

If you have a copy of the Scripture I invite you to turn to Psalm 51. We're going to continue this week looking at the Psalm that we started last week in our summer sermon series in the Psalms. This month we're looking at the *Psalms That Lead Us into Worship*. Last week we looked at the element of worship of confession of sin. Today, the element of worship that this Psalm, I think, instructs us in is the proclamation of the Word, the work of God in a visible way. So we have the Word and the Sacraments, and today we have the wonderful privilege to celebrate the Lord's Supper together as believers in Christ.

One thing we can note by observing God's world is this: Things change. Some results of change are easy to observe, right? Ugly caterpillar, beautiful butterfly, right? Little acorn, mighty oak. Doctor Bruce Banner gets angry, Incredible Hulk smashes things, right? You can see change pretty quickly, at least in the Marvel world, right, that takes place. But some change happens over time and some change happens immediately. Immediately you put popcorn kernels in the right temperature oil, and a savory snack is had by all. But over time, it's sometimes a little more difficult to see change take place.

Yesterday some of my kids were doing the scrapbooking thing---are you familiar with this principle of bringing a picture of their father that was taken about twenty five years ago to him, in a very humbling encounter with reality. Because if you observe this one with the full head of hair and all the other things---the body type that doesn't look like a low cholesterol diet is anywhere other than a textbook---and then you look in the mirror, you can see change, but it's been this gradual change that's occurred over time. But one thing we know if change takes place, change should be evident, right? It should be evident for all to see, whether it's immediately seen or whether it's seen gradually over time. The difference should be noteworthy. That's why we call it change. It's the very definition: Something is different.

Last week we saw in the first nine verses of Psalm 51 how where, after being confronted by the prophet Nathan, King David [of] Israel completely repented of his sins. The sin of adultery. The sin of murder. The sin of the deceitful cover-up within which he had attempted to manage his sin and his life at that point. That repentance, we saw, included a desperate cry for mercy to a God of steadfast love and abundant mercy, and acknowledgment of the need for complete cleansing and honest agreement with God's reality. We saw David owning his sin at every level, in expectation of redemption and restoration, in expectation of complete redemption and restoration. That's what David expected because of the God to whom he cried for mercy, the God who completes his projects. So true repentance springs forth from the heart that has had an encounter with the living God. And that encounter with the living God produces hearts that are genuinely converted. There's change, and that change should be evident. That's the whole point of these last ten verses. The change that God brings in our lives should be evident to others. We look at the characteristic of genuine conversion today through the lens of the church because we look back on the cross upon which our Savior died. We look back on the sacrifice of the one and only son of God. We look back, and we rejoice in the Lamb of God, who was slain for the sins of his people. So we look at the characteristics of true conversion or genuine conversion through the lens of the church.

And we are well served to remind ourselves, even before we start looking at these characteristics, of who comprises the church, of what kind of people make up this Church of Jesus Christ. You may recall, the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6---I know you've heard me say this from this platform before, it's a favorite passage of mine because of the way that the apostle Paul speaks to that sometimes infamous church in Corinth. He says in verse 9 of chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, Do you not know---this is a description of a kind of anti-church. These are the people that will not inherit the kingdom of God---Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor the idolater, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will

inherit the kingdom of God. And speaking to the church, Paul says the next phrase: And such were some of you. That's past tense, but that's who makes up the church. The church is made up of all types of people from every tribe and every tongue across the age, but the church is made up of all types of sinners. This is who is sitting there with you in those puffy chairs today. Paul says that's what you're supposed to know: And such were some of you. You've had the encounter with the living God, and that encounter has produced genuine conversion, and genuine conversion is evident because he says you don't do these things anymore. Such were some of you. I hope that we can grow in our understanding of how God receives glory when we confess honestly and openly. God receives glory when we're honest with our sin, when we come to him and him alone for mercy and grace, when we trust his plan of salvation as our only hope. One Savior crucified for all sinners. That's when he's most glorified. And we can be sure of this, God did not crush his one and only son in the place of sinners so that we could pretend that we don't sin, or that we have [no] need for a Savior. We know that for a fact. God would not waste that precious sacrifice so that we could just pretend that sin doesn't exist or that we're not weak and might fall into sin.

