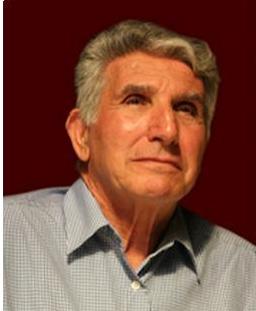


David's Cry for Mercy

By Art Katz



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The Lord wants to pull out all the stops and touch a subject that has suffered chronic and historic neglect: the Cross, which is central to all that I will be sharing about the crucifixion of Jesus, His death and atonement, and sin and righteousness. The Church, even in its best forms, has not understood or appropriated this deepest of all realities: the single most pivotal and epochal event in history. To allow that to suffer neglect or to be swept under the rug, or to become, as I so often say, a 'non-event', is tragic beyond all speaking.

The Cross, this event of God in the earth, the Son of God submitting to the abuse, devastation and violence of men in order to shed blood to become a propitiation for sin, to affect salvation, atonement – what does all that mean? We need to probe and open ourselves to God for it to permeate and affect us. We need an existential appropriation of the Cross, or else our view of it will degenerate into a mere article of the faith while we give it a kind of scant, polite acknowledgement, missing it all the while. One cannot comprehend how disastrous that would be. It trivializes God, and robs us of significance and meaning. It voids the power that is intrinsic to the most holy faith, and robs our souls. The Cross is everything.

Opening Prayer:

Lord, remember the prayers that have already gone up, even today. Insane prayers, extravagant prayers, that if You will answer them even so much as in part, who will be able to stand the reply that You will give? Who can bear it, Lord? We are asking that You would look upon this time and this occasion

in these days as something ordained in Your wisdom and will, something whose time has come. You have been chafed; You have pursed Your lips and gritted Your teeth, observing the conspiracy of silence against You – the trivialization of the Cross. You have watched the athletes who can well afford such opulence, wearing crosses around their necks on gold chains, and movie stars wear them between their breasts, studded by diamonds. The whole thing, my God, is a terrible farce and a fraud. We are asking that You would be jealous over the meaning of what You have performed through Your Son, whose suffering You shared, that His soul might be gratified and the Church be brought to its apostolic foundations.

Devastate us, lay us out, do us in, take Your sword out of its sheath – Your sharp two-edged sword – and just cut, strip, penetrate and pierce. Do what You will to strip us of all of the subterfuge that has grown up: all of the deceit, all of the religious nonsense, phraseology and talking, the cheap, easy and glib things that shroud the truth and rob us of its reality. These things rob us of all reality, and if we lose the Cross, we lose all.

Come, redeem and restore, and speak. We are asking for an event. Whatever the cost to ourselves, we want and desire to be poured out like water before You. We confess the best of us, myself included, that we do not know as we ought to know, and we must know; we must esteem and appreciate You. Gratitude is love, love is worship, worship is service; it is all intricately bound up, inextricably joined – inseparably joined with the Cross. There is no true worship; there is no true service if the Cross has suffered loss. Come, strip it of sentimentality and all of the ways that it has been abused by men, and give us the pristine, original, pure, holy, intention that You had when You set that event in time and history. Let there be shockwaves and tremors going through this room and out of this church into Asia because of the speaking of these days, as the earth shook with an earthquake when Your Cross was put into its socket, into that hole in the earth, and the thud was heard and reverberated into eternity.

We are asking that You would insert the Cross again and that the effect, the ripples, the sound and the weight would pierce our very souls. Save us from shallowness, save us from religious play-acting, from false piety, from celebration that is performance.

Possess this mouth as Your own, this body, this frame that You birthed in 1929 and gave its particular cast for the very purposes that are now coming to be. Come and delight Your own soul; ventilate Your soul and express the

deeps of it. Your servants are hearing. This is a choice people and environment. They have borne the servant, and have established a relationship of welcome and trust that is rare. We enjoy the privilege and do not want in any way to offend against it – yet we are willing to risk all, if it should please You that for some reason there should be a failure, a disappointment. I am more willing for that than the enjoyment of a shallow success, a pat on the back and an enjoyable time. Come and give us Your heart, we pray, and receive even now our gratitude for the possibility of it, as we thank You and give You praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

