



Israel's Greatest Hits Volume II-Part 10
White As Snow
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well as we just said there have been a lot of weddings around here lately. There's no doubt about that. Which means, of course, there have been a lot of people looking their best, lining up for very important photographs. A lot of concerns about crisp white shirts and spotless dresses. Got a lot of grooms and brides and parents and in-laws wanting to make sure everyone looks their best for that important day. And if you think about that it's nothing new. That's been going on for centuries, all the way back to Bible times. Matthew 22, Jesus tells a story about everyone looking their best at a wedding and that the host of that wedding at one point looks around and find someone dressed in a T-shirt and flip flops. It doesn't say that specifically but the idea in the passage is that the guy is just not dressed the way he's supposed to be. He doesn't look right. He's not cleaned up like everyone else and so he gets booted out of the wedding reception.

That picture of being stained or dirty or not qualifying for something like the banquet that Jesus is trying to illustrate there in Matthew 22, that's coming for all of us. A place of blessing, a place that the Bible says every fulfilled desire will be realized, a place where God is going to unleash all of his blessings to people, the Bible says there has to be a qualified outfit. You've got to be looking right. You can't have spots and stains and blemishes. That's the picture, of course, if you've been around church, I mean, you know that's the picture of the problem of sin.

Sin. That we are not what we ought to be and yet God is a God who expects us to be qualified and that image of sin, it has to somehow be extracted, expiated, removed. You see that illustration throughout the Scriptures. Sometimes you'll see it in verse. And the inverse of that, I suppose, there's probably no better passage in my mind than the passage in Mark where Mark is depicting the transfiguration of Christ. Remember that? He goes up on the mountain, Peter, James and John, and they have this experience of seeing Christ for who he is. He's there and he's transfigured in front of them. The analogy shows up again, this time in reverse, that Jesus it says becomes radiant. And here's, I love the way the English Standard Version translates Mark's depiction of it, he says and becomes intensely white. It says whiter than any, now here's the Greek word, "gnapheus." It's the idea of launderer. Now, the English Standard Version just translates it whiter than anyone "could bleach them." But it's whiter than any launderer, any fuller, or anybody who works on making clothes clean, could ever make them. I just love the way it's put. You couldn't bleach clothes white enough to give you a sense of what we saw Christ looking like as he emanated there with brilliance on that mountain.

And of course that's the picture of a holy Christ. He's perfect. He's spotless. He's without blemish, without spot, without stain, without dirt. He's perfectly clean, which depicts his moral purity. Now we, on the other hand, are dirty. Now that's the picture in the Bible. The Good News of the Gospel is that God wants to take our dirt and remove it. Or to put it in the most severe terms, go back in that passage in your mind to the Old Testament where it says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, yet they will be white as snow; even though they're red like crimson, they'll be made white like wool."

I mean, that's the picture. It's very different than world religions, it's very different than a lot of perversions of Christianity that say you got to work to try and somehow counterbalance the bad in your life, work to try and do some good things and maybe, you know, all that dirt won't look so bad, or maybe you can scrub some of it out, it may take you years or months or maybe a lifetime to get rid of those. But if you work at it long enough you'll get there. Of course, Christianity is about the Gospel, the good news, that God can take your red scarlet stained life and make it white, white like snow, white like wool.

Well, if you know that passage I'm quoting, that's Isaiah Chapter 1 verse 18, and that's not how the passage starts. It does say that, that our sins can absolutely stain our lives, but God can instantaneously make them white like snow, but here's how it starts. "Come, let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they'll be white as snow; though they're red like crimson, they'll be made white like wool." Come let us reason together. That's an interesting way to put it.

It's a Hebrew word that's used in the context of a courtroom, where you've got someone coming in and there's a problem and there's a case and there needs to be some kind of verdict that is handed down. And here's God saying to the people that, of course, in the context of Isaiah, have got all kinds of sin problems that God's going to point out for 66 chapters. And he says let's come and talk. "Let you stand before me," of course, picture this now to kind of meld together some biblical images where the King of kings and Lord of lords is there in brilliant white, whiter radiance than any launderer could bleach his clothes. Standing here before him are the sinful, stained people of God and he says let's just reason. Let's reason together, let's talk about the problem.

Now think about that. It's like a courtroom, I suppose. You can come in and start to make a defense. You can start to make excuses. You can say, "Well, here are the mitigating factors. You don't understand, the reason I did this is because of this, and the reason I had that happen is because of those things. Here's my explanation, here's my rationale." You can have all of that go on but that's not what Christ wants us to do. It's certainly not what God was expecting in Isaiah Chapter 1. He doesn't want us to plead no contest. He doesn't want some kind of plea deal going on, he doesn't want some kind of debate. He wants us to do what he already knows and that is to admit the problem.

That is something that is unpacked for us in great detail in Psalm 51. It's very important that we understand this psalm because in that psalm is basically the reasoning together with God to say here's the problem. If you would admit it, if you would see it, if you'd be honest about it, listen, then your sins, no matter how darkly stained they've stained your life, they can be instantaneously as white as snow. It's an amazing promise. It's unlike any other religion on the planet. But it all starts with understanding what it means to come and reason together with God.

Let me show what that looks like. Turn in your Bibles for Psalm 51 if you haven't already. If you've found your worship packet there inside the worksheet, it's printed there for you on the right-hand column. Better yet to get a Bible in front of you, a digital version or a printed version, whatever, but to get your eyeballs on this text. I want to read it for you, these 19 verses. And I want to walk through this, try to read it. You know how hard it is for me to read it without comment, but I'm going to try to read as best I can without too many comments, to

read these 19 verses. Then I'm going to look at it, very carefully, to see this picture of a psalm from a person who has just sinned in a grievous way. And you know, you can just glance at it and know this is a psalm of David.

