

Sin worse than afflictions

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[0 : 00] In 2 Samuel 24, and I would like us to consider words we find in verse 10, where we read, 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 my servant, for I have done very foolishly.

And this evening I want us to consider our studies in the subject of our saving faith.

And as we are seeking for marks of faith, I want us to review evidences of our saved state.

And this is another evidence of a person being in a state of grace, and in a state of salvation, through our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 19] And the proof of it is here in David's words. 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. This is a mark of saving grace.

It's an evidence of the work of the Spirit of God at work in his soul. He is convinced and convicted of his sin of setting up a census and counting the people.

The suggestion is that he wanted to assure himself that he had sufficient armed men in order to defend the realm.

And the implication is that his trust was not holy upon the name of the Lord. And there must have been this in David's heart, although there was no outward appearance of it in his outward life.

[2 : 37] But, you see, the Lord doesn't judge by outward appearance. The Lord knows the secrets of the human heart. He knows what motivates us.

He knows the reasons for our actions. He knows everything. There is nothing hidden from God. And we can only surmise. We can only suppose that there must have been something of unbelief at work in the heart of David before he would set up a census in order to count the number of his armed men and to buttress his feelings of insecurity in the realm as he sets about to count the number of his soldiers.

Now, last week, I talked to you about the believer in Jesus as a person who hates all sin.

This is true of the believer. The believer hates all sin. And I was in pains to show that from the scriptures.

But this evening, I want to probe this subject just a little deeper for 20 minutes or so. Now, firstly, I would say that the Christian is made to be more willing to have his sins purged out of his being than that God would remove all his afflictions.

[4 : 17] I think it's a first principle that the believer in Jesus is more prepared to have all his sins purged out of his system than that he would have any or all of his afflictions removed.

I think that's a first principle in our Christian life and experience. We want to get rid of all sin at any cost.

Because sin is that awful thing which God hates. And sin is that awful thing that is our burden. It's our burden.

Now, let me try and illustrate this from the lives of the Bible saints. It is a fact that sin is more of an affliction than all our losses and crosses and troubles and trials that we can have in this world.

Sin is the worst of all afflictions. And not to be afflicted for sin is a great affliction. Look at David under the affliction of the pestilence in this verse here.

[5 : 42] He doesn't pray to God, take away the pestilence, but take away the iniquity of thy servant. 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. And he was exposed to the judgment of God, which God had threatened his people with.

And he doesn't pray for the taking away and the removal of the affliction and the punishment. But what he prays for is the removal of his iniquity.

Now that's a very important distinction there. A very important distinction to notice. That David is praying for the removal of his iniquity. He's not praying for the removal of his afflictions.

This gracious man's response to affliction then is not that God would remove it, but that God would have mercy upon him and that God would take away his iniquity.

[6 : 53] And this is true of all the Bible saints. We have Daniel, for example, saying to the Lord, We have done foolishly.

We have done wickedly. We have rebelled. Confusion of faith belongeth unto us this day. But righteousness belongeth unto the Lord.

And unto us belongeth confusion of faith today. He doesn't say, we are sadly reproached. We are greatly distressed. We are woefully oppressed.

No, no. He doesn't say that. What he does say is all these, he does pray is, we have rebelled against thee. All these other things were true.

They were oppressed. They were reproached. They were distressed. But he doesn't mention these things. What he is concerned about is that God would have mercy upon him and his people.

[7 : 54] And in his confession, he says, confusion of faith belongeth unto us. And so too with Paul in the New Testament.

We find that Paul doesn't cry out and complain about his reproaches and persecutions and bonds and chains and stripes and prisons and perils. No, he doesn't cry out to God about these.

But he does cry out to God about a law in his members, rebelling against the law of God in his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members.

And this is what he says. And he cries out to God, oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. No, he doesn't cry out to God concerning his afflictions, his trials, his troubles, his persecutions, his reproaches, his prisons, his perils.