Psalm 51 is one of the most eloquent, profound and classic of the Psalms. I do not have enough adjectives to describe this most choice of statements on repentance to be found in all Scripture. That is the genius of David, of what is Davidic, and why he is beloved of the Father. The depth of this Psalm, the cry of it, that such a man – the sweet singer of Israel who faced Goliath single-handedly with a sling and stones, the one who brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem with sacrifice, worship and dancing – should fall shamefully into adultery and murder. He was the greatest of Israel's kings, and the one whose name the Father is not ashamed to ascribe even to Jesus as the 'greater David'. It is staggering to contemplate that this man should fall into the most horrible conjunction of sins, the one hand-in-hand with the other – this giant, this holy man, this lover of God, who stood for the honor of God, who would not allow that the armies of God be defamed and mocked by a pagan, a Philistine. How could David have succumbed to temptation of that kind and allowed its logic to be enacted in his life in such a way as to imperil his kingdom? How could he have trafficked in and abused the very Name of God, which he had so celebrated in psalm and in song? How could that be? Nevertheless, it occurred, and he has left for us a statement of the deepest contrition, broken heartedness and authentic repentance that is to be found in all the Holy Writ.

That leaves us without excuse for not knowing what repentance means, or how it is to be expressed: the repentance for which God waits that is actually a key to the Kingdom. For if there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness; there is no reception, no restoration. We want to examine this remarkable heart's cry over the issue of sin and judgment, atonement and forgiveness, that is caught up and expressed in this most remarkable statement, as well as look at its implications for us. In this edition of my seminary Bible, it says in italics, "*Prayer for cleansing and pardon. A psalm*

of David, when the prophet Nathan came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar." (Psalm 51, ESV).

How do you like that? Can you empathize? Can you sympathize? Can you relate? Is there a corresponding chord in your own heart that reverberates to this? Can you pick up the cry from the beginning, "Have mercy"? Have you ever cried like that? Have you ever needed to cry like that? Have you ever needed mercy as desperately as David has? How then shall you have obtained it? And, if you do not obtain it, how shall you extend it?

The issue tonight is far more than yourself. If you can understand it, the issue tonight is the redemption of Israel, the restoration of Israel in the last days, in their final extremity, when they shall be uprooted and dispersed through all nations, cast off, hated, despised, victimized, and marred more

than any man. They shall have no beauty that any shall desire them. If they do not find mercy in that time, an entire people will perish. The hatred, the vehement, venomous hatred expressed through Islamic sources will hound them unto death. No nation will be able to protect them. If they do not find mercy, they are finished!

That is why Paul, in Romans 11:31, says, “. . .that by your mercy, they may obtain mercy”. But do you have a mercy to extend? You are too nice. You are much too polite. Basically, you are respectable, moral, and ethical. What need have you for mercy, unless you can see yourself in David’s predicament? But you can vicariously identify with David in his cry – and it does not wait for you to commit adultery, it only waits for you to acknowledge that, if so great a giant as the sweet singer of Israel was capable of a falling of this kind, who are you? Are you made of better stuff than he is? He fell in shame for your sake, that none of us can flee the requirement of God for the deepest contrition, brokenness and repentance, for which He waits. We are found out, we are convicted, and we are guilty. It does not wait for the proof of the actual event of our fall. His fall is our fall. “Have mercy!”

There is only one thing that will suffice when a man comes to a condition of this kind, when he finds that inadvertently, through one circumstance after another that began only by gazing upon the beauty of a woman, he is now not only an adulterer and a liar but also a murderer. The king of Israel is a murderer! And his sin haunts him; it is rotting his bones, his guts, and it is with him day and night. He cannot shake it, he cannot drink something down, or shoot something into his body, or find distraction in some way that would lessen the enormous moral anguish that sin has brought him to. He knows it, and has performed it, and knows that there is nothing that he can do for himself in that condition. He cannot lie down on a bed of nails. He cannot go to a school of discipline. Sin is pervasive; it is deep. We are caught, we are found out, and we have sinned against God in His sight. “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned. . . in Thy sight.” Think on that, that everything is naked and transparent unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. There is nothing hidden or concealed from His sight.

It is astonishing, not only the sin of men, Christians and ministers, but the fact that they think, and we think it as well, that it can be performed before the face of God with impunity, as if to say, “God is not seeing, He does not

see or care, He is indifferent, He is not that absolute and all-seeing." Sin, in the last analysis, is extravagant human presumption against God.

The adultery is not the issue so much in itself, as the remarkable *hubris* (the Greek word for human pride) – the extravagance of ego and self-exertion that thinks it can transgress before the face of God and get away with it as if it had not occurred, as if it was not seen, or to put it bluntly, as if God is not God! That is the nature of sin. And who is exempt from it? Who has not taken his liberty and seems to have gotten away with it before men, but does not know that there is an accounting on the Day of Judgment in which God will bring before him, in full remembrance, everything he thought was hidden and concealed. "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me," David says.