And this psalm of David as the superscription said was a psalm that he wrote when Nathan the prophet went to him after he'd gone in to Bathsheba. And if you know anything about David, everyone remembers this: the scandal and egregious sin of Bathsheba's adultery and then the killing of Uriah, her husband, once David impregnates her and tries to cover it up. And this is the thing that David is known for beyond being a man after God's own heart as The Chronicler writer says, I mean, he was a man after God's own heart except for this big thing here.

Well this big thing here, God made sure in his providence was part of the story so you and I can learn a lot about someone who is right with God. I mean that. Right with God. A man after God's own heart, but has this issue in his life that needs to be dealt with. And I say that because it's very important that you don't listen to a sermon like this and say, "I'm glad you're preaching this sermon, Pastor Mike, because there's someone I know in the auditorium right now who needs to hear this because they're not saved. So preach it." That's not what I want you to do.

As a matter of fact, though this is a sermon that if you're a non-Christian you can understand something of the grace and forgiveness of God and though your sins are like scarlet, they can be white like snow. That is certainly something you can understand and process and maybe today leave a Christian. But if you're a Christian, I don't want you leaning back today saying, "Oh yeah, that's fine. Twenty years ago I became a Christian. I've got a testimony, I know I'm clean, I'm a child of God."

Because this scene is a lot like the scene, just to kind of carry on this imagery of stains and sin and cleansing and making clean, Jesus comes in the night before he is crucified and he sits his disciples around and he starts this Upper Room scene that you might remember as they're about to initiate the Lord's Supper that is to be this memorial meal for the rest of the church age. And he says this, "First we're going to start by washing your feet," an ancient near-eastern custom of you walking around on the dirty roads with your sandals. But someone's going to come and wash your feet. Usually it was the lowliest person in the room, some kind of servant or something that was serving the household or, you know, whatever, maybe you'd wash your own feet. But they're all in there listening to Christ and they're about to get instruction from Christ. And here comes Christ taking up a basin of water, putting on an apron and he starts to kneel down to wash feet.

And Peter, you can count on Peter for a colorful response, and he says, "Listen, you're not going to wash my feet." And Jesus says, "If I don't wash your feet then you have no part of me. You've no part with me, we have no fellowship, we're not connected, we're not on the same page. We've got a big problem if you don't let me wash your feet." Now is Christ fastidious about feet? What's his deal here? Well this is all an illustration, obviously.

I mean, it's living out in real time but it's illustrating something. Because Peter's response is, "Listen if I can have no part with you if you don't wash my feet then, listen, let's just go all the way. Why don't just pour the basin over my head and wash my whole body." And Jesus says

this. He said, "Listen, you believed in me, you're already clean. You're already one of mine." He said, "You only need to wash your feet."

If you're Christian here today and you hear this story you think it's about grace and forgiveness and confession. This is an evangelistic message so I don't need to pay attention. Just like David, a man after God's own heart, this is a passage that is for you and for me that realizes that walking through and trafficking in this world, you're going to get your feet dirty every single week. You can't get through a day in this world, bombarded with temptation and sin, without you and I falling into some kind of sin. And what God is saying is you've got to learn to confess your sin. Not as a one time, once for all experience in your past. But this needs to be a regular practice of your Christian life. You need to learn to have this kind of reaction to the sins that you and I fall into, whether they are as grievous as King David's or not.

What does David say? What does he ask of God? Here's what he asks, verse 1, "Have mercy on me." You know he's just committed adultery. He's tried to cover it up. He's had Uriah, her husband, killed. And he wants mercy. Why would you want mercy? Well, because the punishment for adultery in the Mosaic Law and certainly for murder all the way back to the Noahic Covenant in Genesis 9 is death. How are you supposed to die? The king should be dragged out into the Kidron Valley, Uriah's family ought to take stones, the elders of Israel ought to gather and they ought to pile stones on top of him and have him killed in a judicial act of justice.

And he says, "God, I need mercy. Would you have mercy on me? I know I deserve that punishment but have mercy on me. O God, according to your..." and we always run into this word in the psalms, we've studied several psalms so far this year, "your hessed," that Hebrew word for that faithful, covenant love. "You've made a decision to set your love on me, I am your child, I am your son, I am your king, I'm your person, and you've set that love on me. And according to the fact that you're mine and I'm yours and that you're my God and I am your servant would you, based on that love, have mercy on me? Don't allow me to suffer the consequences of this sin that I deserve to be punished for. As matter of fact, according to your abundant mercy and I've seen it in other people's lives," I'm sure David has seen it in his past, he says, "Would you please," here it is, "blot out my transgressions. Here was the line, I passed it, I stepped over, I did wrong. Would you just take that thing that I've done and just blot it out?"

"Wash me," verse 2, "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 will 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," there it is again, "all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," David says. "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."

He'd seen it leave Saul. He'd seen that favor of being the king leave from Saul, the former king and now he says don't do that to 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," as I've killed someone. "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," certainly not in the state that I'm in, "or I would give it," if that's all it took, writing a check, giving you a lamb, a goat, a bull. "You'll not be pleased with a burnt offering."

No. "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." Many people think this is some kind of edition in the postexilic period when the walls have been broken down by Nebuchadnezzar, some 500 years later. I mean, this makes perfect sense. David has recognized his sin and he's saying, "I'm the king. I want you to shore up, not just my office, but the kingdom and the city." And you know what, if that favor rests on us, "then you're going to delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar."

The passage is all about the confession of sin. It's all about the cry for mercy knowing that we're guilty and saying in verse 1, "God based on your love and your mercy would you blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly," verse 2, "from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin!" That is a picture of someone who's getting honest before God, reasoning with God, saying God I am guilty. That's the word "confession."

