

Study in Psalm 51 - Part 3

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[0 : 0 0] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let's turn again to the passage of scripture we read, Psalm 51.

Psalm 51.

And as I said, I'd like to continue looking with you at Psalm 51 and the cry for mercy and forgiveness, which David puts up here.

Of course, it's a very well-known psalm, but sometimes we can be so familiar with a psalm that we actually forget what its main message can be. And, of course, the title reminds us of the occasion on which the psalm was written.

It tells us that David sinned after Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. And without wearying you with repetition, you'll remember that on the first night we looked at this.

[1 : 2 3] We looked at how David fell into this sin and how the sin got a hold of him and how it grew, how it began with spiritual lethargy. And then his eye lingered on Bathsheba's beauty.

And then he was ensnared. She became pregnant. And then he tried to cover his sin by bringing her husband home from the war so that he would lie with her and that the child would be thought to be his.

But, of course, Uriah would not lie with his wife while his own brethren were fighting the war. And that in itself should have been a rebuke to David even at that point to cease.

And when David had tried everything, even making Uriah drunk, still his plan would not work. And in the end, David resorted to sending a letter with Uriah to Joab, the captain of the army.

And that letter instructed Joab to put Uriah in the hottest part of the battle. And when the battle would be very hot, that the forces were to draw back and to leave him exposed so that he would die.

[2 : 3 2] That was done. And after the period of mourning, David took Bathsheba to be his wife so that the child would be thought to be his legitimately. But the chapter ended solemnly by telling us that the thing which David had done displeased the Lord.

And for nine months after that, David became progressively shattered spiritually. And it was only after the child was born that Nathan the prophet came to him with that parable that brought David to real and full repentance.

And that's the repentance we have recorded for us here in this psalm. And that's why it's been so precious to God's people ever since. And we noticed that this cry for mercy, have mercy upon me, was an intelligent cry.

It wasn't a random shot in the dark, but it was an intelligent cry. And it was based on God's character as a merciful and forgiving God.

It was based on that first. He laid hold on that as a truth about God that he was merciful and that he was willing to forgive. And he also cried for mercy on this basis too, that he himself had now come to a full confession of his sins.

[3 : 54] And we saw what that involved. He took full responsibility for what he had done. Instead of glossing over it as he had tried to do for nine months, he came face to face with it and confessed it.

He also saw that it was against God. It was against his glory. It was against his goodness and against his kindness. And he also justified God for all his dealings with him.

Even when Nathan said that because of this sin, the sword would never leave his own family and it would never leave his own house. Still, he justified God for that.

He said, yes, you are right in your judgments and right in your chastisements. And these are all marks that his confession is real, that his repentance is real.

And so have mercy upon me is based on these things, God's goodness and his own confession. But I want tonight to look with you at another aspect of this cry for mercy.

[4 : 54] And what I want to look at with you is just this, when he prays for mercy or when he prays for forgiveness, what exactly does that mean and what does it involve?

We know that he's confessing and that he's sorry for what he has done. But when he prays for mercy and forgiveness, what does that involve and what does it mean?

Now, in the psalm, you'll notice that mercy or forgiveness is often described as a cleansing.

And the language of cleansing is used again and again in the psalm. Wash me, cleanse me, purge me. All these expressions have to do with cleaning.

And mercy and forgiveness mean just that. They are to do with cleaning us. And that's what David is praying for. He's praying to be cleansed.

[5 : 55] And this cleansing itself involves two things. And they're both important. And unless both are in your cry for mercy, then your cry for mercy cannot be real.

It cannot be a true repentance. If it's a true repentance you have, both these elements will be in it. So then, what kind of cleansing is he praying for? Well, in the first place, he prays to be cleansed from guilt.

Guilt. Now, you know that word. It's common and so do I. People could say he's guilty or I'm guilty or whatever. And I suppose if I asked you what the word guilty means, some of you anyway might say that it means that you did it.

If you're guilty, you did the thing. Now, that's not actually what the word guilty means. If you're guilty, it doesn't mean that you did it.

It means something much more than that. It means that you deserve punishment or that you're liable to punishment because you did it.

[7 : 07] That's what the word guilty means. That you deserve punishment. And every time you break God's law, then that carries guilt.

