

FINDING LOST JOY PSALM 51

FCF: In a fallen world like this we are liable to lose the joy of our salvation.

Proposition: We can learn from David's experience the way to the recovery of lost joy.

Objective: To lead the people of the Lord to recover their lost joy.

Introduction:

To know the Lord and to serve Him fills the life with joy. There is an unspeakable joy in the salvation of the Lord. It is the joy of being forgiven a debt you could not pay, of knowing the eternal God as Savior and Lord, of finding a hope of life eternal. Joy is an inner sense of well being when the heart is right with God. Such joy transforms every part of life. No one knew this joy better than King David.

But David is a reminder to us that it is possible to lose the joy of salvation. You can not lose the salvation, but you can lose the joy. This Psalm helps us understand the loss and points the way to the recovery of joy.

David became painfully aware that you cannot have sin and joy in the Lord at the same time. One of them must go. When he became aware of

this, he took immediate steps to recover the lost joy. His tragic story of failure is well-known. It happened when he was at the height of his success as the king of Israel. It happened in a moment of neglect and weakness. He allowed sexual lust to lead him to transgress the law of the Lord by committing adultery. He spent a night of pleasure with the wife of Uriah while Uriah was away in battle. It should be noted that David never refers to the specific sin in the prayer—if he had, this would be a prayer for adulterers alone. Since a specific form of sin is not mentioned, all of us can use this prayer regardless of the nature of our sin. Adultery is only one expression of our fallen sinful nature.

Sin always has unexpected consequences—in this case there was an unwanted pregnancy. And sin usually leads to other sins, in this case, the untimely and unjust death of Uriah. It was a horrible transgression against the Lord. David found himself with the woman he wanted, but without the joy of the Lord. This Psalm is a prayer in which he seeks to recover the joy that he has lost.

Your sin does not have to be as shameful, not as well-known as the sin of David, to cost you the joy of your salvation. Any sin—regardless of what it might be—produces the same loss of joy.

I. GOD REMOVES JOY WHEN THERE IS PERSONAL SIN.

David documents his loss of joy by pointing to four painful realities that resulted from his personal sin. His experience is not unique—this is the experience of every child of God who sins.

1. Sin produces guilt.

Have mercy upon me, O God,

According to Your lovingkindness;

According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,

^bBlot out my transgressions.

² ^cWash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

And cleanse me from my sin.

David added to this admission these words: “My sin is ever before me.”

We ought to be grateful for guilt. Guilt is to the spirit what physical

pain is to the body. It was ever before him as shame and guilt.

This is not bad. Can you imagine the damage we would do to ourselves if we did not have pain? Can you imagine the mess we would make of things if there was not the pain of guilt when we sin? But when guilt comes in, joy goes out.

2. Sin breaks fellowship with God.

Do not cast me away from Your presence,

And do not take Your ^hHoly Spirit from me.

David had enjoyed communion with the Lord; it was the delight of his life. The possibility of being cut off from the presence of the Lord was more than he could bear. Then the possibility that the Lord might remove the Holy Spirit from his life was a terrible thought. It is the Holy Spirit who makes communion with God a reality, which makes the presence of the Lord personal. Yet when you bring sin into your life, you forfeit this fellowship. When there is no fellowship, there is no joy.

The removal of the Holy Spirit was a real possibility under the Old Covenant. David would never forget the life of Saul after the Holy Spirit was removed from his life. We may not lose the Holy Spirit in the same way, but we will grieve the Holy Spirit, and lose the joy that he imparts.

3. Sin brings chastisement from the Lord.

Make me hear joy and gladness,

***That* the bones You have broken ^jmay rejoice.**

In the historical record of David's sin there is no record of any broken bones so this may be a poetic expression. The pain of the chastisement of

the Lord in his life may have been like a broken bone to him. We do know that the chastisement involved the death of a newborn son, the one conceived by Bathsheba. We do know that the chastisement of the Lord probably involved some kind of physical illness for he makes reference to this in Psalm 32.

Whatever form the chastisement took, it was the end of joy. While you should be grateful for the chastisement of the Lord, you will not do much rejoicing while it is under way.