To know your transgressions like *that* is to be on the way to a salvation to the uttermost. How saved are you? Are you nominally saved, shallowly saved, technically saved? You have made a right 'decision' and called on the Name of the Lord? You have performed something and it is all sweet and ordered now?

There is a salvation to the uttermost that has escaped most of us, and will continue to elude us until we are acutely aware of our transgressions, not so much because we have transgressed, but because we are human, all too human, and are *capable* of it. The fact that it has not yet taken place means we have not yet met our Bathsheba. However, that does not save you from your propensity to sin. "I was born in iniquity," David said; "I came into the world like this. It is in my bones, in my guts; it is the way I am constituted humanly. My sin is ever before me, not just the event of it, but the condition of it, and who is going to save me from that?"

"Follow me in a prayer, brother." "Repeat after me, sister." This is far too shallow. David's cry is not unto men – his cry is unto God, "Have mercy on me!" "Mercy!" is the deep, very intense cry of David. David is equally aware of the depths of his transgression as he is of the fact that the only entity in the world that can relieve the pangs of his sin is God in His mercy. To know God that way is to know God, and not to know God in that way is not to know God, however much overloaded one may be with end-time understanding. The knowledge of God begins with what God is in Himself, which is to say, His mercy.

Moses said, "Show me now Thy glory", and God said, "O.K., I will hide you in the cleft of the rock and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen." He said, in effect, 'Having done that, I have exhibited my tender kindness, I have exhibited my pity. I have shown you my mercy. You asked to see my glory? I showed you my mercy, because to see my mercy is to see *Me!* This is what I am, this is my nature as God – it is mercy.'" If it was not for that we would all be dead! We would have no eternity and there would be no prospect; this life would be grim, as it is in fact, for the countless millions who do not know God and are living in absolute independence of Him. Theirs is a grim existence and by far, a more than grim eternity if they remain in that condition. It is His mercy that saves us out of death, out of ourselves, out of our pitiful egotism that thinks that we can pull stunts and get away with it, because we think that He does not see.

You need to sense David's ache and his cry that the only thing that can relieve the weight of this continual, perpetual crush upon his heart is the mercy of God, and if it comes, it will come as a blotting out of his transgression. "Blot it out Lord, do not patch it up, do not put a bandage on it - *blot it out*. This has to be extricated; this has to be taken out branch and root, root and branch. It is into me; it is my condition, and unless you blot it out and create in me a new heart, I am a dead duck. Therefore, You have to be God for me, a God who will extend mercy even though it is against You and You alone that I have sinned. You have every right to be insulted, that the David whom You have chosen and anointed as Israel's king could have performed this in Your sight as if he could get away with it."

If it were not for Nathan, the faithful prophet who told him a little parable in a story about a wicked man who used someone else's sheep, and then said, "Thou art the man," David would have gone on in his deception. Because sin is deceptive by nature, it does not reveal itself as sin, but rather, it gives justification. "You had it coming; you fought all those battles. Here is a little compensation – here is this beautiful woman. It is only a fluke that she is married to this guy; he does not deserve her. She is appropriate for a King of Israel, not just for an ordinary warrior who is not even Jewish. Therefore, you have a full right to appropriate that woman and you need it, you need the compensation. I am giving it to you; it is a grace."

How many ministers of our generation have fallen on that same basis, for that kind of reasoning, that they deserved it? Moreover, when they are found out, not only are they defensive and self-justifying, but they refuse to

submit to judgment – even so mild a judgment as a three-month cessation of their ministries! But of course, how can they cease for three months when the world depends on their ministry? Therefore, they balk, and they refuse even that correction, and then fall into yet more disgraceful and shameful expressions of that sin. David is not like that; he does not conceal his sin. Blessed is that man whose sin is not concealed, but he openly acknowledges it, bears the shame of it and cries out to the God who alone can blot it out. He cries out that God blot out *not just the incident*, but the root that made the incident possible – his human, sinful nature that he shares with Adam, as do all of us, being man. David anticipated that God already had made provision of a Lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world. Consider that. Reflect on it.

He was the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world, and David – the poet, prophet, giant, saint – sensed and knew that the Father had made this provision that would not be acted out until seven centuries later, but he obtained the reality of it through faith. “Blot out my transgression with hyssop” – that rude plant and common shrub – “and dip it into the blood and wash my transgressions away.” Blot them out. “Then I will tell transgressors of their way; then I will teach men Your salvation – but first deal with me, first be merciful to me, who deserves the greater judgment, because of the greater knowledge and the greater privilege of relationship. For me to sin against You, and You alone, is most grievous. I ache from it, I cannot sleep, and I cannot eat a decent meal. With every bite that I chew and masticate, I am thinking of my condition and it is without relief. No one can comfort me. There is no solace available to me, no advice, and no counsel, no patting on the back, no one justifying me and saying, ‘Well God understands, you had it coming, you made a little mistake.’”