The office staff has been going through the Heidelberg Catechism as our weekly devotion on Tuesday morning--the pastoral staff and the administrative staff gather. And the Heidelberg Catechism captures this thought very succinctly. Question 88 says, What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion? The answer is this. Two things: the dying-away of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new. The dying-a way of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new. Genuine repentance, genuine conversion. The dying-away of the old self and the coming-to-life of the new. Do you hear the gradual in that? Please hear that. The Catechism goes on to further define the dying-away. I think this is very instructive, very helpful. The dying-away of the old self is a deep sorrow for sin, a growing hatred of sin, and a purposeful forsaking of sin. That's what's involved in the dying-away of the old self. It's a repentance. It's a turning from. And then the coming-to-life. The coming-to-life of the new involves this: An increasing joy in God through Christ. An increasing....do you hear the gradual? Do you hear the change taking place? An increasing joy in God through Christ and a deepening delight to do the good that he calls us to do, so that the One who has genuinely converted our hearts from death to life gets the glory. He wants to be glorified when sinners are not sinning as frequently as they used to. That's why God saves sinners.

So four observances today from Psalm 51, that evidence of real change, the characteristics of genuine conversion. The first one is that a genuinely converted heart is *Dependent on the Sustaining Power of God's Holy Spirit*, dependent on the sustaining power of God's Holy Spirit. You know, before we go any further, mark these four characteristics, but don't let them be a burden. This isn't a to-do list. This isn't some kind of, find a new way of doing what you haven't been able to do prior to this point. These are characteristics of the activity of the living God in the hearts of his people. Don't let it be a burden. But do, may I encourage you, do let it be a challenge. Let these characteristics challenge you, as I trust and hope that they challenge my heart as well.

So the first characteristic is dependence upon the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit of God. Look at what David says. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not or don't cast me away. Cast me not, don't cast me away from your presence. I want to be where you are. Take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. You see that? The joy of your salvation, bring that to my heart again. And uphold me, O God, uphold me. Strengthen me, enable me, cause me to persevere with a willing spirit. You see, David, we can imagine, is still consumed with the heaviness of his guilt. He was busted wide open when Nathan pointed the finger at him and said, you are the man. And that which he had pretended to be beforehand, now was all exposed, that he was out in the open. It was heavy. You can imagine the isolation and the distance that he felt, perhaps, because we have all felt that isolation and distance. We've experienced that at one point or another when we've done something so heinous as to alienate us from the loved ones that we have injured. Maybe it's a harsh word spoken in anger, or maybe it's a self-centered action that demonstrates a lack of concern for the other. Maybe it actually is a malicious deed meant to cause harm

to another physically or emotionally. Whatever it is, it causes a distance. There is an isolating effect that sin has. It separates us. It separates us first from the Almighty God and the Fellowship that we have with him. But it separates us from one another. David was probably feeling that. We don't feel it, but maybe we do. We feel as if we could never get that relationship back. We feel as if we'll never have the closeness that we once enjoyed with the person we've offended.

And we will do all sorts of things to get freed up from that guilt. Instead of actually humbling ourselves and admitting the wrong, we try to wiggle free from the guilt by spreading some of the responsibilities out for our actions. We'll try to spread it to the other person. Well, you know, if they hadn't been so \_\_\_\_\_ (fill-in the blank), then I wouldn't have had to do \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank.) You have to fill in the blanks because my blanks are my blanks, and your blanks are yours. But we do that, don't we? We'll shift the responsibility. Man, if they hadn't been so \_\_\_\_\_, I would have never done that. That's not me. And you have to come to terms---I have to come to terms. I guess you need to, too, but I do. We have to come to terms with the fact that it was me that did that. That's what genuine repentance is. I did this. It's me. Does it sound familiar, trying to spread the some of the "wealth," some of the responsibility around? That man-made plan may even relieve some of the weight of guilt, but it's only for a brief time. You've experienced that. I have, too. Where you can kind of like....*these stupid idiots, they don't know...* And it makes you feel better, because they're stupid idiots and you know you're not. And then you realize I'm the biggest stupid idiot.