Number one on your outline if you're taking notes and I wish that you would, jot this down, "Confess Your Sins." That's as basic and simple as I can put it this morning. To agree with God that I am dirty, I am stained, I'm blotted, I'm blemished, I'm morally not satisfactory to you the holy and righteous King. That's hard. And it's very hard when we get to verse 3. In verse 3, it says, "I know my transgressions." Many people I find when they talk about sin and they talk about God's righteousness and they talk about them being guilty, they shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, you know, no one's perfect." I say, "Are you perfect?" "No, no, no, I'm not perfect but no one's perfect." Listen, here's David, "I know my transgressions." Question: do you know your transgressions? I mean, do you know your transgressions?

You say, "Well, if I murdered someone, committed adultery this week, well then surely I would know my transgressions." Do you know your transgressions? You cannot walk through the world and not get your feet dirty. You need cleansing. You need restoration of your relationship with God. You need to fix this. And it starts with confession. Let me be very clear based on verse 3, it starts with a confession that has specificity to it. It's very specific. What are your sins? What are your sins this week?

The Bible says that we should be very careful about the sins of our mouths. Want to catch everyone? I should be able to say what is the sin that you need to confess this morning and there should be not a single brain in this auditorium right now that doesn't go, "I get it. I know." And by the way, if you don't know here's a very, very simple way to find out. I mean, I can shut up for 30 seconds and fix this problem if you're going, "I don't know what my sin is." Here's all you'd have to do. Sincerely, sincerely and honestly just say this to God: "God, what's my transgression? God, what's the sin in my life that you're not happy with?"



If that sounds biblical it is. Psalm 139, "Search me, try me, know my heart! See if there's any wicked way in me." Test me, try me. You give God 30 seconds, that's all it would take. Five minutes may be too much. You're going to be overwhelmed after five minutes. But say to God, "God what are my sins? What have I done?"

James says if we don't sin with our mouth we'd be a perfect person. Let's just talk about deception, lying. Maybe in your job. Maybe in your home. Maybe in your relationships, your friendships. You know flattery is lying. Did you know that? Trying to take advantage of someone else by ingratiating myself to them saying things that aren't true for my own selfish advantage. Which by the way, all these things go back to selfishness. You can look in the Garden. Everything that really relates to sin that God sees as a blemish and a stain upon your life comes back to you reaching out to grab something for your own pleasure, for your satisfaction. You say I want to do it my way, not God's way. Lying. Deception. Cheating. Stealing. Dissensions. Factions. Rivalry. Envy. Jealousy.

Some things we don't even see as sin anymore. Did you know worry and anxiety are sins? That in our hearts having a callousness toward things that we should be receptive to, being passive about things we should be passionate about, being passionate about things we should be passive toward. There are words used here, four of them: sin, transgression, iniquity and evil.

Sin "avon" in Hebrew, much like the Greek equivalent in the New Testament "harmartia" is the word "to fall short." That's a good place to start because you can say, "Well, I didn't kill anybody or commit adultery this week." Well, great. There is a sense in which if we were honest about the standard and say here's what God wants of a Christian, here's what Jesus would have done this week if he worked at your job. Here's what Jesus would've done this week if he lived in your home. This is what Jesus would have done this week had he lived in your neighborhood and you measure up to that and say this is God's holy and perfect standard. Where do you measure up? There are a lot of things there, we call them sins of omissions, that you did not do. You fall short. "All have sinned," there's our word, harmatano, "and fall short of the glory of God." In Hebrew, the same concept. You fall short. The sins of omission.

Iniquity. That's a word that's used here in this passage. Iniquity is the twisting of something. Here's what God said, here's how you should do it, and you say, "Well, I'm going to do it but I'm doing it this way." It's when our motives are twisted. It's when I take something that's good and I just put my own twist on it to say, "Well, I would feel better about it if I did it like this." Or "if you want me to do it like this, I'm just saying I don't feel good about doing it like that, I want to do the same kind of thing but I want to do it this way." That's the iniquity. That's the concept of twisting the truth.

And of course there's transgression. That's easy. Those are things we usually are quick to see and I hope you're quick to see it. Here's the line. Don't cross it. You know what the line is. And you step over the line. That's what David did in trying to cover his sin. It's what David did in committing adultery. That's what David did in saying, "I know I shouldn't do this and I'm doing it anyway because I want to do it."

Evil. Evil didn't stem from God or his plan. It stems from the enemy, from the tempter, who's saying this is the good way for you to go when in reality it's the way and the pathway of death. Did you know that gossip is evil? Did you know coveting is evil? There's so much we overlook, whether it's our self-promotion, our worry, whether it's sloth or greed, compromise, rebellion, mockery, hypocrisy, duplicity immodesty, pornography, anxiety, arrogance.

All I know is that when David said I know my transgressions he knew his transgressions, and I don't think we can get started with confessing our sins unless we know what those are. You've got a chance to make that clear to you. He gave you a conscience which already has sounded an alarm in your heart this week. Just say to God, "God, point out to me my sin." As though half of you need that. I mean, I use the phrase "let's talk about your sin this morning," I mean immediately your mind was brought to those issues. As the writer of Hebrews says there's the sin that so easily entangles you, that make you dirty before God. You know what that is? Well, be very specific. You want to confess and agree with God that you're guilty, you stand before the tribunals and say "come let us reason together." You get very specific. Confess with specificity.

Verse 4. "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." Now I have a hard time convincing Uriah's family that's true. Am I right? "You killed him. You sinned against our family." I mean, you sinned in a big way against the nation, you sinned in a big way against the neighborhood, against the people across the way. You've sinned against... Matter of fact, there's hardly a sin you've thought of this morning that you've committed that didn't in some way damage someone. So this is the hyperbole of putting priority where it belongs. And that is, yes, you've hurt people with your sin. Yes, there's a reverberating effect of your transgression, but ultimately it is a sin against the God who stands before you in the whitest clothes that no bleacher could ever launder, they're intensely white, and the thing that stands between you and God are those sins.