I wish you could see the newspaper clippings I collected from the New York Times for the last three years. They are about a foot and a half high. I am preparing an indictment against the world and American civilization, particularly the world of finance, and the world of so-called culture, whose ballets are now being performed naked, and the most lewd, vile conduct, including open fornication, is now being exhibited on the stage.

Rap artists are being celebrated as if rap were an art form; their words are spoken in the most foul language about misogyny, the abuse of women and mothers, and white middle-class people are among those buying up these

CDs by the billions! Within a week of release, one CD produced by a guy named "50 Cents" was already in the charts, with sales of fifty million. It is nothing for them to gross fifty to two hundred million dollars for a tour! It is big dough! And how does one rap singer differ from another if he does not bring out something a little more extraordinary, more bizarre, more daring, more risqué? There is an evolution, a logic that requires our culture to become more decadent every day. We are moving towards Sodom.

Every day in the financial section of the Times, another CEO, another head of a corporation is indicted and charged with fraud, with misuse of funds, with criminal corruption for obtaining millions, all of which was done as if there were no God to see. These people see to it that even if they are caught, somehow, they will buy their way out, or make a transaction with the Attorney General to pay thirty or forty million dollars in penalty – but what is that next to the billions that they have already acquired in false profits? They will not acknowledge the fact that they have either violated the law *or* been exonerated; they will not allow the moral issue to be factored into the settlement. They will pay their way, but they do not want to have to acknowledge that they have been at fault, and if there is any concession, they use language such as, "I made a mistake", "It was an error". It is never a *sin*; it is always just a little trifle, a boo-boo, a momentary failure of judgment that allows fifty to one hundred million to fall into a man's pockets through transactions and manipulations of the vilest kind.

There is not a day that the papers are not full of these exposés, but there is no sense of shame. We are living in a world that has forgotten how to blush. There is no remorse. "It was just a mistake; anybody can make a mistake," but no one is crying out, "My God, have mercy on me, I am greedy! It is not enough that I have a salary of fifty millions a year, but I have seen to it that I will leave with an additional one hundred fifty millions as a retirement fund and an honorary settlement for my years of service." What do you do with a hundred fifty millions that you could not have done with your first ten millions or twenty millions, or your annual salary? It is greed; it is lust for money, for power, for avarice, for sensual delights, for a six thousand dollar shower curtain – while a little further down on the same page, in the same newspaper, there are reports of people starving to death in Africa. There are helpless women being raped in the Sudan, and on the same page, there are these guys rolling in unbelievable wealth acquired

through corruption and criminal offense, without regret. They made an error, maybe, but they will not acknowledge it, even after they pay the fine.

David said, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love. According to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions." In other words, "If I am sure of my sin which is ever before me, I am equally as sure of Your ability to forgive, to purge, and to cleanse, and if that were not so, I would be a man entirely without hope. Without relief, I would carry into eternity the things that presently haunt me: the image of my fornicating with another man's wife, and seeing to the arrangement of his murder. It would haunt me. There would be no relief. It would be a hell – a tortured conscience that can never be at peace. Save me! I am glad You are that kind of a God; your steadfast love, your *chesed*, your merciful nature, is my only hope, and the remarkable thing is that You give it without qualification. You do not require some course of rehabilitation where I show myself to act differently. The only requirement You make is that I acknowledge my transgressions that are ever before me. If You hear that confession, You bring this deliverance." What a God!

But this deliverance comes at what cost? It is not a simple wiping the sin off the book; righteousness requires judgment. It is not just a blinking and saying, "O.K., you missed it this time, you are forgiven, go on." No. If there is a blood into which that hyssop can be dipped in order to be applied, what blood is it? It is not the blood of bulls and of sacrifices, but something more perfect, more enduring, more eternal and more righteous than that given by an animal. It is going to require the righteous blood of God Himself. But how shall He supply it? By sending his Son to die on the Cross and bleed – not just on the Cross, but Calvary began in Gethsemane where He sweat drops of blood. One version said, "clots of blood" oozed out of the pores of his skin with his agonizing cries before God, because He knew what He was required to perform for the Father, and asked if it was possible this cup should pass. But it was not possible. He would have to drink it. He would have to suffer not just the physical pain and torment, but He would have to *be made* sin. He who did not know sin became sin so that we who knew no righteousness would become righteous.