And the ground at the foot of the cross is completely level. We all need a Savior. And that closeness we want... You see, that spreading the responsibility for the actions, that won't even come close to working for David in this Psalm. There is no wiggle-free room for the responsibility of his actions in trying to blame God. In fact, in verse 4 he's already admitted, Lord your judgments are found to be righteous because you called me what I am, and I agree with you. I agree with you. David feels the distance even as he acknowledges his sin. He longs for the closeness that he experienced in the past to, be restored. Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit. The true communion with God can only be achieved by God's Spirit. And that's the first point, it's dependence on the sustaining power of God's Holy Spirit. You see the phrases there. Create in me a clean heart. That's calling upon God to do it. You must create this. Renew---you must renew. I can't generate this. I can't bring it up out of my sinful heart. You have to do this. This is evidence of the converted heart. He willingly upholds the Creator/creature distinction. Actually, he revels in it. There is one God, and David knows he's not God. He is asking God to do these things because he's dependent on God to do them. If they are ever to get done, God must do them. Create in me a clean heart. God, please clean this up, cleanse me from my pollution, my guilt of sin. Renew a right spirit within me. Uphold me with a willing spirit, enable me by your Spirit's power to walk in obedience.

I don't think we need to be caught up in some kind of controversial, theological discussion about verse 11, either. David wants to be where God is. He doesn't want to go it on his own, because he knows where going it on his own gets him. It gets in sin. That's where he was in 2 Samuel 11. David is well aware of what we read in 1 Samuel 16, that the first king in Israel, King Saul, at one point disobeyed and had the Spirit of God removed from him. We don't have to go into a bunch of detail to know the heaviness that David felt as he confessed his sin. He longed to be restored to the closeness that he once enjoyed, and he cries out to God, renew, create, make me yours again, draw me close. David longed for God's presence. Maybe because David saw the torment of the soul of Saul. Remember, David was the one that was brought to play the stringed instrument and to comfort Saul when he was all tormented. He was vexed in his spirit, because the Spirit of God had been taken from him. David had seen that, and now David was experiencing that. This is what guilt does. Guilt causes that torment. David says, I don't want this. I want to be where you are. David says, create, renew, cast me not, do not take your Spirit from me, restore to me. All these verbs are God to do. That's the action of God.

I wonder for us, for me, for you, for us in this present day, do we pray to God for his Spirit to be with us? Do you pray to God for his Spirit to be with you? That's simply what's being called for here, a dependence on God's Spirit to guide and direct our thoughts and our actions, to renew our minds and to guard our hearts, to restore the joy of our salvation, to place before us again the picture of Jesus Christ crucified for me, for you. That's this picture today for sinners. I think we should pray for God's Holy Spirit to be with us. It's not compromising our theology or our doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to feel and to feel deeply a desire to be in God's presence. Hear me, please, hear me. We're not jumping out of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for this one point. We are joining with all of Christ's genuinely converted souls and saying, if I'm to be a joyful follower of you, then I must have your Holy Spirit enable me to do so. That's what this first point is. Dependence on the sustaining power of God's Holy Spirit.

David recognizes that when God's Spirit works within his heart, another characteristic of a genuinely converted heart shows itself pretty quickly, and that is it *Declares the Deliverance Provided by God's Appointed Savior*. David says if you do these things---you renew, you create, you uphold my spirit with a willing spirit---then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from my bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. You see, David is still dependent on God. He says, God, you're the one that has to open my mouth, because if it's dependent on me, I can't do it. David is raring to go. He wants to teach and he wants to sing and he wants to declare aloud God's praise. You can't contain David. You should just try. You'd draw back a stump.

I've had the privilege on occasion to be able to share summer vacation plans with the six Flora children. Dana and I will figure out something, we'll figure out where we're going, and then one of them will maybe be passing by and we'll say, hey, you know we're going down to the beach or we're doing the mountains or whatever. I haven't done that commercial where we say, we're going to Disney World, but maybe one day we'll go to Disney World, when they're all like 35 years old or something. Sorry, you guys. But when I share with the one, they don't walk down the hallway, get out their suitcase, and start packing clothes to go on vacation. That comes later, trust me, I've got four girls. What they do is, once they find out what the news is, they go immediately to the others. Man, if you didn't have your plan in effect, if you didn't know for sure, you better not open your mouth, because they're going to go right out to the other room. Yay! We're going to the beach! And they all get excited, because you can't contain that joy.

Now that's nothing compared, nothing compared, to what David is raring to teach and to sing and declare. What is he so stoked about sharing? Well, he's just had the ultimate rescue, that's all. He's just had the ultimate rescue, that's all. David says, deliver me from my bloodguiltiness, my blood guilt. Deliver me from the death sentence that I had heavy over me. This is something we read about in Ezekiel 18. It's actually something we see in 2 Samuel 12. It's something that the Old Testament writers and people that lived in that time---they were very much aware of what 'blood guilt' was. If you do this, then your blood is required of you, your life is required of you. And David says, deliver me, O God, deliver me, make this rescue effective in my life, and I will teach sinners who you are. I'm going to let them know that it wasn't me, it was you. I'm going to sing aloud, I'm going to declare your praise. You know, maybe David was thinking of Psalm 40. He heard my cry and he drew me up from the miry pit, and he set my feet on solid ground and he placed a song in my heart. And now I sing. I sing of Jesus who saves sinners, of whom I am the chief.