Now they're committed against other people. There's a horizontal damage that's done. But the ultimate damage is a vertical damage, "Against you, and you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." Have you done what's evil in Uriah's brother's life? Absolutely you have. But ultimately that overshadows everything else. "So that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment." "If you had me dragged off by the officials and captains of my command and threw me in the Kidron Valley and had them start pelting me with rocks until I got knocked out and suffocated and died with my rib cage collapsing in my body, you would be absolutely just. I deserve it. I deserve punishment." That's what the whole cry for mercy was in verse 1. Want some help with confessing your sins? Confess with specificity, be very specific about what the sin is, and number two, confess with sincerity. Say to yourself, "God I sincerely recognize I deserved punishment."

Not only do non-Christians not think about hell as often as they should. I don't think Christians think about hell as often as they should. The reality of this, outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. A place where you are away from the presence of God and the glory of his power, to quote two passages of Scripture. And all I'm saying is this: you should be able to look at your own life and say, "I know that's what I deserve." Real confession is a kind of sincere confession that says this is bad, so bad that I deserve God's punishment.

David felt that and sensed that he writes it for us. And certainly he knows because he's committed two capital offenses. But you need to realize "the wages of sin," no matter what it is, "is death." And to be able to see that a holy God can't tolerate an unholiness of the few things even that you've thought about in the middle of this sermon are things that should condemn you and shut you out from the perfection of a holy God. That is an important thing for us to think. That sincerity, that saying, "God, I have done wrong against you." And if you were to punish me right now for it, if you were to cast me out of your presence, that would be absolutely 100% justified and blameless, no one could say anything.

How bad did he feel, verse 5? "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity." That is not a statement about him being an illegitimate child, just so you know. Jot this down in the margin if it's not already there, Psalm 58:3. Psalm 58:3. "I was brought forth in iniquity," our passage says in verse 5, "and in sin did my mother conceive me." A lot of people think, "Wow, he must have been an illegitimate kid." That's not the point. It's not about your mother's sex life that we're talking about here. Isaiah 58:3 is the same concept. It talks about sinners now. "Sinners are estranged from God from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies." I mean they come out wired to do wrong. That's the picture here. I mean, I know what you want, verse 6, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being." But you know what I haven't found much of in my past? Truth in the inward word being.

"You teach me wisdom in the secret heart." The conscience does, the Word does, my parents have instilled it. I feel the fact that I don't measure up and I feel it from the inside of my heart as far back as I can go. Now, he hasn't got any special memories. Right? He does not remember being conceived or in his mother's womb or being an infant. He doesn't remember any of that. And you don't either. But I'll bet if you go back in your mind as far as you can think, whether you're five or six or four or three and a half or seven or whatever your foggy memory can remember about yourself, unless you have some apocryphal view of your charmed childhood, you get in your own head and you say, you know what I've been going south from the beginning.

Well, I've kept up appearances in many circles. I've tried to please my parents here. I tried to please my Sunday school teacher there. I tried to stay out of trouble at school, but in my heart, as it says in Ephesians Chapter 2, "I was by nature a child of wrath." I deserve God's punishment from the beginning. I see it, my propensity to do wrong. To quote the rest of that verse, verse 3, "I lived according to the passions of my flesh." What I wanted, it didn't matter what God's rules were, if I wanted to reach out and grab that fruit and eat it because it was a delight to my eyes and if it was in my power to do it and I can get away with it, I'm going to grab it. Can you not remember that from the youngest of ages in your own life? Don't you see that? You know what that is? That's a guy who feels ashamed about his propensity to sin.

If you want to learn to confess, confess with specificity, confess with sincerity, and confess, here it is, I know it's not popular, confess with shame. I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed of myself. I'm ashamed of who I am, I'm ashamed of what I think, I'm ashamed about my propensity to sin, I'm ashamed that I can go all the way back in my life and see from the very beginning all I tried to do is get away with doing what I wanted.

Paul says in Ephesians 2:3, I quoted it, "We live according to the passions of the flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, we were by nature children of" God's just anger, his

"wrath, just like the rest of mankind." That's who we were. And even when we stumble and get our feet dirty in the Christian life, our flesh raises its ugly head and we fall into the patterns we had from the beginning of our lives.

David said, "I know what you want and I haven't measured up. I've seen my sin from the beginning." Sinners are estranged from God from the womb. They go astray from birth, speaking lies, as we all did. I think confession will make you think that way when you get specific about your sin, you get sincere about the damage it causes in your relationship with God, and you start to feel ashamed. Now the world can tell you should never feel ashamed. "I went to church today, the guy's making me feel ashamed." It's exactly right. You should feel ashamed and here's why. Because I started this with the fact that we have a Christian gospel. The Christian gospel, the good news is, that God wants to take your filthy sin that's like crimson and make it white like snow. It's red and it's so dark and so stained but in a moment he wants to make that just as white as wool. God wants to do that but it starts with reasoning together.

A lot of people want to paper over a fallen heart that's not contrite about sin and say, "God loves you, he wants to be your life coach, he wants to help you through life, won't it be great. Get a little Jesus in your life, you'll have a better life. Maybe this week will go better for you. Just get some church in you this Sunday." And you're not going to have what God wants to give you, and that is a clean heart, a clear conscience, a fresh start and forgiveness that comes only from him to say you were guilty and spotted and stained but because you've confessed with specificity, with sincerity, with shame in your heart, now all the sudden you be confident in this: you can be confident in forgiveness. That's what God wants to do.

