
Illuminating Scripture

Lecture One: The Depths of Forgiveness

1. Hannah's Song (1 Sam 2:1-10)

My heart exults in the LORD;
my strength is exalted in the LORD.

**My mouth derides my enemies,
because I rejoice in thy salvation.**

² “There is none holy like the LORD,
there is none besides thee;
there is no rock like our God.

³ Talk no more so very proudly,
let not arrogance come from your mouth;
for the LORD is a God of knowledge,
and by him actions are weighed.

⁴ **The bows of the mighty are broken,
but the feeble gird on strength.**

⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.

***The barren has borne seven,
but she who has many children is forlorn.***

⁶ The LORD kills and brings to life;
he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
he brings low, he also exalts.

⁸ He raises up the poor from the dust;
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes
and inherit a seat of honor.

For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
and on them he has set the world.

⁹ “He will guard the feet of his faithful ones;
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;
for not by might shall a man prevail.

¹⁰ The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces;
against them he will thunder in heaven.

The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;
**he will give strength to his king,
and exalt the power of his anointed."**

2. Prayer of Manasseh

8: Therefore thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous, for Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against thee, but thou hast appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner. 9: For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied! I am unworthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities. . . 13: I earnestly beseech thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions! . . . For thou, O Lord, art the God of those who repent, 14: and in me thou wilt manifest thy goodness; for, unworthy as I am, thou wilt save me in thy great mercy, 15: and I will praise thee continually all the days of my life. For all the host of heaven sings thy praise, and thine is the glory forever.

3. Psalm 51

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. When Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1. Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight, so that thou art justified in thy sentence and blameless in thy judgment.
- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners will return to thee.
- 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of thy deliverance.
- 15 O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
- 16 For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased.

17 The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good to Zion in thy good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,
19 then wilt thou delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on thy altar.

4. Detail of Psalm 51

(A) Have mercy on me, O God,
(B) according to thy steadfast love;
(B') according to thy abundant mercy
(A') blot out my transgressions.

5. St. Augustine, Expositions of the Psalms

Sometimes when God means to forgive someone in the world to come, he corrects that person in this world. Remember David's case. He had been told through the prophet, "Your sin is forgiven" (2 Sam 12:13), yet the calamities with which God had threatened him because of that sin still fell upon him. His son Absalom waged a bloody war against him, and humiliated his father in many ways. David walked in sorrow, humiliated and distressed; and so submissive was he to God that he regarded all his woes as just punishments from God, confessing that no part of what he suffered was undeserved. Already he had an upright heart, with which God was not displeased. . . He recognized his guilt and embraced his punishment, seeking God's glory and not his own. He praised the Lord for whatever good fortune he had, and he praised the Lord for what he was suffering.

6. St. Augustine, Expositions of the Psalms

Sins are pleasing to an unclean spirit, displeasing to a holy spirit. So although you are still imploring pardon, from another point of view you are already united with God, because you are disgusted with the evil thing you have done; and so what is displeasing to him is displeasing to you as well. That makes two fighting against your illness—you and the doctor. Confession of sin and the will to punish sin cannot be present in any of us by our own doing; and so when we are angry with ourselves and find ourselves displeasing, it can happen only by the gift of the Holy Spirit (p. 424).