4. Sin destroys usefulness.

³ *Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.*

¹⁴ *Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.*

¹⁵ *O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.*

Evidently sin affected David's desire to serve the Lord. He prays for God to give him a "willing spirit". This involves an eagerness to serve the

Lord and to do His will. When this is missing in your life, it is usually because of sin in the heart.

Evidently David experienced uselessness after his sin. He could not influence others to come to God. He could not offer praise to the Lord. His only psalms from this period in his life were like this one—full of lamentation and sorrow. Thus the cry to the Lord for the restoration of the joy of salvation!

II. GOD RESTORES JOY WHEN THERE IS PERSONAL REPENTANCE.

David knew this—he sought the restoration of the joy from the Lord. He could not restore it to himself, God must do it.

Recognition of what has happened is not enough. What will you do about? The proper response is repentance. David's prayer demonstrates the nature of true repentance.

1. The confession of Sin.

The confession was sorrowful and sincere. It was an expression of deep sense of need and shame in his heart.

For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

⁴ ^dAgainst You, You only, have I sinned,

And done *this* evil ^ein Your sight—

^fThat You may be found just ¹when You speak,

And blameless when You judge.

2. The claim of mercy.

David knew that confession was not enough. He lays claim to the promised mercy. Mercy is the way God has promised to respond to the misery that we have created by our sin. These are all covenant words. God has pledged to show us mercy when we sin.

Have mercy upon me, O God,

According to Your lovingkindness;

According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,

^bBlot out my transgressions.

² **^cWash me thoroughly from my iniquity,**

And cleanse me from my sin.

3. The consecration of life.

Repentance involves an intentional change. David takes another step in the process—He offers his broken and contrite heart to God as a sacrifice. He is praying like the prodigal who asked, "Make me as one of your hired servants."

For ⁿYou do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it*;

You do not delight in burnt offering.

¹⁷ **^oThe sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,**

A broken and a contrite heart—

These, O God, You will not despise.

This step is important in repentance. It is not enough to turn from the sin in sorrow, you must turn to the Lord in re-commitment of life.

We used to do this in re-dedications—why have we stopped this practice?

I am reminded of a moving testimony that I read some years ago in a book by a former president of Wheaton College. It was the conversion testimony of the well-known Methodist evangelist Peter Philpot.

Peter had a job as a twelve year old lad in a blacksmith shop in his Midwest home town. The chief blacksmith in the shop was Tom, a brute of a man that they called “Big Tom.” Tom was a hard drinking, hard working character. He had a tendency toward violence and was profane in his speech.

One morning he came to the shop with a smile on his face and a report to his fellow-workers that he had been converted the night before at the local Methodist church. His report created a stir among the men in the shop—not one thought it would work, but no one dared tell Tom that they doubted his conversion.

But it did work. It became rather obvious that a change had been made in Tom's life. His speech was different, and his behavior was changed.

He was seen walking to the church with his family on Sunday, and was conspicuously absent from the local bar on Friday night. This went on

week after week for six weeks, but in the seventh week on a hot

afternoon, Tom smashed a finger on the anvil, and immediately began

to curse in his old style. Every eye in the shop turned to him, but

carefully lest they offend the brute of a man. But to their surprise Tom

slipped to his knees beside the anvil, and began to weep. They heard

him praying to God, "Lord, I am sorry. I promised you that I would

never use those words again. Please forgive me. I want to serve you."

Then he arose from his knees, and humbly asked the men in the shop to forgive him.

Peter Philpot, the boy, watched the whole thing with wonder.

The next Sunday morning he went to church where Tom went to church. When the Methodist pastor finished his sermon and invited people to come to Christ, Peter was the first down the aisle. He said to the pastor, “I want God to do for me what He did for Tom.” The rest is history. Peter Philpot became a very useful evangelist for a generation across the Midwestern part of this country.

But it all started in blacksmith shop when a Christian sinned, but then humbled himself before God and asked for mercy.

Do you need a restoration of joy this morning? It is possible!

Humbly ask God for His mercy!

Admit to Him your transgressions and sinfulness!

Offer your unworthy and broken life to Him as a willing sacrifice!

The joy of the Lord will once again become the strength of your life.