That's what happens in verse 7. A cleansing, a purging. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Hyssop? What in the world's that? If you go to Israel today the walls of the Western Wall or any ancient Rome walls you see those Herodian stones, they're gigantic. Sometimes through the middle of them you'll see these plants grow up, kind of crawling out between the crevices of these big giant stones. Mostly, those are hyssop branches. Sometimes they dry up, they look like tumbleweeds out here in the southwest. Well, even before they turn into dried up, little bushes, they have a very dense leaf structure.

They were used, the first time we see them used in some specific way in the Old Testament was in Exodus Chapter 12, when they were supposed to take a hyssop branch, which becomes this little bushy thing that they would wrap yarn around, at least they would in the Mosaic law, and would give you a handle to hold on to and it be this little bushy thing that came out of the ground, you cut it off, and now it says in Exodus 12, kill a lamb because God's judgment is coming on Egypt, and take that hyssop branch and twirl it around in the blood puddle that comes from the neck of that bleeding lamb and take the blood and go to your doorpost and paint the top of the doorpost with that blood, and put that crimson color right over the top of your door.

And if you do that and that innocent lamb that you brought into your house and he stayed there for almost a week, your kids got attached to that lamb, and that innocent little baaing, year-old lamb dies, that blood on that doorpost when God's judgment comes upon that city, he's going to pass over your house and there'll be no judgment on you. It's called the Passover.

And that hyssop branch was the instrument of applying the purging of sin on that home. It became a part of the Mosaic law.

If you had leprosy, for instance, and by God's grace it started to recede and you were in remission, so to speak. You no longer were having these parts of your body that were being eaten away and your body gets back to normal and your skin starts to clear up. The Bible says you go to the priest and the priest was supposed to inspect you. You'd de-robe, he looks at you. He's going to now let you back into the regular community of Israelites. And he would take a hyssop branch if he looked at you and said you're looking like you're all good now. I don't think you're a disease threat in our community. He'd take the hyssop branch, he would kill a bird in that case, he would dip the hyssop branch in that bird's blood and he would sprinkle you with blood. Seems gross and weird, but it was a picture. It's a picture of the fact that the stain in your life is going to be removed.

And that shifted, even in the Mosaic law. You had not only the act of trying to purge this uncleanness by the hyssop branch and the blood but also it was used of water. You've even seen in high churches today. They take that thing that they use. Right? There's a formal name for it, but the informal name is "thing." They take the thing that they dip in holy water and they sprinkle it at people. That's the picture. The hyssop branch was used and they put yarn around it the Bible says, the handle, and they have that branch. They dip it in the water and again it would be part of the cleansing ceremony, in that case if someone had touched a dead body and was ceremonially unclean and they were supposed to come to worship. Well, you can't with that. So we'll make you clean by this picture of this water sprinkling on your body and it was a picture of your cleansing.

Well, it's not ceremonial uncleanness and it's not leprosy in a skin disease, but it goes back to that picture of somehow having my sin before God that's in need of judgment because God is just, but somehow that hyssop branch, that picture of hyssop, is a picture of me being cleansed. "Purge me," cleanse me, fixed my problem "with that hyssop branch, and I will be clean; wash me and I'll be whiter than snow."

Here's a man coming off of real confession, specific, sincere, shameful admission of his sin, and now he's saying, "I'm going to be white like snow." You? Yeah. This is what the non-Christians don't like about our gospel of grace. Think about it. They don't. Because if someone is in prison for rape and murder or the cannibal or a serial killer and at the end of their lives they sit there in a jail cell the week before they get executed and they come to Jesus. Right? You know what they're going to say on the talk shows. You know what they're going to say out there in the magazines and the newspaper. They're going to roll their eyes and say, "Those Christians, they really believe that if you just get right with Jesus and confess your sins, you mean all that stuff they'd done is going to be not relevant, they're going to walk into the presence of God. That's what you're telling me?"

And even Christianity, at least in the name, has taken that secular repulsion to real grace and they've worked it into their religious system. There are guys preaching in fancy clothes with crosses over their shoulder this morning who say this: that you have to somehow work off this problem of sin. And if you stumble and get your feet dirty this week, I'm going to give you something called penance to do. If you do enough penance and pray through a prayer as you go through enough beads, if you do something that's good enough, maybe God will start to

wash your life clean. But you know what? You're probably not going to get it all clean because you're going to die and you're going to have to go to a place called what? Purgatory. You see that verb right there, verse 7? Purge. That's the idea. God said I'm going to purge you right now. You're not going to have to burn this off in some place called Purgatory. That's fanciful nonsense. Another word for it is heresy.

I am 100% fully clean before God, white like snow, if I confess my sin to God. That's a forgiveness I embrace. I need to confidently embrace it. So number two on your outline if you're taking notes "Confidently Embrace Forgiveness." God is a God who wants to take your filthy sin, red like scarlet, and make it white like snow. It's red like crimson, it's dark and stained, and make it white like wool. It starts with reasoning together, that's confession. But he wants to do that. He can do that not by the blood of bulls and goats.

I feel bad for David that he could only look through the corridor of prophetic Scripture and think about how the "Lamb of God was going to take away the sin of the world." We look back on it knowing all about the beating and the whipping and the Crown of Thorns and the purple robe and hanging on a tree outside of Jerusalem, and having him crucified. We know exactly, as Paul wrote to the Galatians churches, "before whose eyes Christ was crucified, proclaimed as crucified," because they didn't see him, Galatian churches. They were miles, hundreds and hundreds of miles from Jerusalem. But the message was preached to them, it was in the mind of every Christian in the cities and churches of Galicia because they could look back on it with clarity. How good it is for us to know that God took all of your sin and appended it to a cross. And it wasn't the blood of bulls and goats. It was the actual focusing of God's justice on Christ who was treated as though he were, in David's case, the adulterer and the murderer that he was, and instead God would now look upon Christ as the focus of his justice and say, "I going to punish Jesus as though he were David, so that David can be white as snow."