It means that you are liable to be punished for that breach of God's law. Now, that's something that must happen. Every breach of God's law carries guilt.

Now, God can't just wipe off that guilt. I'll come to that in a moment. He can't forget about it or pretend that the guilt isn't there. That guilt exists. And that guilt must somehow be satisfied.

There must be some kind of making up or some kind of reparation or putting right when that guilt exists. It must be dealt with properly and honestly. And whenever a sinner is coming to God, that sinner begins to feel guilt.

It's not just a matter, and you who have been Christians here tonight will know what I mean. It's not just a matter of saying, yes, I did such and such and it was wrong.

- [8 : 17] But there's the sense of guilt. You know that you're liable to be judged and liable to be punished because you have done wrong. And conviction of sin means that.
- To be convicted of sin means that, yes, I'm convinced that I've done it. I'm convicted that I've done it. Yes, it's true of me.
- And also, I am guilty because of it. I am liable for punishment. I deserve to be punished. And punishment must come in some shape or form. Now, David acknowledged that he needed his guilt dealt with.
- He needed his guilt taken away. And there are two requests, especially in this psalm, that bring the idea of guilt before us. And they're both important.
- First of all, you'll notice the word blot appears here. It appears in verse 1. According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.
- [9 : 21] Again in verse 9, you have the same word appearing. Hide thy face from my sins and blot out all mine iniquities. That's the first word.
- We'll come to it in a minute. Blot. The second word that he uses in verse 7 is purge. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.
- Now, both these words, blot and purge, have to do with guilt. And they're very close in their meaning.
- Now, let's take them both. First of all, the word purge. Maybe sometimes in church you might hear the intimation at communion time that the session is going to meet to purge the role.
- Now, what that means is this. Of course, in every church, in every congregation of any church, there's a role kept of all members of the church.
- [10 : 19] And before communion, that role is purged. And the names of people who have died or who have moved away are removed from the role.
- They're purged. Now, that book is a legal document. It stands in the church's law. It's an important document, the book of membership. And when a name is blotted out, it's called purging.
- Removing by law. That's what you could call it. Blotting out by law or removing by law. So that's purging. And then you have blotting.
- Now, it's almost exactly the same. Blotting, again, it's an accounting expression, originally. An accounting expression.
- And when an accountant is removing something out of his book, he's blotting it out. In other words, if you owe something, if you don't owe this thing anymore, then it's blotted out.
- [11 : 27] Your debt is blotted out or it's dealt with some way or another. Now, of course, you know that an accountant can't just fiddle a book.
- Well, he shouldn't fiddle a book anyway. He can't just blot a thing out. If there's a thing there, it must be dealt with properly somehow. And we'll come to that too in a moment.
- But it's important to notice just now that to blot out here is an accounting expression, which means that legally, again, something is removed. An account is dealt with or a debt is paid.
- It's blotted. A debt is paid. It's no longer outstanding. Dealt with. Reckoned with. Now, these two words are very close.
- To purge out and to blot out. Now, to blot out your sin or to purge your sin, how can that be done?

