect heart*.

EXAMPLES IN DAVID'S LIFE

Psalm 101: 3: I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. 4: A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.

This is a good resolution. Believer, do it! Use all the power of God's grace and do this. But we must be taught what the Lord taught David in mercy and judgment. But what did David resolve not to turn aside from? From Christ! When David said, v6 *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land*, he is speaking of his brethren who God made faithful. But the preeminent Faithful One of the land is Christ. We depend entirely upon Christ. Look nowhere but to Christ. Set him before your eye of faith and cleave to Christ. If and when we look too much to ourselves to work this resolve, we have turned aside from Christ.

Let's see a few examples in David.

David said, *“I will set no wicked thing before me mine eyes; I hate the work them that do so; a froward, perverse heart, shall depart from me.”* Then one day, David beheld Bathsheba before his eyes. In his old man of sin, he became froward in heart. He used deceit. David tried to cover his sin by killing Uriah her husband. What happened? David had taken his eyes off the Faithful of the land, Christ Jesus. Make no mistake, the sin was all of David. When we sin it is entirely our fault. But it was the mercy and judgment of the LORD revealing to David that the one with the froward heart, the deceiver, the proud man, was in David's own old sinful man in his flesh. The Lord taught David that it is the Lord who puts down that wicked fleshly man. In mercy and judgment the Lord brought David to cry, *“O when wilt THOU come unto me, Lord!”* He made David cry out in truth, “Lord, you are just, I have sinned and done this evil in your sight! O Lord have mercy on me; create in me a clean heart; renew me, then I shall teach sinners thy way!”

All of this was the Lord showing David mercy and judgement. It was our merciful High Priest working what was just and merciful to David. Christ had put away David's sin and justified him as David's Surety. It was judgement to show David mercy by ruling over the trial then saving David from his sin. Doing so the Lord taught David mercy and judgment. He taught David it is the Lord who is the Righteousness and Sanctification of his people. He taught David it is the Lord who works this. The wicked he puts down is our old man of sin first and foremost. The Faithful he makes to dwell with him is Christ the Faithful One in the new man he has created within us. By this the Lord renewed David's resolve in his holy heart. But he

taught David a little more clearly, “*When THOU wilt come to me then I will walk in my house with a perfect heart.*”

It is Christ who worked all this for his people. It is Christ who works this mercy and judgment in his people. He sets himself before our eyes and puts down our wicked, froward heart so that we cleave only to Christ. That is how we, through the Spirit, mortify our flesh.

Let's see another illustration in David's life. David said, v5: *Whoso slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.* Then it came to pass that Absalom, David's own son, slandered David. He turned Israel against David. David had to flee into the wilderness. But David did not want to cut off Absalom because it was his son. Then over the hill comes Ziba with two asses laden with gifts. Ziba flattered David and said, “These are for you David.” David said, “Where is Mephibosheth, your master?” Ziba slandered Mephibosheth, saying, “He is in Jerusalem, saying, now the kingdom shall return unto me.” Without any hesitation, David cut off Mephibosheth by giving Ziba everything he had promised Mephibosheth. In time the Lord revealed to David that Ziba had slandered Mephibosheth. Then David saw what he had done in not cutting off his son who slandered him when he quickly received the slander and cut-off Mephibosheth so quickly. David saw himself the sinner.

That was Christ the King working mercy and judgment toward David showing David his need for Christ. If the Lord did not teach us in this way, keeping our old man put down and our new man renewed, then trusting ourselves to fulfill our resolve we would slander the Lord himself who declares us to be the sinner in need of Christ to continually save. But by working mercy and judgment toward us, the Lord keeps us believing that Christ alone is our Righteousness and our Sanctification, our King and our Savior.

Let's see another example. David resolved in our psalm to cut off him that had a proud heart. Then one day, it came into David's heart to number Israel. It was pride in David. His officers tried to dissuade him, saying, “the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be...that the eyes of my lord the king may see *it*: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing?” (2 Sam 24: 3) But David did it anyway. It was David's pride to look to his army rather than trusting the Lord to add to his army. It was pride in the strength of his military rather trusting the Lord to be the Captain of his warfare.

This was the Lord working mercy and judgment toward David to teach David his own flesh is the proud man that only Christ can save him from. The Lord was angry with Israel due to their pride. But while the Lord purposed to pour out strict judgment on them that were not his, he purposed to work mercy and judgment toward David to show David the pride of his own heart. Scripture says the Lord moved David to number Israel and it says the devil provoked David to number Israel. The Lord merely took the restraint off the devil and off David's proud fleshly heart and David numbered Israel. But this was the Lord showing David mercy and judgment.

2 Samuel 24: 10: And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

In order to show how the Lord put down the proud man in David and humbled him in the new man, the Lord gave David 3 choices how the Lord would deal with Israel due to David's sin. This was already the purpose of God to destroy the reprobate in Israel. But God wisely used David's sin to bring it to pass. Thus God taught David, his elect, in the process of fulfilling his purpose. But David had been humbled in the new man by being made to see his sin. So David did not look to himself but left the matter in God's hand.

2 Samuel 24: 14: And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man. 15: So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

After, David went and built an altar and offered sacrifices to the Lord. This is a picture of the Lord turning us from our fleshly proud man and bringing us back to Christ. This pride is in every sinful heart of every fallen child of Adam—“Every man carries within him the heart of a king.” It is even in the poorest and basest men. It is even yet in those God has made holy. But it takes the Lord's mercy and judgment to show his child that the perverse, wicked, proud, deceiving man is our own old fleshly man. It is Christ our King

who suffers not our forward, wicked proud flesh to prevail over us. It is Christ our King exercising his mercy and judgment toward us to humble us from our pride, keeping us depending upon the Lord alone.

THE END OF DAVID'S LIFE

The Lord works this over and over throughout the life of God's child. We start the life of faith thinking we have the strength to perform our resolve—“*I will, I will, I will*”. Then we find ourselves needing the Lord's strength and the Lord's mercy. And it is Christ's mercy and judgment being worked to make us see we need his mercy and judgment.

The Lord teaches us what we so prone to do. We are prone to NOT suffer the wicked when it is another person but to suffer the wicked man of our own flesh. Our own fleshly heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? But then when the Spirit of God brings us to cry out for Christ, he giveth more grace. He works more judgment, doing what is right and good in our heart and in providence. He renews our resolve in the new man to worship and serve our Lord Jesus. But each time, he teaches us to depend more upon Christ and less upon our “will”. We see a little more clearly we are the sinner and we see a little more clearly that Christ is the King and Savior. We are being saved by God working mercy and judgment for us and in us for Christ's sake.

We saw this was David's resolve at the beginning of his reign. Now let's hear David's last words. What did the Lord teach David in all this?

2 Samuel 23: 1: Now these *be* the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man *who was* raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2: The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue. 3: The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must be* just, ruling in the fear of God. 4: And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

David learned Christ is that Rock and that King who ruleth justly in the fear of God. Christ is the Light of the morning whose showers of mercy and judgment come down on his child as rain on the tender grass. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers *that* water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps 72: 6-7).

David had said, “*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*” It was a good resolve which was of God. But the Lord taught David it was not David's covenant with the Lord that saved him but the Lord's covenant with David. These are his last words.

2 Samuel 23: 5: Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.

From the day of conversion, Christ begins teaching us more and more that it is not, “I will”. He teaches us more and more “in my flesh dwells no good thing.” But the Lord also teaches us more and more to depend upon Christ, “If the Lord will, I will live and do such and such a thing.” Christ is the King by whose mercy and judgment we are saved.

Amen!