That's the picture here. And you and I can say right now, unlike a lot of religious people this morning, I am fully 100% qualified to go straight to heaven right into the presence of the banquet of God and he's not going to look at my clothes and say, "Kind of dirty. You need some time there in the steam room getting that all cleaned out there. Why don't you spend some time in the laundromat and maybe we'll get you ready for the banquet?" I am, according to Colossians 1, fully qualified to stand before God. I'm not getting kicked out because I have the righteous robes of Christ around me, "clothed in the righteousness of Christ," Paul wrote to the Galatian churches. And that's powerful. You can have confidence because of the payment. Jesus said on a cross, "Tetelestai," paid in full.

If I come to your house after church. My 16-year-old daughter knocks over an expensive vase in your front room, it crashes to the ground. It's \$500 worth of vase. Gone. Why? Because she picked it up and started to try and juggle with it and she dropped it. You'd be mad at her. Would you not? You should be. Careless. Dumb. She shouldn't be juggling with your vase. But if I came in and said, "Listen. It's an expensive vase but I'm going to give you a \$1,000,000 right now. Hold on, it's in the car." I go bring in a suitcase of cash. I go, "Here. Go shopping in the morning for a new vase. Paid in full." I think you could take whatever animosity you might have toward my daughter and say, "You're forgiven." She didn't pay for it herself but her dad paid for it. Even in your sin, I realize, you might hold a grudge, but God is not a sinner like us. If the payment is paid, the payment is paid. There's no double jeopardy. He's not holding against you what is already been paid for. That is if you have reasoned with him.

That was a pretty depressing sermon for the first half. Right? But I'm saying right now this is the part that we all like to celebrate. We want to celebrate the forgiveness of God and you should. You should embrace it confidently and fearlessly because a payment has been made. But we've got to make sure we've reasoned with God about our sin. But once you do, man, embrace forgiveness because the payment has been paid, confident because of the payment. In verse 8, here's a guy who should be fearing stones being thrown on him and having his corpse tossed into the Kidron Valley and instead he wants to hear joy and gladness. What?

He wants his bones that you have broken. That's metaphorical. It's poetic. Because back there in Psalm 32 David says, "When I was silent," about my sin "God's hand was heavy upon me. The bones within me, they were crushed," they were hurting. I was weary. It was like going through the desert without a bottle of water. "With the fever heat of summer my bones wasted away." Instead of that guilt that you should have for killing Uriah and sleeping with his wife and impregnating her, I want those bones to rejoice.

That's the part non-Christians don't like. That's the part people don't get. How can a guy who is guilty rejoice and be glad? I don't get it. It's because the payment has been made. That's grace. That God would take his sin and say, I'm going to hide my face from it "as far as the east is from the west, I'm going to blot out all your iniquities," and David is constantly saying that. Why? Let me give it to you in New Testament terms. Why is he confidently embracing forgiveness? Here's why. Because God made a promise. "If you confess your sins he is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness."

Now either you believe that or you don't. Some of you think you're super spiritual today because you feel bad about yourself after you've confessed your sin. You've read some Puritan works, maybe that have been weighted in the wrong direction and you have that poor miserable worm theology. And that's how you view yourself. And you think that's more spiritual because you go around waiting for the lightning bolt to strike you.

As opposed to David who says, "I am so guilty, but I pleaded for God's mercy, I've confessed my sin." And here's what I've learned, I don't even need John 1:9 to prove this to me. I know this. That God has proved in the Old Testament that if you confess your sins he'll forgive you. Forgive you. Forgive you. And though your friends and your neighbors and people looking on to your life would say you deserve to suffer for that, you'd say I've received the mercy of God. I'm going to be joyful and glad. That's the dispositional proof, that is the dispositional proof that you believe the promise of God, that you can be glad as a sinner because you're forgiven, and that God is blotted out your iniquities.

God gives us the privilege of having children, in part, to illustrate what he's doing with us. I've already quoted it, at least in part, Psalm 103, "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us. As a father," next verse, "has compassion upon his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." So there's the picture, parent. You've had your kids sin, maybe, try to juggle some of your vases, which has happened, but comes to you in penitence. True, sincere, specific confession with shame over their sin. Even without a payment, what do we do? We hold them, we hug them, we forgive them. I mean, that's the picture of God blotting out our sin. God is too just to overlook it. He had to make a payment and he did. He purged our sins with blood, not the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of

Christ. But if that's true, you can say with David, I'm going to replace my guilt with joy and gladness.

And then he said something in verse 10 because this is what's needed. "Create," that first word, underline it, create, "create in me a new heart." Create in me something that's not there. That's what create means. Create a clean heart, a new spirit, "renew the right spirit within me." God can only do that. How can a guilty person feel not guilty? How can a guilty person, who should be crying, rejoice? Because God creates a clean heart. God does something new, "he renews a spirit within you. Cast me not away from your presence, take not your Holy Spirit from me." He watched that happen with Saul. But he is saying I am an unholy spirit and I want the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to dwell with me. How in the world can the Holy Spirit dwell with the unholy spirit of David?. That's the miracle of God. That's the power of God. That's what the reformers in their little Latin phrase said, "Simultaneously righteous and sinner." At the same time. Martin Luther loved that phrase because it pictured what the reality is, and that is forensically God looked at us and said, "We know that you're a sinner." David is guilty of adultery and murder. But he says, "You're righteous."

Theologians like to talk about "imputation." David here is believing the power of God to create something that will show in disposition, verse 12, joy, a willing spirit. All of us because God does a miraculous thing. He takes the righteousness of Christ and he imputes it, the biblical word for it. If you want it from the New Testament, it's the word "logizomai." Logizomai is used several times in Romans Chapter 4. It's the word "to credit." If I said I'm going to pay for that vase, but here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to transfer a million dollars into your account. So I wire some money from my phone. Right? As if I had a million dollars to wire you, I don't, but let's just pretend, this is all an illustration. And I say, "I'm going that wire that to you." The bank's going to get it on your side and they're going to go, "Now you have a million dollars in your account you didn't have five minutes ago." The crediting of your account, the withdrawal of the funds elsewhere into your account.