He became sin in so graphic and real a way that the Holy Father had to turn His face away from Him. He could not look upon His own Son who had become sin, and so He had to cry out, "My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Well, maybe you can stand to be a little God-forsaken, but

the Son of God cannot, because He had had a long-standing relationship with the Father even before He came down to earth. Proverbs, chapter eight, says, "Before the foundation of the earth was laid, I was with you," in a loving relationship. "That for Me is My food and My drink. To know You, to know the Father and the love of God, and to be in that environment and relationship was for Me, very life! And I can bear everything else, but to bear the sense of Your absence, that You would have to forsake Me, that I would not be conscious of Your presence in a time when I most desperately needed it, is part of the suffering that I have to bear, and the cup that I have to drink, so that the Davids that follow Me can have a blood to blot out their transgressions."

Listen, dear saints, to turn this into a few choruses on the blood – it would be better if we were silent. To reduce this to a formula for salvation – step one, step two – is travesty against God. This is too holy, this is too costly, this is tragic, and there is no shortcut. The expression of God's mercy was more than a condescension and an, "All right, I will let you go this time." Mercy required sacrifice. Sin required judgment; the penalty had to be paid. A chastisement came upon Him. Isaiah 53 says, "For our transgressions He was stricken. He bore our iniquity."

Of course, what does that have to do with you? You are a nice Christian congregation. Iniquity? You have never talked back to your mother. You have always been superficially polite to your father. But the iniquity I am talking about is the iniquity of David, which is yours whether you are Chinese, Jewish, white, yellow, or black, red or green, because you were conceived in iniquity from your mother's womb!

You may ask, "Are you trying to say that my mother was not a moral woman?" No. She could have been the choicest of the handmaidens of the Lord and it still would be true. It is not about her moral condition at the time that you were born; it is a statement of the intrinsic condition that belongs to every man that breathes! It is *in* us; we are from Adam. It is an iniquity; we are born in it and with it. What a pity that we have to fall before we come to agree with God about the truth of that, because if you will not agree with the truth of it based on the scripture and the sacrifice of Jesus, you will have to *experience* it. Moreover, it will be a mercy that He allows you to sin, so that you can cry out when you see it and begin to feel the terrible shame, stigma and pain of that morally unresolved thing that is a lump in your gut. In fact, if it is not resolved, it will become a physical

lump; it will go from being a moral blight to a cancer or a tumor. The body is not made for unrighteousness and if you conceal it, it will break out in one way or another.

Sin is a terrible thing, it is evil, and it is death. It is going to require an answer from God of an ultimate kind that only He can give – and has given in the crucifixion of His Son. “For this reason I have come. No man takes my life, I lay it down.” You dear saints, I wish you could say tonight, “My transgressions are ever before me,” based on the preached word and this text, innocent though you are, young though you are, hardly out of puberty and into adolescence. You have hardly begun to experience the sexual thing that will have its expression increasingly as you grow up, and yet, even before the possibility of giving expression to that in a sinful way, you can say, “My transgressions are ever before me.” Not based on what you have subjectively experienced, but based on what the Word of God says the condition of all men is. Because if it is David’s condition, how shall we be exempt? We have to repent with him, with a contrite and broken heart, not waiting first to fall in order to prove the truth of God’s Word, but to accept it at its face value, that there is not a righteous man upon the face of the earth that doeth good and sinneth not. If God were to mark iniquity, who could stand? Therefore, He is justified in His sentence and blameless when He passes judgment. Indeed I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

Spurgeon’s three volume commentary on the Psalms is called, *The Treasury of David*; it is cheap and it is gorgeous. It is a sublime commentary on the entire Book of Psalms as only Spurgeon could comment. I will give you some examples. He says, “In David’s cry for mercy what he is really asking is, ‘Act, O Lord, like Yourself. Be Yourself.’ Express the mercy that is intrinsic to Your very nature.’ The cry ‘wash me,’ is in view of one great pollution, polluting his entire nature.”

It is not just the act of adultery or the conspiracy to murder. Those are only the acts that reveal the truth of the condition, and it is the *condition* that is pervasive. If it will not express itself through adultery or murder, it will express itself through cheating, through lying, through any and every form that is vile and sinful; it is a *condition*. His cry to “Wash me” is in view of that great pollution that affects one’s entire nature.

“The one sin against Bathsheba served to show the psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity of which the foul deed was but one stone.” Did you

follow that? The foul deed was one stone to show David the mountain of his iniquity, and if that is true for David, by committing the act, what is possible for you in reviewing the act? Can it be the stone that shows you *your* mountain?