[8 : 59] No, but he cries out to God about his sins and about his iniquities. That's what he cries out to God about. And so it's a gospel principle for the Christian to be willing to be rid of all sin sooner than to be freed from any or all of his afflictions.

Now you see the contrast between the believer, the godly man, and the unbeliever. As unbelievers are brought before us in the Bible, the ungodly are far more interested in getting rid of their afflictions than they are interested in getting rid of their sins.

You remember how Pharaoh cries out to Moses, take away the frogs. All the successive judgments and afflictions God laid upon Moses.

It was always a cry to God and to Moses, take away the frogs, take away the lice, take away the marine, take away this, take away that. Take away the frogs, he says, and I will let the people go. Take away the lice, and I will let the people go. Take away this, and I will let the people go. It's not a case of entreat the Lord to take away my heathenish, evil heart.

[10 : 26] It's not a case of pray to the Lord that he will take away my proud, rebellious heart. It's not a case of pray to the Lord that he will take away my disobedient, defiant heart.

It's not a case of Pharaoh praying Moses and God, take away my blind, perverse will. It's not a case of Pharaoh praying to God, take away my vile and evil affections and my bad memory.

It's not a case of Pharaoh crying out to God about his sins and iniquities and about the nature of his sin and the sin of his nature. Take away the plagues that plague both me and my people.

No, he's not interested in all these sins of his nature. He's more concerned that Moses would pray to God that he would take away the afflictions and the judgments.

And there's no word about his heathenish heart, his perverse will, his bad memory and dead conscience. And disobedience and defiant attitude towards God and his rebellion and his failure to fulfill his promise.

[11 : 41] He said time after time, take away the frogs or whatever and I will let the people go. Take away the afflictions and I will let the people go. And whenever God took away the afflictions, did Pharaoh let the people go?

Why, of course not. He didn't let the people go. Ah, no wonder the psalmist writes. In one of the psalms, trust not in princes nor man's son in whom there is no stay.

His breath departs to his earth, he turns that day his thoughts decay. No, trust not in princes. Don't trust Pharaoh. Moses, don't trust Pharaoh.

He's not his word. You cannot trust his word when he makes a promise of letting the people go. If you take away the punishment, the afflictions and the sorrows, there's no guarantee that he will let the people go.

Oh, the ungodly are far different from the godly. You see, the problem with Pharaoh was not the problem of God's judgments.

[12 : 50] It wasn't the frogs and the lice and all the other plagues. That wasn't the problem. The problem with Pharaoh, you know, was an evil heart of unbelief. Pharaoh's problem was a defiant, a God defiant, God against, rebelling against God.

This was Pharaoh's problem. And so we can say that the ungodly are far more anxious to be freed from the punishment due to them for their sin than they are to be freed from the cause of their punishment, namely their sin.

And we see this in the history of the children of Israel, how they murmur against God and against Moses time and time again. They became professionals.

They became professional murmurers and complainers. They murmured against God and Moses. They distrust the providence of God.

They scorn and deride both God and Moses. And they revile Moses. Though it is true that Moses often delivered them.

[13 : 57] And delivered them from their sins. And yet they continue to sin. God sends them fiery serpents. And many of the people died.

And now they run to Moses to ask him to pray to God to take away the serpents. They don't run to Moses and ask him to pray that God would take away their murmuring, complaining, despising, reviling tongues.

There would have been better implied asking Moses that God in his mercy would take away their sins, would take away their murmuring and complaining, their reviling, their reproaching and despising tongues.

No, you see, they were more eager to be rid of their afflictions justly imposed upon them than they are to have their evil hearts and vile tongues purified and cleansed.

And people are still the same. People haven't changed. People are just the same today as they were then. God himself says to the people through Jeremiah, Why cryest thou for thine afflictions?

[15 : 05] Thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity. There it is. Thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity.

It's just so God was saying to the people, If you give up your sins and you give up your iniquity, then your sorrow will be at an end. Because thy sins are increased, he says, I have done these things unto thee.