The parallel passage in Psalm 32 starts, "Happy is the man," that's the dispositional proof that you believe the promises of God and God has worked a miracle. The miracle is this: "Happy is the man whom the Lord does not impute his sins against him." He does not count or credit his sins against him. In the Greek pre-Christian translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, guess what word was there? Logizomai, like 88 times I think in the Septuagint. Logizomai. God will credit and count, in this case, you to be a righteous person and you should be happy about that. You got money you didn't have. You got credit and righteous you didn't have. And all your sin, where did all that debt go? Well, that got transferred to the cross. Logizomai.

If you want to constantly embrace forgiveness you better understand God's payment. You better understand God's promise. And you better understand God's power, because it's the power to look at sinners and to impute them with the righteousness of Christ so that you can say, "I am an unholy person and guess who's my closest ally, the Holy Spirit." A miracle.

God's power and then everything changes for David. Look at verse 13. Embracing God's forgiveness. Now he's going to do some things with that forgiveness. "Then..." I love that. Right? If that's all true a guilty man is going to be happy, someone with it a weight of guilt and shame is now going to be joyful and glad because they're forgiven and counted as righteous,

"Then I'm going to teach transgressors your ways, and sinners are going to return to you," just like I did.

A couple weeks ago Dr. Ware was here preaching on Isaiah 6. Did you hear that sermon? If you know the passage you understand what happens there. He sees God in his glory. "Holy, holy, holy." He thinks of himself. He says, "Woe to me. I'm undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. I live among a people of unclean lips." The seraph is dispatched, takes the tong from the altar and touches his lips. There again is the picture of a purification. And the declaration is your sins are forgiven. And right after that what does God do in that vision? "Hey, I got an assignment. Who are we going to send? Who's going to go for us?" I mean that is so strategic. That is the pattern and paradigm of Scripture and we have it again right here. Right? "Once I catch you, the disciples. I bring you into the fold. I fished for you. Now you can become fishers of men. Hey, you've just been forgiven. Guess what you're going to be now? You're going to be someone who's going to go out there and teach transgressors the way of God." What's the way of God? Confession leads to forgiveness. That's the way of God ultimately. Sinners are going to turn back to God.

Do you want to maximize your forgiveness and you should? Let's write that down that way. Number three, to "Maximize Your Forgiveness." The first thing you do to maximize your forgiveness is found right there in verse 13. You start to be more evangelistic. You proclaim this forgiveness. If you've experienced it then you proclaim it. Matter of fact, let's flip that on his head for just a second. Some of you are not evangelistic and you do not share your faith and you haven't shared it recently. Do you know why? Because there's unconfessed sin in your life. What? Listen. We don't want to proclaim something that we do not experientially, really, we have not experientially dealt with the issue of forgiveness. Proclaim it. "Teach transgressors your way." There's so much about that. As a matter of fact, we're going to deal with that verb in a second. That concept.

In the New Testament I love the word. It's been absconded, unfortunately, and that's the word "preach." I mean, it's such a bad word in our culture. Right? You start to really tell someone something, you say, "Well, I don't mean to preach to you." I take offense to that. I do want to preach to you. I mean, that's a good word. When I was a young pastor I gave up on that word. I started to do what other pastors did, which was we're going to have a talk at church and all that. Listen, preach is a great word. I mean, from the New Testament Greek "Kerusso" it means to proclaim. Proclaim what? Good news. What's the good news? "Hey, you confess your sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. If you just reason with God about the problem. You know what? Your sins are scarlet and red crimson, they're going to be white like snow and wool."

I mean that's the great news. When you experience that and you maximize what forgiveness is, it's like fuel, it's like nitrous. You go and move into your community, you go to your co-workers, you say to them that really they're tied up in sin just like you were. Maybe even this last week you were tied up in that sin. But you say to them, listen, there's good news for you. I know it sounds like bad news because your sermon starts the way my sermon started and that is you got a sin problem, you got to admit it. But the great news is if you admit it, if you confess it specifically, sincerely, with shame in your heart, God forgives.

And David said I'm going to do that. He ramps up his evangelism. Look at verse 14 and 15, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness," I know I should be punished, I should be executed, but "O God, God of my salvation," if you deliver me "my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness." Not quietly. I'm not going to mutter through the words in a worship session. I'm going to sing loud. "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will," here's the word, "declare." That's the equivalent of the word *kerusso*. I'll preach, I'll make it clear, I'll "declare your praise." God is a forgiving God abounding in lovingkindness, forgiving the guilt and the transgressions of people. That's the gospel, that's the New Testament.

If you're going to maximize for your forgiveness you're not only going to ramp up your evangelism, you're going to ramp up your gratitude. Be more evangelistic, be more grateful. Make sure that in your heart you're showing that. Matter of fact, let's reverse this one. The diagnostic that you may have unconfessed sin is you're not interested in sharing the Gospel. Another diagnostic if you have unconfessed sin, it may be that you're not even interested in worship, you're not interested in thanksgiving. I mean, you're not all that passionate about being grateful to God for the gospel and what he's done.

In Luke Chapter 7, Jesus is at a dinner, this gal comes up, long hair, weeping. She comes in and you remember the story, her tears wet Christ's feet, with her hair she dries them off. Jesus turns to Peter and he says, "Listen, let's think about what's happening here. She loves much because she's been forgiven much." Do you think Peter needed to be forgiven much? Oh yeah, it's not about really how much to be forgiven. I mean, she had notorious sins just like David. Well, David, an adulterer and a murderer, I could see where he'd be excited. Listen, all of us have fallen short of the glory of God. Peter had a lot of sin problems. He's going to end up denying Christ, he's going to do all kinds of things and he's already done all kinds of things by Chapter 7 of Luke. And he says if you just see how much you've been forgiven, you'll love much, you'll be grateful, you'll serve.