God said that He would send his Spirit to convict us of unrighteousness, and that is what I am trusting to work now through the Word. I want to see you writhe, not because I am malicious or have a little something against you, but for your sake, for the Church's sake, for Israel's sake through you, I desire to see deep conviction, discomfort, and a sense of something growing in you as you are hearing this word. "It is me being described; I am capable. If that was true of David, it is true of me. I do not have to prove it by falling. This is my truth, and I need to anguish before God and cry out for His mercy to blot out the transgressions that I will inevitably perform, because my nature will compel it. It is a new nature that I need. 'Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me'. Merely saying, 'Yes Lord,' and calling on the name of the Lord as a step one, step two salvation has not done it."

When the time comes that God brings Israel through Singapore and Asia, and they need your mercy, and you have not yet obtained it because your transgressions have never been blotted out by the mercy of God, what shall you be able to extend to them? What an embarrassing failure in that moment to which all history is now tending, for the issue of the Church is the issue of Israel's redemption. But it must be the Church of redeemed souls who have acknowledged their transgressions that are ever before them, believe for the mercy of God in the crucifixion of Jesus, have had their sins blotted out, a new heart created within them, and live with a renewed spirit by which to serve Him.

"My sin is ever before me," David said. That sin is never out of mind, and the resulting pain of it is not transient and occasional, but intense and permanent. Can I give you the other side of that coin? Have you ever enjoyed righteousness? Have you ever come to a place in your condition before God and in your relationship with Him and with men, where you enjoy the sense of what it means to be righteous in God? Have you ever tasted that? It is better than the rarest wine. To taste it once is to be spoiled forever! And you know what? God intended that to be the normative condition and experience of mankind, that we should live in righteousness and breathe freely, and have minds that are not corrupted and polluted, that

our conduct and actions be in keeping with God's nature and pleasing in His sight. God intended that you do not scheme and plan, that you do not curse and shout, do not look for your own way, but be living in the righteousness of God. It is a *me'chila*, the remission of sins; it is life and joy unspeakable!

What is the alternative? "My sin is ever before me, I am haunted day and night, I can not shake it off, I can not spit it out, I hate myself, I have no self-esteem, and therefore, I am a candidate for yet more degrading acts." So, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned . . . in Your sight." To commit treason in the court of the King and before His eye is impudence indeed. It is the arrogance of man, to think that he can perform something in God's own sight and get away with it. It is detrimental to God; it denigrates God, and it nullifies God as God. It makes Him less than man, to act as though He is not capable of seeing, or that He is indifferent, that He is not Himself the supreme moral agent of all creation and very righteousness Himself. The Judge is ever present. He is at the door.

And how does Paul conduct himself? The Apostle Paul is always aware that God is observant, that God sees him. He says, "You know what manner of man I was before you, and God is my witness." He lived always in the consciousness of God as a brooding Judge who one day will come and judge, and he can say to the Athenians that this Jesus whom God has raised from the dead will one day judge all men. He has winked in times past, but He commands all men everywhere now to repent. The Apostle Paul knew the Judge; he knew judgment. He said we would be held accountable for everything that we do in our bodies, both bad and good. He lived always in the consciousness of God as Judge, and it was not a "complex": he did not have a hangover, he did not need a psychiatrist. His was not a formula for mental derangement, but a formula for sanity! To understand God as all-seeing Judge, who will chasten and require judgment and will express it in wrath, is to have your head screwed on right and have your feet grounded in reality, so that you can live, and move, and have your being in the truth of God.

Anything less or other than that is fraudulent; it is play-acting, a religious hype, and it is false piety: therefore, it does not impress the world or touch it. "I was shaped in iniquity." My mother was a chaste handmaiden. I was born in wedlock. I was not illegitimate. But the cry of David is an acknowledgment of inborn sin. "I am in my very nature a sinner; the fountain of my life is polluted; mine is a constitutional disease. It is with

me. Only God can blot it out, create in me a clean heart, and renew in me a right spirit." Redemption is creation, and only the God who creates the heaven and the earth can create us anew. It waits only on His hearing our cry and acknowledgment that we need to be made new, that we cannot swallow down our condition and try to live morally despite it, getting by in the best way that we know, minimally.

