

## **SUMMER PSALMS SERIES – PSALM 51 – CONFESSION**

Today I want to talk about a topic that you don't hear much about in church today ... it's ironic because it is central to the whole Bible story....and it is the 'S' word - **SIN**. At its core sin means to 'miss the mark' – to fail to hit the target. Rather than go through Bible verses aplenty – I want us to approach the topic from a practitioners perspective... because that's where we all start...we don't start with theology or knowledge we start with experience.

**Sin is born into us**...somehow we have all succumbed. It takes various forms and shapes in our lives, sometimes we manage it, suppress it, or express it.

**Sin comes from inside us** (Romans) says, it's like a nature born in us that leaks its way out from the inside of us. There comes these desires to have, covet, to cheat, lie, deceive, manipulate and gossip.

**Sin is costly in our lives**. It causes pain, and hurt to us and those we love, and others we mix with. We just cannot keep this condition to ourselves. Then there's big sins and little sins, the biggies like stealing, lying, cheating or immorality and little sins like tax return, truth telling, gossip or slander, we have this grading of sin but here's the news you know *God doesn't grade sin*. But here's the good news about sin,

**Sin is something God specializes in**. Gods actually very used to people who sin. He has had a lot of practice at this. No matter what your sin, God can take who you are and bring something good out of the carnage of your life choices. That's the story of the Bible through and through.

**In today's Psalm 51 we see a redemptive journey of someone on their way back from failure** – we get an insight into the process and journey David took to recover from his life where he used power and position to control, murder and then commit adultery with Bathsheba....so says the opening of Psalm 51. So what I want to give you today is a pathway out and back, regardless of what sin, failures and life choices you have made – this pathway is for you to tread. **We are all on our way back from somewhere to God.**

**Steps ONE - ADMIT** Face your life with its failures – God sees, knows.

God confronts us with our sin and failures.

Sometimes one of the hardest things to do is to admit that it was YOU who did this stuff....we are great at blame shifting, minimalizing, rationalizing...but here is the first step – to just say – Yes it was me, I did it.

God confronts us in many ways...

Firstly it comes internally by our **conscience**...or nudge of Holy Spirit

Then it can be an external source....*like a life event*.

Or it could be a *person who challenges you*...wife, colleague, or friend

This is not easy to receive – but what we need to learn to do when this happens is take this to God and ask ‘Lord is there truth in this’? What do you say to me about this?

Admit – it really means to **agree** with the way God sees you...”*yes it’s me O Lord standing in the need of prayer*”! Many people never get past the first step... they are always busy finding fault with everyone else, blame shifting, rationalizing, rather than owning it.

### **Step TWO - UNDERSTAND**

**On what basis does God forgive us?** Does God forgive us because he feels it’s about time he was more merciful after being so strict for a period? Does God forgive us because he has days when he overlooks certain sins as ‘lesser wrongs’ ...and he has to wage war on terrorism, or ethnic cleansing? *God forgives because his character is to forgive.*

*V1 because of your unfailing love.* I sin because I was born a sinner.

But God while not overlooking your sin and its consequences has a way of dealing with your sin and failure.

**God does not have good and bad days**...bad days when he punishes people and good days when he turns a blind eye to people’s sin. Because he is just and fair every sin by every person must be paid for. V4

**Sin might be against people but primarily it is against God** v4

You were born to sin...it comes naturally! – but with it comes the fallout that impacts both people around you and your relationship with God.

In the OT sin was appeased by sacrifice, you bought some costly and offered it to the priest who would represent you before God and offer it. Jesus is our sacrifice, his life was made an offering once for all time, for all sin for all people. When you confess your sin, God forgives because of Jesus.

### **Step THREE - ASK**

Psalms 51 is full of asking....it’s really as prayer.

**Create** in me v10

**Wash** me v7

**Purify** me v7 God needs to do what we cannot do ourselves.

**Include me** - Don’t banish me from your presence

- Don’t take your Holy Spirit from me (Spirit of Holiness)

**Restore to me** – joy v12

**Change me** Make me willing to obey you v13

**Unseal my lips** – to praise you v15

**V16-20 The Psalm finishes with verses about offerings and sacrifices.** *It’s not offerings or sacrifice you want...in fact bringing those without some else is pointless. What you want is a broken and contrite heart.*

### **The Healing Dilemma – Healed and Broken**

That we are in a process of recovery and renewal towards reflecting and being in the likeness and image of God. This is a lifelong process, takes time, and we exhibit at times reflections of both our future and our past. But there is some part of you that God does not want you to recover from. He wants you to remain broken, to remain limping. And here is the dilemma we live with....we carry in our lives something that is broken and something that is healed. I am broken to my own sense of achievement, self confidence, my own ego and its desire to control –

***So are broken people just walkovers? Here is this fear that I took quite some time to get over...that Christians were people who were kind of like namby-pambies...who needed a crutch like God to get through life. Especially men they were effeminate losers with little backbone and I'm going....listen I don't want to be like that. Where are the real blokes who have faith?***

Then I saw something – that people with **faith people swim against the current.**

They are people whose strength is in God. They are **not swayed by public** opinion and peer pressure. They are strong people, sometimes rough on the outside and **carry in their hearts gold forged by fire....**The gold of God. They are **meek people** who know how to serve, who are secure enough to know their weaknesses but also ask for Gods help in their lives.

Maybe the word broken is not the best word to describe the process. Describing the people who walk with this experience is difficult but they look like they have been somewhere and **experienced something that sets them apart from others.** They are more secure not less, more God focused, more confident but not in themselves, more capable but not because of their skills, more deeply assured but still live with the vulnerabilities of being human.

Now what do you call that?....The Bible calls this quality meekness. It was said of Moses that he had this quality more than anyone else on the earth. **Its harnessed God strength forged into human weakness and frailty.** A kind of strength that comes through being broken then healed but **keeping inside of us what we learn on the journey.**

It may be so **personal and custom made** that for each of us its different. But here is what I want to say about this.....**you know when you have been there.** The stronger you are the harder the treatment....fire and testing. But you come out of this somehow changed. Sometimes you still limp a little, but you never forget why.

Now why have I said all this today? It's because it's my conviction that **confession especially of failure is one of the keys to living with yourself and letting God teach you deep truth about yourself and him.**

If you think confession is for weak people who need God as crutch to lean on then you have not trod little of the path towards knowing God.

Confession is for people who know something:

- know they are sinners and need God
- know that the very process of confession changes them
- know that they carry in their lives a deep sense of Gods strength
- know that they can call on their convictions to drive their daily choices

We read Psalm 51 and we go....*well this won't have much to say to me....*I have killed anyone, I haven't murdered and manipulated someone where their life was rubbed out in some way, financially, relationally, or emotionally... I only deal in small sins!

Yet this Psalms speaks to us all....Because we all need to admit our need of God's forgiveness, restoration, cleansing and washing. A great little verse in it is **verse 18**....

*'Look with favor on Zion and help her rebuild the walls of Jerusalem'.*

Zion is the people of God. Walls of Jerusalem is the city where God dwells.

God what you are looking for is a broken and contrite spirit...

***Leave your offerings.....don't give them until your heart is right.***

God isn't impressed with what you give him until the inside of you is right....

Create in me a clean heart O God. **Then** Unseal my lips to praise you.