God delivers from the blood guilt, and he doesn't diminish his righteousness at all in the process. In fact, he is both just and the justifier in that deliverance. It's an amazing, amazing plan of salvation, and we get the benefit. Do you think about that often? Maybe not as often as we should, right? The apostle Paul, again, to that church in Corinth, in 1 Corinthians 1---just a reminder of where we are, who we are, what we are. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are---

what are you talking about, Paul?---so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him, because of God, you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us the wisdom from God. He's become for us righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Verse 31---so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.' Let the one who teaches, teach in the Lord; let the one who sings, sing in the Lord; let the one who declares praise, declare praise in the Lord. That's what David is saying he is raring to do. He wants to do that.

So, for death-deserving sinners, then, the question comes for us. Is your life characterized by teaching, singing aloud, declaring for all to hear the praises of your Savior? I'll tell you, desire counts. I worked with a teacher this week at Howard Community College. You could probably write on your bubble sheet, you know, well, I have the desire. I'll tell you in this sermon that desire counts. There's a something at work in us. Remember, we talked about it's gradual. The dying-away of the old self, the coming-to-life the new. Is this characterizing your heart? I want to tell others about Jesus. Maybe you need to freed up from the notion that you've got to be a theologically precise something or other in order to do it. Maybe you remember Billy Graham, the evangelist who packed stadiums with his gospel messages. He was, I think, attributed the statement that evangelism is simply one beggar telling another beggar where he can find the bread of life. Maybe you've heard it put this way---I saw this all over the Internet---I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody about The Somebody who can save anybody. That's us. That's what David says. Listen? You've got a desire to teach. I want to know more about this One who saved me, and I want you to know him, too. Not because you have to be a part of our club, not because you have to be a part of our denomination, or our religion---it's because at one day in history, all of us have to give an account of the sin in our life. And that's why I want you to know about the Savior. He saves sinners, all types, all types of sin. All types of sinners, young and old, from every tribe and every tongue, he's gathering his bride. And that bride, by the way, isn't going to be this ugly thing at the end of history. It's going to be spotless and blemish-free and blameless, because that's what God is doing. He's making us into his image.

So a genuinely converted heart declares and sings, it depends on the Spirit, and it *Displays the Humility of God's Heart-humbling Work*, verse 16 and 17. David says, For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you'll not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, these you will not despise. What David is saying here is that he's not throwing out the sacrificial system, because actually burnt offerings and sacrifices are what God required. David's not saying that we now have this different thing---I no longer have to be saved the way you atone for sin. He's saying my heart must be broken and contrite. That's what's pleasing to God. David, in essence, is saying God is not impressed when we attempt to make atonement for our own sin. But even deeper still, God is not interested when we go through the motions of his plan when our heart is not broken and contrite before God. We show evidence that we don't understand the gap between a sinful man and a holy God when our hearts are not humble before a holy God. When they're not humble we either try harder to be pleasing to him in our own strength, or we pick and choose ways that we think God will be pleased with us.

We're just like constantly manufacturing ways to not do it God's way. That's called the sinful heart. It's Original Sin. It's a curse. It's what the Holy Spirit is come to reverse in our lives, but that's what we fight against. When we humbly recognize our place before God, he is pleased. When we exercise faith in his Son for our salvation from sin, he is pleased. When we gladly acknowledge that if anything good has come forth from us, either in thought or word or deed, it has got to have come from God, he is pleased. Because that's us with a broken and a contrite heart. That's us with the Creator/creature distinction fully acknowledged and actually celebrated. We should do that. We're not God. Why pretend to be so? He settled the sin-debt through Jesus Christ on the cross. See how God is glorified when we humble ourselves and openly and honestly confess our sin and proclaim him as God and his way right.