Because thy sins are increased, I have done these things unto thee. They don't cry to God for him to take away their sins.

No. But to take away their afflictions. And we know from the history of God's dealings with his people and from our own experience, that as echo follows song, so does sorrow follow wrong.

As echo follows song, so does sorrow follow wrong. And in these instances I've been quoting to you from Scripture, we see that the people's sorrow followed their wrongdoing.

[16 : 20] Oh, you say, But that's the Old Testament. God is different today. That was the Old Testament, and God was different then. But this is the New Testament age, and things are quite different today under the New Testament.

Ah, we fear that things are just the same today as they were then. You remember, Pilate was reluctant to condemn Jesus. See him washing his hands, pleading his innocence, see him offering to release Jesus.

But yet, at the latter end, after all said and done, he was perfectly willing to let Jesus be crucified. Yes.

Although there were no witnesses, although there was no evidence to condemn Jesus, and he himself confessed it, he himself confessed it that there was nothing in him worthy of death.

He himself had come to that conclusion. He had examined what evidence there was, and his judgment was, there is no evidence. There's nothing to prove and to show that this man deserves death.

[17 : 35] And yet, in spite of all the lack of evidence, in spite of his washing his hands and trying to show himself innocent of the blood of that just person, nevertheless, he put him to death.

Harold was unwilling to behead John the Baptist, and yet, in the latter end, he gave orders to have him killed. If the Savior asked you, what would you like?

What would you say? If we were given the opportunity this evening, if we were given the choice, what would we choose? Would we choose rather to be freed from our afflictions and sorrows, or would we choose to have our sins removed?

Would we pray to the Lord, take away all sin? Like David, and David's heart smote to him after 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. And we can all say, we have done very foolishly.

[18 : 52] Yes, we do very foolishly. That's what he prays in the 51st Psalm that we sang there. Cleanse thou me from within, from secret faults, thy servant save from all presumptuous sin.

Yes, we need, we need the, the blood cleansing, of, we need the cleansing, efficacy of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We need the washing of the water of regeneration. And to, we need the instructions of the Holy Spirit to teach us the nature of our sin as rebellion against God.

the nature of our sin as that which is something heinous and dreadful as the wages of sin. The wages of sin is death.

But the gift of God is everlasting life. Your sins and sufferings and trials and afflictions are nothing compared with your sins and iniquities.

[20 : 09] Our afflictions and trials and sorrows are nothing compared with our sins and iniquities. Oh, you're saying, I'm making too much of sin.

Ah, no, we cannot make too much of sin. We cannot understand enough the nature of sin. Sin is that awful thing upon which God cannot look.

Sin is the death of the body. Sin is the death of the mind. Sin is the death of the soul. Physical, temporal, spiritual and eternal unless God will have mercy upon us and blot out our sin.

And if that is not a great and terrible evil, I don't know what is. Sin cast Lucifer out of the immediate presence of God.

And you know, Lucifer means light-bearer. It means one who was full of light. Glorious person.

[21 : 16] Lucifer was a glorious person. He was perhaps the prince of all God's angelic princes. And yet, because of a sinful thought that passed through his mind, God cast him down to the lowest hell into outer darkness.

Sin cast Adam out of paradise and sin casts multitudes of men and women today into a lost eternity.

Ah, let us reckon on it. Sin is the worst of all evils. It is a great and an awful evil. Or you say, I have no real consciousness sin.

Well, we should be praying that the Lord would send us his spirit so that he would convince us of sin and of righteousness and of judgment because it's only God who can do it.

We are so in love with sin that we delight in it and we'll never hate it until God will show us the heinousness, the awfulness, the filthiness and the corruption of our sin.

[22 : 49] And only then will we see it as that defiling, corrupting, damning, abominable thing which God hates. And David's heart smote him after he numbered the people.

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, I have done very foolishly.

God will punish sin, yes. Go, verse 12, go and say unto David, thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.

So God came to David and told him and said unto him, shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land. What a terrible judgment that was upon David for his sin.