God wants exuberant, chaste, virtuous souls who testify of His reality, and live with remarkable freedom in the power of the new life, because they have acknowledged that in the old life there is no man good, no not one. Men will cavil and hedge at this doctrine about the total depravity of man as a universal condition, because it is unbecoming to speak this way of man in our modern generation. "After all, we are all individuals. I am different and I am not like that, and if I did a boo-boo, it was circumstantial. I could not help it. My retirement payoff of a hundred fifty million was only an error, although others in the same conspiracy were getting payoffs. It was only an error, but I deserved a hundred and fifty million." What can man do on this earth that will ever deserve remuneration of that kind?

Therefore, they will hedge and say that this doctrine of the depravity of man is too devastating and negative, and my Jewish people do not even know it is born out of the statements of God in the Old Testament. It is not a New Testament doctrine. The New Testament only reiterates what the Old Testament has already acknowledged, that there is not a righteous man upon the earth that doeth good. That David said, "I was born to this iniquity. It is in my very frame and nature, and except You give me mercy, I am stuck." Those who will not acknowledge this truth will suffer it, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament his lost condition without having to wait for the proof that comes through sinful conduct. You do not have to wait for the transgression; it is already there. If you will acknowledge it, you will be spared from the humiliation and shame of having to experience it. You are a blessed soul when you learn to lament your condition and your estate and cry out to God for mercy, and He will be quick to give it.

"You desire truth in the inward parts. . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean," David says. "Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me; give me the reality. Nothing but blood can take away my bloodguilt, my stains; nothing but the strongest purification can avail to cleanse me. Let this sin-offering purge my sin, no one needs it more than I do. Foul as I am, there is a

power in the blood, there is a power in the divine propitiation, and You have made this provision. Your mercy is actual, but it cost You something, and I bow before that sacrifice. I will ever honor You for it; it will be the basis for my gratitude, for my love, and I will express it in worship and in service. I will not need worship teams to get me to worship. It is continually rising up within me; it flows out of a gratitude for what You have performed in me that was totally undeserved. I could not commend myself for it, neither earn nor obtain it; You gave it. You gave it expensively. You gave the application to free me from my sin, and You gave me a new heart, only because You heard my cry, and You had mercy on me." If that is not a basis for gratitude, undying love, and worship that expresses itself in service and sacrifice, then there is none. The other kind of worship that we perform, not having come to this condition, is just a cosmetic overlay, a musicality, a performance.

"And I shall be whiter than snow." What a condition that is! I was thirty-five years old when I was saved, and what was my history before that time but relationships of a sinful kind, a long trail cluttered with the debris of broken lives and cast-off women behind me. What was the price of my egotism, vanity, self-assertion and pride? I shudder to think of it. Blessed is the child who comes to God early and does not have to bring the baggage of a misused life before God, and even have to suffer the memory of it. Oh, to be whiter than snow, to have an innocency in God!

But I tell you what, God's mercy is so great in blotting out your transgressions that He makes it as if you had never acceded to sin. He takes away the haunting memory. He makes you feel virginal, new, and chaste as if you had never been in the mud, as if you had never had an ugly history or spoken an ill word. It is a remarkable innocency that is not from lack of exposure or opportunity, but one that He has performed as blessing and mercy *through* your exposure. The greatest innocence is the innocence of a man who knows the truth of man and man's condition, and the realities of evil that are in the world, yet, he still shines transcendentally with purity and innocence, not because he is ignorant of evil, but because he has transcended it through the blood of the Lamb.

That is salvation. That is deliverance. You will be whiter than snow. Oh, that you may take heart even now and obtain mercy that your sins need not be before you morning and evening, day and night, to haunt and grieve you. On the other hand, maybe it is worse to be shallow and experience no

grief, to operate in a kind of superficial and callow Christianity, singing its choruses, not yet having recognized the truth of one's own condition or need, speaking about Jesus as Savior because it is part of the vocabulary that we acquire, without having the experience of His Saviorhood, His mercy or remedy. If we have not obtained that mercy, we have nothing to say to Israel. I am asking you repeatedly tonight, are we required to duplicate David's sin in order to obtain mercy? Does God's mercy have to wait until we ourselves are transgressors, adulterers and murderers? Or, can we share vicariously in what is the truth for every man, yet not need the shameful experience to prove it?

Since David is speaking in this Psalm on behalf of *all* saints, and not himself only. "Is this not a proof that my nature is more deeply infected and corrupted by sin than I thought – I, who yesterday was chaste, and today I am an adulterer? I, who yesterday had hands innocent of blood, and today I am a man of blood-guiltiness?" For any man to offend in the sight of God, and not to be moved by it, he is in the deeps of sin.