Lastly, David reminds us that a genuinely converted heart *Delights in Being Part of the Community of Faith*. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; and then you will delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings, and then bulls will be offered on your altar. You see, the sacrifices are still in view, but it's the heart that's been changed that makes the difference. Up until this point, other than the sinners that David envisioned teaching and singing aloud to and declaring praise in front of, this has been an individual confession of one man and one God up to this point. But now David turns his attention to the covenant people of God. Do good to Zion, if it pleases you. If it pleases you to do so, build up the walls in Jerusalem. The walls had been breached, the walls had been torn down. Sacrifices had ceased for a time. In the days of Nehemiah, we read in chapter 12, that after the walls were rebuilt the people of God offered sacrifice with hearts of rejoicing, that God had made them to rejoice, Nehemiah says, with great joy. So the walls were constructed. The prayer that David prays is, gather your people, gather your people for worship. Bring all those that are cleansed and pollution-free and have been acquitted of their bloodguiltiness. Bring them all together, and we will give you the sacrifice of praise.

Many centuries later, Jerusalem was again to be the site of another sacrifice. It was the sacrifice that didn't bring much rejoicing that day, at least not from hearts that were pure. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was put to death on the cross at the hands of the Roman government, but by the wisdom and design of the sovereign God. Jesus was crucified in order that any sinner who humbly acknowledges that they deserve God's wrath--- which Jesus has absorbed and bore---any sinner who repents of their sin, who confesses openly and honestly and delights in him more and more, shall be saved. That sacrifice and that hill in Jerusalem afford us what Peter talked about, the apostle Peter, who actually was there that night. Years later, Peter would write a letter to the church in exile, the church dispersed, and Peter would remind them of the sacrifice that has brought together the covenant people. He said, listen, don't sin. It's not worth it. It's wasting your energy running after things that you think will fill you up that can't fill you up at all. So Peter says, put away all malice and all deceit and all hypocrisy and all envy and all slander. Like newborn infants long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it, the word of God, you may grow up to salvation. See the gradual? See the gradual? It's there, the coming-to-life of the people of God that have been genuinely converted. That you may grow up to salvation if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. That's the challenge, that's the examination. That's for you and for me, it's for all of us every time we gather, every time we encounter God's word, every time we pray, every time we think about our eternal existence, we should be challenged. God, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me, cast me not from your presence, keep me close to you. Lord, give me a right spirit that will uphold me, a willing spirit, enable me to obey.

Because Peter says this in [1 Peter, chapter 2] verse 4: As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God, chosen and precious, and you yourselves like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a the holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, whoever believes in him will not be put to shame. Do you see what's going on here? David cries out, O God, if it pleases you, build up the walls in Jerusalem. In Zion do your people good, so that right sacrifices can be offered. The righteous sacrifice was offered in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ, so that from every tongue, every tribe, every nation on earth, across the ages, young and old---stones would be placed in that wall, building up the household of faith, building up the bride of Christ, building up the church to the praise of the glory of God. Amen?

We have a picture for us today of the word. The word that was living and active, the word that took on flesh. Part of corporate worship is we partake and celebrate the Lord's Supper. We're going to do that in one moment. This table is for sinners. It's for sinners who have been made aware of their need of the deliverance from their blood guilt. You have freely acknowledged that God is perfectly just if you were to go to hell forever and ever. God would be just because of your sin. But if you confess your sin, he is faithful and just, and will forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. This table is for those who have acknowledged

that. And for those who are rejoicing in a gradual way, coming to life, dying to self, coming to life in a gradual way---this is our food. This is where Christ meets you, and he says to you through his minister, this is my body, when he holds the bread. My body that was given for you. Eat in remembrance for me. This is what I've done for you. And this, this cup, is the new covenant that I've secured for you because you couldn't do it. You didn't have the strength or the energy or the willingness to do it. This cup is the new covenant in my blood for the forgiveness of all your sins. And the minister ministering in Christ's name says, drink of it. Enjoy Jesus.

So let's pray and let's ask God to meet us in this time. I want to tell you before we go to prayer that this table is not for people who have not made that public acknowledgment of their sin, their public acknowledgement of Christ as Savior. This table is not for those who have never been baptized. But for you, those who have the sign of the covenant that has been given to you, and those who have made a public profession of your faith in Christ, sinner, come and enjoy Christ. Let's pray. Heavenly father, we pray that your Spirit would be at work. Meet us, Lord. We pray that the bread and cup would have that significance that you have set before us. Lord Jesus, we pray that you would meet us now. You are here spiritually present, very real, and we ask you for your blessing. Lord, deliver us once again with a renewed spirit, deliver us from the blood guilt. Cause us to rejoice in the one who took our sin and suffered in our place, and the one who rose victorious, so that we might have life, and that life be abundant life. We praise you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.