Seven years of famine. or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies while they pursue thee. That would be a terrible punishment.

[24 : 07] Or that there be three days pestilence in thy land. Now advise and see what answer I shall return unto him that sent me. And David said unto God 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. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed and

they died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men.

Now we may think in these gospel times that that was an unwarranted punishment after all all he did was institute set up a census that's all he did and we would be inclined to play down and to palliate and mitigate the enormity of David's sin but we must believe this it must have been reckoned by God to be an enormous sin because of the enormity of the punishment that God meted out and there died of the people 70,000 men oh what an awful judgment that was upon the people for the sin of one man it shows us that the sins of people in high places the sins of kings and queens and parliamentarians and judges and teachers and ministers and people with great responsibility their sins are great sins sins and however much we would palliate and mitigate and reduce the enormity of the sin nevertheless in God's account it was a great sin a great sin God will judge people for their sin because he avers though hand be joined in hand the wicked will not go unpunished and however men may escape the punishment of of men in this world however the wicked may escape the judgment and punishment of men in this world yet though hand be joined in hand the wicked will not go unpunished if we learn one thing from this surely it is this that sin is an abominable enormous evil and the judgment is an appalling affliction it was a temporal affliction in the case of these people but it is an eternal punishment for the wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness yes into everlasting punishment

Jesus taught the people this and he's teaching ourselves this that unless we repent and believe the gospel we shall all likewise perish David's sin was a public act a public act and David's punishment was a public act God this thing wasn't done in the corner and God didn't punish David in the corner it was done in broad daylight and 70 thousand perished oh let us lay to heart that sin is an intolerable evil it is an appalling evil and of course the enormity of sin is highlighted by the nature of the death of the son of

[29 : 10] God on Calvary's cross where there he is suspended between heaven and earth and there he is bearing the sin of his people he is crucified between two malefactors he is put to death he is there made a curse he is there made a sin offering and there God turned away from him his face and he cried out in his utter abandonment my God my God why hast thou forsaken me you see this is what God will do to every unrepentant sinner God will turn away from every such person and he will drive out from his peasants everyone who doesn't confess sin and who doesn't forsake sin everyone will be turned into hell that awful place of outer darkness reserved for the devil and his angels how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation it's as though the apostle were saying it's not possible for anybody to escape all righteous judgment and punishment if he refuses to believe in the

Savior Jesus Christ oh men and brethren I beseech you by the mercies of God this night I beseech you to turn turn from your wicked ways and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation now is the accepted time today is the day of salvation there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved he is the only savior and he is saying to you tonight come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take up take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls well then there are these few things in this section of the chapter that I would leave with you tonight first of all the believer is willing to be is more willing to be rid of all sin than to have the least of his afflictions removed that's the first thing and the second thing is this that all sin is a great evil an incalculable enormous evil and this is seen in the punishment that God meted out to David and his people when 70,000 of them perished and it is highlighted even more brightly in the death of Jesus upon Calvary's cross and we can draw this conclusion from this chapter tonight that unless we turn from our sins the Lord will certainly meet us in his great white robes as the judge of all the earth and what he will do will be right when he consigns the wicked to everlasting perdition 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 yes take away the iniquity of thy servant for I have done very foolishly amen let us pray we beseech thee

O Lord we beseech thee O Lord take away the iniquity of thy servants for we have very often done very foolishly we pray that thou would give us conviction of sin conviction of righteousness and conviction of judgment to come do a work of saving grace in us tonight we pray that thou would give us repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ give us what thou dost command and then thou canst command what thou wilt thou hast given us thy law so that we should see the

greatness of our sin but thou hast given us thy grace in order that we may turn away from all our sins and we pray that thy grace might be sufficient for us and that thy strength might be made perfect in our weakness us that we will cry out to thee to take away all iniquity and receive us graciously we pray that thou do a work of saving grace in us therefore and all whom we love everywhere and do thou bless us with thy righteousness peace and joy for the Lord Jesus sake Amen