- [12 : 26] Well, there's only one thing that can blot out your sin. And that, in the Bible, is blood. You can't whitewash it.
- You can't tip-ex it. You can't put anything over it that will really blot it out except blood. And only one blood.
- And that's the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's take that here. In verse 7, you'll notice what he says. Purge me with hyssop.
- Now, I don't know if you know what hyssop is. This hyssop was a small plant. In fact, the actual identification of it is still, I think, unclear. All that's known is that it was definitely a small plant.
- And it was used for sprinkling blood in the Old Testament. And perhaps the best known incident is at the time of the Passover, when the lamb was killed.
- [13 : 28] And even the children here will know the story. When the lamb was killed, the blood of the lamb had to be put on the doorposts, and on the upper lintel of the door, and on the step of the door too.
- That's quite clear in the passage. On the upper lintel, on the doorposts, and on the step. In the four places, the blood had to be put. But God told Moses to use a hyssop plant in doing it.
- And the plant obviously must have been, because of its shape, very good for sprinkling blood. So Moses was to take the hyssop, to put it in the lamb's blood, and to sprinkle it on the doorposts.
- And it was also used by Moses when he sprinkled the whole congregation of Israel at Mount Sinai.
- After God brought them into a special covenant relation with himself, Moses was told to take hyssop and to sprinkle the blood of the bull right over the people, as a sign that they were under the blood.
- [14 : 32] Now, this sprinkling of hyssop is important. In fact, I would say, although I wouldn't be dogmatic on this, I would say that hyssop was used to sprinkle all the blood in the Old Testament.
- It might be worth your while yourself trying to find that out if you're so inclined, but I would think that the hyssop plant was used to sprinkle all the blood. Because hyssop represents something that's in itself insignificant or weak, but yet it is the blood of Jesus Christ that is sprinkled in the heart in order to cleanse.
- Now, that reminds us of the law. David says here, purge me with hyssop. What does he mean? He says, I know I'm guilty.
- And I know I'm really guilty before God. And I know that only your grace can deal with my guilt. Only the blood which you have provided can deal with my guilt.
- Now, that's where a sinner is brought by God. And if you're ever going to come to God, or if you're coming to God tonight, you're brought to that place. You could try, like David, to deal with your sin in lots of different ways.
- [15 : 48] You can try and tipex it. You can try and blot it out by suppressing it or repressing it in your memory. You can try and ignore it or try and do other good things to make up for it.
- But if God is dealing with you really and truly, and if the conviction of the Spirit is upon you, none of that will do. And tonight you'll still feel guilty. You'll be brought to feel that none of that is an adequate covering.
- That you need your guilt truly dealt with. And that's what David is saying. Let me not be purged by anything else, but by the hyssop that speaks of your blood, and that speaks of a proper legal cleansing in the sight of God.

You need that, and I need that. And he prays for it. Purge me with hyssop. Purge me with hyssop. And then again he says, Blot out my iniquity.

Now I'd like here to turn, actually, to a text in the New Testament that speaks of blotting. It's in the letter to the Colossians, and in chapter 2.

[16 : 52] And maybe it's a difficult text to understand. But it speaks of blotting. Colossians chapter 2, and the very end of verse 13, and verse 14.

Colossians chapter 2, and the very end of verse 13, which says this. It speaks of God, having forgiven you all trespasses.

Now listen to this. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us.

And took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Now that's difficult to follow. But what it says is this.

It speaks of a handwriting of ordinances. Now that word, handwriting, it means, in the Greek, it means a statement of debt.

[17 : 53] A statement of debt. Supposing you're in debt, you have to pay such and such a sum. Well, a statement of debt gives you the amount that you're in debt, and you've got to sign it, and acknowledge, yes, I'm in debt by this much.

This much I have to pay. You're signing it. It's got your name on it. It's a statement against you. And what Paul is saying here is that there's a statement against you.

And that statement is the law of God, which you have broken. And your conscience, as it were, signs that statement. Yes, I have done it.

I am guilty of it. But if you come to Jesus Christ, what happens is that that statement is nailed to the cross along with himself. So that his blood, as it were, blots it out.

Now, it's just a picture Paul is using. It's a vivid picture. It's a powerful picture. That statement is nailed to the cross. It still speaks. But lo and behold, Christ's blood covers that statement.

[19 : 04] He blots out that statement so that you are not in debt anymore. You're not guilty. You don't have that price to pay.

That's the wonderful thing. You don't. And that's the wonderful thing about this because, yes, you have sinned.

Christ takes your place. But that doesn't mean that he sinned. You sinned. David sinned. The deed was his. But he's not guilty. Why? Because the debt has been dealt with.

The debt has been paid. Paid by our Lord Jesus Christ. And that reminds me of what I said near the beginning. Guilt is something that God can't just forget.

Debts must be paid. God would cease to be God if they weren't. The whole universe is built on the righteous moral character of God.

[20 : 05] If that collapses, the universe collapses. If God ceases to be God, with all respect, he would become chaotic. He would be chaos. Everything would be chaos.

God, to be God, must have his own honor, his own righteousness, his own justice acknowledged. So what happens?

If you've done it, you're guilty. It must be paid. Yes. The only provision that the law can make is that your debt is put on someone else's column.

In other words, the accountant, if he's going to write off your debt, he's got to put it onto somebody else. If he's going to say, you've paid it, the only way in which you can do that is by someone else paying it so that everything will balance in the end.