What is sin? It is to transgress in God's sight and not be affected by it, not be pricked, not be haunted – to do it with impunity, in a casual way, and swallow it down and go on to the next, as if God is not God, as if God is not seeing, as if God is not righteous, as if God will not judge. That is an error against God, which is the heart of sin, which is the failure to reckon God for what He is in Himself, righteous as well as merciful, all knowing and all seeing. Every sin is an act of presumption against God. To fail to reckon David's sin as our own is to be yet in our sins, the worst of which is presumption.

Who is made of better stuff than David, than God's beloved, the sweet singer of Israel, who could compose psalms, and fight against Goliath and lead a nation? Who can plead an exception for himself? It is defiance not to acknowledge the truth of David's condition as our own, and the need to be pricked in our hearts with the feeling of remorse for this evil, that we might enjoy the benefit of God's provision – the blood that He quickly employs for that one whose repentant cry He hears, recognizes and acknowledges.

It is difficult to persuade those who are virtuous, who have not had occasion for sin; they are too young. They have not yet come to the promptings of the sexual thing that will encourage fantasy and conduct that is sinful, and yet God says you *will* come to it, and you will not have the strength to triumph over it unless you realize now that you were birthed in iniquity.

From your mother's womb, you came with the Adamic taint, and if you will not acknowledge and repent of it and forsake it and ask My mercy, it will have its own logic and fulfillment in shameful transgression from which He wants to save you now, *while you are young*. Come and avail yourself of the mercy of God. The blood that flowed from Emmanuel's veins is potent to blot out all our transgression, all our iniquity, all our false and sinful nature, that He might create in us a clean heart and renew in us a right spirit.

I do not know how to give an invitation, but avail yourself of the mercy of God. When you hear His voice, harden not your heart. Go down on your knees and talk to God, He waits to hear from you. He is a God of truth. Perhaps you need to do something like break with the past. It may be something radical, or as simple as getting a haircut because your father or elder requests it. Obey him and honor him so it will go well with you, and it will break your stubborn pride, which is the root of your sin, which, if it is not broken by this act of obedience to which he is calling you, you will fall again into yet more degrading sin.

Concluding Prayer:

Lord, mercy, Lord! Mercy for these precious young ones. Mercy of a kind to understand something that is over our heads and beyond our present experience, that we will acknowledge the truth of your Word and of our condition as transgressors, and cry out for your mercy and receive the blood of the sacrifice of Jesus' death effectually, experientially, and existentially. Your mercy will be real for us; darkness will go out from us and we will feel lightened, we will feel an inward change in a quiet way. You will touch us in our deeps; You will create in us something new.

We pray for all the youth, and the children of ministers who are indifferent to the call of God, who have their own superior observations and reflections and think that they do not need to go the way of their fathers. I pray that they will acknowledge the truth of their condition, and their insubordination, and their egotistic superiority, and humble themselves before God and break and say, "I am not better than David, have mercy upon me Lord, and blot out my transgressions!"

It is not just the sinful action that I am asking You to blot out, it is a nature, it is a condition. It is Adamic; it is evil. I need Your work, the newness that only You can give that corresponds to Your own righteous nature. Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Do not withdraw the benefits of Your comfort

and counsel and assistance, or I am a dead man. Uphold me with your free Spirit because I am conscious that if I could commit adultery and murder, then I am weak, morally weak. I am susceptible, I am capable of the worst transgression; You need to uphold me. Do not just save me once, but continue to uphold me by Your free Spirit or I will find myself again in a comparable condition or worse.

My sin is not just my own personal thing, but it has had consequences for others with whom I am related in the Church. I have demeaned the Church; I have reduced its witness. I have negated the reality of God, so I am crying out, "Lord, build again the walls of Jerusalem!" Not only forgive my transgression, but also make up for it in whatever loss the Church suffered by my failed conduct, because I am not in this alone. I am affecting a whole people, we are in something together, there is a corporate reality of which I am part, and my sin and my example has affected others adversely.

The walls of Jerusalem have suffered loss, and I am asking you to build them up again in Your great mercy, even more strongly than before, out of the repentance that I acknowledge. Hasten it, O Lord, because I have dishonored your name, dishonored your Church. Then I can tell sinners of their transgression and lead others to salvation, even Israel itself that does not have the faintest inkling that David's condition is its own condition.

Thank you, my God, for that availability. May there be many tonight, who will appropriate it by faith, acknowledging the truth that You have said is our condition with David, and receiving the mercy for which he himself pleaded and which we ourselves need. Lord, I am praying for this congregation which is precious, that its joy, its worship, its reality, its witness, especially to the Jewish community, as well as to its own nation and Asia, will be birthed out of the deepest reality and appropriation of the Cross of Christ Jesus which is available even tonight, for as many as will cry out and call.

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