Who pays? Well, of course, it is the blood of God, as Paul tells us. God purchased the church by his own blood.

[21 : 05] It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God in our nature. That's whose blood it is. He took the debt, and he paid the debt.

And that's why David can say, hide your face from my sins. Verse 9 again, hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

I suppose you could put it like this. It's not that God hides his face from your sins. It's more strictly speaking that he hides your sins from his face.

That's what he does. He hides your sins from his face. He blots them out by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And remember that blood speaks of life, and it speaks of death.

Jesus' life, his work, everything he said, everything that he did, as well as, and including his death, that's what blots out your sins.

[22 : 12] And if you embrace him, your sins are blotted out. Now friends, guilt is a great burden to carry. It's a great burden to carry.

And it's a burden you'll never lose if you die without Christ. You'll never lose it. guilt stays, guilt deepens, and guilt increases.

The sense of having done wrong, the sense of having broken the law of God, that guilt will only increase. how important, how important, friends, that the devil doesn't try and whitewash your conscience.

How important that he doesn't whitewash your life, or that you don't whitewash your life, by getting a covering that Isaiah says is too short, or a covering too narrow.

You've got to get the one covering, the one blot for your guilt, and that is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's one part of the cleansing.

[23 : 17] But there's a second part too. When David prays to be made clean, he's not just talking about the guilt being dealt with. He's not just talking about his sins being blotted out of God's book.

It's not just a matter of something legal, outside of himself, that he wants done. Something in a law court, that's screaming out against him. Something that says, deal with it, deal with it.

That's not the only thing that he wants dealt with. He also wants his heart dealt with. He wants his life dealt with. Because he knows that the problem is not just what the law says, but the problem is what his heart is like.

The problem is himself. The problem is his own defilement, his own uncleanness. And that's why a large part of his prayer is to be cleansed inwardly.

Inwardly. Because every sin doesn't just make guilt, it also makes dirt. And that dirt is on the heart.

[24 : 26] You know, sin is a habit. As well as contracting guilt, it's a habit. Sin is something that actually stains your heart. A simple way of looking at that is just like this.

If you look at a man who begins to immerse himself in sin, or to think about unclean things, and to follow unclean things, well, the more that man does it, the more that man is caught up in that thing.

It gains possession. It gains the mastery. And sometimes you see men and women becoming almost demonic because of how possessed they have become with sin, or how much sin has possessed them.

In other words, sin leaves a stain. It makes its own impression on your life and mine. And it's not enough, as it were, to pray to God that the guilt of it would be dealt with, but that its power would be dealt with, that its effect would be dealt with, that your heart would be dealt with too.

And David prays for that. You'll notice in verse 10, It's not just guilt that bothers him. Look at verse 10. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

[25 : 39] Now that's not about his guilt, he's praying. It's about his heart himself. Create in me a clean heart. He's looking at what he did wrong.

Now you go back over it. First of all, he thought he didn't need to fight anymore. He thought he didn't have to be with the army anymore. He could stay at home while everyone else fought.

He almost retired in his Christian life. He became lethargic. He was lying in his bed in the afternoon when people were fighting the cause of God.

And all that meant that when he saw the woman bathing outside, he had no spiritual strength to deal with it. He couldn't, like Joseph, run away and leave his garment in the woman's hand.

He was caught. He was ensnared and he was captivated. He couldn't resist temptation. He fell. And that wasn't enough. Then pride came in.

[26 : 36] One sin leads to another. The fear of being found out. The fear of being made a spectacle. And then the fear of failing.

All that came in. Refusing to face what he had done. Covering his sins. That was there. Using religion to put a veneer on what he had become inside.

Outward performances to hide what he was inwardly. I asked you last week, was David more righteous? Was he more religious or less religious in the nine months between his sin and the repentance?

He would say, surely he was less religious. No, he was more religious. Because man tries to please God in different ways to avoid facing the reality of what he's done.

You could be hiding here tonight. Not just hiding from men, but hiding from God. And David knows that he went so far wrong.

[27 : 38] So far wrong. In fact, it's almost impossible to believe that David did all this. You almost find it impossible to believe. But like I said in the first week, it's here to remind you that could be you, could be me.

This is a Christian man here. Not an unbeliever, but a Christian man. And what David prays with is not just deal with my guilt, but create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.

Now that's an interesting prayer. David was called the man after God's own heart. But yet, he can pray, create in me a clean heart.

Now, what that means is this. He wants a right spirit renewed. He doesn't want sloth anymore. He doesn't want being lazy about fighting God's battles anymore.

He doesn't want to be a prayerless man anymore. He wants to be renewed back to where he once was. Renew it. Renew it, Lord, by creating in me a clean heart.

[28 : 49] Now, this word, create, is interesting too. It's used of God's work. Man doesn't create. This word in Hebrew is used for God's work alone.

Create in me a clean heart. Why is that important? Well, it's important for this reason, that you can't do it yourself. You know, someone who's enslaved to drink or something like that may say, well, I'm going to get myself back on the rails.

No Christian can say, I'm going to get myself, as it were, back on the rails. There's a sense in which you can't say that. Of course, there's a sense in which you can, providing you're putting God at the heart of it.

But there's an important sense in which you can't. What David is acknowledging here is, I can't govern my own life. I'm not strong enough to stand myself. I thought I was. I thought when God took me from being a shepherd to being a king.

I thought when I wrote all these psalms, when I helped all these people and I delivered the poor, I thought when I taught the word, I thought that nothing like this could ever come upon me.

[29 : 55] I thought as a 50 plus man who had seen enough wars and enough battles that I could take my rest in Jerusalem and leave Joab and leave the mighty men to do all the fighting.

But I was wrong. My prayer slipped. Everything slipped. And when I'm left to myself, that's what I became. Lord, you create by your own power in me a clean heart and renew by that power a right spirit within me so that I don't do this again.

Now, that's an important prayer. take it with you every day and if you forget to pray it, well, I'm pretty sure that something like this will happen.

If we cease to pray and cease to rely, then certainly something will go wrong. And he also says this in verse 6.

Behold, he says, you desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

[31 : 07] Now, that word truth is a very rare word in the Old Testament. I mean the Hebrew word. It's not the usual one for truth. Very often it can mean stability or firmness or uprightness or even sincerity.

Behold, thou desirest sincerity your firmness in the inward parts and in the hidden part wisdom.

Now, what is the inward part or the inward parts? Well, it's just right in at the core of his being. Into the heart. Sometimes you find all the internal organs are used for the inward mind.

Sometimes it's bowels or the heart usually. It says you desire truth there, you desire sincerity there. What's David saying? Well, he's saying that part of my life, just before that sin and for long enough afterwards, well, it was hypocritical.

That's what it was. I had an outward performance but inside I wasn't really what I should be at all. And he prays for God's wisdom in his heart to help him know the right thing and to help him do the right thing and to avoid this kind of sin.

[32 : 31] Now, friends, let's be understanding about this. When I'm talking about sin of this kind, I'm not talking about the sins and the infirmities that attach themselves to us every day.

The kind of defilements that you haven't thought, word, and deed. Yes, you've got to be careful about them. You have to be. What I'm talking about here is a major lapse in your life of prayer, a major lapse in your hearing of the word.

You're listening to the preaching of the word or you're reading of the word. You're neglecting these things. And something more serious grows. You've left the garden unattended and something terrible has come in.

Now, maybe some of you here tonight know what that is. Unlike David, it hasn't come out into the open. people. But, friends, unless God's word brings you back, it must be something like that that will bring you back.

And it's never easy to bear. If you don't hear the word, you'll feel the word. And it's much better to hear it before we feel it.

[33 : 45] And David here prays for that wisdom and that sincerity in his heart. In other words, he desires to be holy.

Now, these are two parts of cleansing. My guilt and my heart. Clean them both.

And what I meant at the beginning was this. every true repentance has both these things. Suppose, for example, suppose you only had the first. Suppose you were only concerned about your guilt.

Well, that means that all you want is just a license to sin. You're praying that God will forgive your guilt, but who cares if you don't get any better? Now, there are people who have that kind of faith and they have that kind of religion.

They say that it doesn't really matter how they live, that if they look to God, God will forgive them anyway. That's not real repentance. That's not what David's praying for here. He doesn't just want to deal with the law book, he wants to deal with his heart.

[34 : 50] Suppose it was the other way around. Suppose you just prayed to be made a better man, but that you weren't concerned about guilt. What would that mean?

Well, that would mean that you didn't have a proper understanding of who God is and what God requires. For the sake of argument, let's suppose tonight that you could be made perfectly holy.

Could you get into heaven? No. Why not? Because of all you have done, all you have done, the guilt of that is still there.

In other words, guilt has to be dealt with. And unless it was on Jesus Christ, it can't be dealt with. you must have faith in him.

These two things are there. Cleanse me from guilt and cleanse me from the uncleanness of my heart. I was going to take the catechism, but I thought it might be useful just to quote the confession here, what it says about repentance.

[35 : 56] Just a little sentence. It says that in repentance, a sinner, out of the sight and sense of the danger and filth of sin.

Now I'm paraphrasing it a little bit just to make it easier. And understanding the mercy of God in Christ. Now notice these two things. He knows the danger and filth of sin, but he also sees the mercy of God in Christ.

He grieves for his sin and hates his sin. So as to turn from them to God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with them in the ways of his commandments.

Now you notice how careful the confession is to include both. It's a turning away towards God to be more like him and to follow him. In other words, through repentance desires to be like Christ.

It desires to live a holy life. Now don't make a mistake. The devil will say to you, well, what the preacher is saying to you is this, that you can't repent properly until you've cleaned up your life.

[37 : 08] That's a mistake. As the devil's contortion on what I've said, that's not what I said at all, and that's not what the Bible says. What the Bible says is this, that you must actually just cast yourself by faith tonight on Jesus Christ, trusting him to deal with both your guilt and your life.

It's not a matter of my prayer for mercy is of no youth until I'm a better man. That's put in the cart before the horse. You'll never be a better man, you'll never be a better woman.

Until you come to just depend on Christ for being a better man and to depend on Christ for being a better woman, then you'll never make it. All you'll be doing is trying to reform.

Are you like that? Are you just trying to reform yourself? Or are you cleaving by faith to Christ reforming you? That's all the world of a difference. It's a matter of where you begin.

You've got to begin in the right place. Maybe you've been struggling for a long time because you've been beginning in the wrong place. In the Bible, begin here. This is the free place to begin.

[38 : 11] This is the best place to begin. It's the glorious place to begin. Begin by faith and say, Lord, I look to thee to deal with both my guilt and my uncleanness.

I plead with thee to sprinkle the blood on my guilt and as from today to begin dealing with my life. David's life tells us that everything isn't sorted out.

This wasn't David's first repentance. It wasn't. That reminds us that outgrowth is in fits and starts. The important thing is that you're brought back constantly to look to Christ and to depend on him for your cleaning as well as your forgiveness.

Justification and sanctification both flow from faith in Jesus Christ. I suppose every Christian too makes that mistake sometimes. The devil can sometimes deceive you into thinking, yes, you're forgiven by Christ, but it's up to you now to do the hard slog.

Sanctification is up to you. No. Yes, it involves your will. It involves your heart. faith in Jesus Christ that you are made a better man or a better woman.

[39 : 31] Now, I think I'll leave it off there, but I want to turn one more time in a couple of weeks time to this psalm, and I want to look at some other aspects of it in connection with how God made this sin turn to good in David's life.

I think it's important for us to finish it on that note, how God used this incident with Bathsheba in David's own life. Certain things that David prayed for in this psalm came through in his life, and God turned it to good account.

And God willing, next time, we'll look at that, and may the Lord bless our meditation on his word. Let us pray. Lord, our God, help us to understand what the gospel is requiring of us.

We fear sometimes, when we share it, or when we preach it, that we complicate it. And Lord, thou knowest that it is our desire never to do that, for it is a simple gospel, and we pray that we would see it so.

And help us especially to hear the simplicity of casting yourselves by faith on Jesus Christ, that we may be saved thereby.

[40 : 53] And we pray that the devil would not allow these things to be unclear in our minds. And even when there are sermons that we may find sometimes difficult, either to hear or to preach, help us to pass over these difficulties and to arrive at the essence of the matter.

O Lord, our God, bless the gospel message to us, for it is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of eternity and not time.

And may we press into the kingdom that we might be saved. For Jesus' sake, amen.