Which by the way, is where we go next. The gifts of God. "You will not delight in sacrifice," verse 16, "or I'd give it." Well, there is a good verse for us, right there. Sacrifice. The equivalent is money, right, today? You didn't bring any goats or sheep to church today. Right? You didn't give any of that. No, the equivalent is giving offerings to God. Here's a great verse for you: God doesn't want your money. "Fantastic. Could you preach on that for an hour?" Right? "God doesn't delight in sacrifice. If he did then I'd give it." "You're not going to be pleased with a burnt offering." Well, of course, this is all going to be put in perspective there in verse 19. You do delight in sacrifice. What kind of sacrifices? Right sacrifices.

Do you think David brought any sacrifices between the time that he covered up his adultery and killed Uriah until he met with Nathan? Do you think there are any sacrifices he brought? Of course. A bull is a pretty big sacrifice. Probably a seventh of the average worker's wage and that's a pretty big thing. That's more than 10% to bring a bull to sacrifice. Of course, David was rich. He probably brought all kinds of sacrifices as he was supposed to. But God said I'm really not interested in that until I have the right kind of sacrifice. And that is your heart. Your heart being honest about sin. The sacrifices of God, verse 17, are a broken spirit. Can you be honest about your sin? Can we reason together about your crimes and your transgressions? "A broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." You'll despise my check, you'll despise my service, you'll despise all kinds of time that I give to the church, you'll despise all of that if my heart's not where it's supposed to be. What God wants is sincere confession.

Does that happen? Verses 18 and 19, which I don't think is just an appendage by some postexilic period of people or exilic period of people some 500 years later. I think this is David saying, "Listen, I put everything in jeopardy but please do good to Zion," your people, your city, "in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem," metaphorically. Right? "I mean, we're vulnerable now because of my sin." And you know what? When that happens and your favor rest not only in me, but on this city, "then you're going to delight in right sacrifices, burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls," those expensive offerings, "will be offered on your altar," and everything will be copacetic. Everything will be the way it should be. That's when it's right.

When Paul was raising money for the disaster in Jerusalem, a special giving project, he talks to the Corinthians, a pretty rich Orange County kind of culture and he says about the Macedonian giving, he says something about them. He says before they gave to this project he said, they gave themselves first to the Lord. That's great. I mean, that's what God's wanting. And you know what that is? There's a lot of this giving to God and it's kind of a detached giving to God. It's a kind of distant giving to God as opposed to a real close intimate kind of relational connected giving to God, which is "I want to serve you because we're right. We're on the same page. This is an extension of a good heart that's right and connected and honest with you."

That's the kind of giving that's in view. They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us, context, giving that money to those people. To go the extra mile, stay the extra hour, spend the extra dollars for the Lord, it really means nothing until God gets your heart. Romans 12:1. Right? "Present yourself to God, based on the mercies of God. Present yourself to God as a living sacrifice." You come first saying you got me. The first thing he wants is an honesty in your heart and your mind about your sin. And then he's willing to have you stay the extra hours, spend the extra dollar, and go the extra mile. And you know what? He loves that, he delights in that. Maximize your forgiveness, more evangelism, more gratitude, more connectedness.

I really want to encourage you with this sermon, as negative as it started, because as I've said you can paper over your sinful life and try and get a little extra God on the outside of it to make you feel better. But the greatest news of all is recognizing the bad news about yourself and embracing the forgiveness of God. There's no better way to end this service than to participate in something Jesus said would be a reminder of the purging with hyssop. It wouldn't be hyssop, it would be the blood of Christ spilled on a tree.

It's interesting, there was hyssop involved in the crucifixion of Christ. They raised up that medicinal kind of anesthetic to try and dull the pain and he didn't take it. The hyssop was rejected in that sense. I mean, what was on it was rejected but the idea was the full payment and full weight of sin was going to be born on the cross. And Jesus says after Christ you're going to remember that not by bloody sacrifices of bulls and goats, you're going to remember that by this very simple mnemonic, which is you remembering my body and my blood in this thing called the Lord's Supper. Last week we had a bunch of baptisms here at the church. There are only two ordinances of the church. We're not sprinkling any water on you, we're not having any bulls or priests or funny robes or hats. We're here just to remember in simplicity what Christ did for us.



I'm going to ask the ushers to come down and I'd like you to take these elements. If you've never taken the Lord's Supper with us, we're going to take these elements together. If you're a Christian, grab those elements and then you do something that First Corinthians tells us we all ought to do and that is we ought to judge ourselves during this time. The church at Corinth had a lot of discipline of the Lord going on. And Paul said, "You know, we wouldn't have to be disciplined if we just judge ourselves." So you ought to examine yourself in a time like this, which hopefully you've been trying to do for the last 45 minutes that you, right now, say, "God, I know what I need to confess."

And if you're still lost on that count go back to saying, "God, search me, know me, try me, see if there's any wicked way in me." And tell God, as First Corinthians 11 says, that you're going to eat and drink of these elements in just a moment with a "discerning heart." You're going to discern yourself. You're going to examine yourself. You don't take this in a worthy manner, which is not saying that you're here as a sinless creature and had a perfect week. It means that you've confessed your sin to him. So I'll come back up in about three or four minutes. We'll take these elements together. But you just silently spend some time talking with God about where you're at. Confess your sins and claim the promise and power and payment that you're holding symbols of in your hands, and we'll celebrate that forgiveness together in just a moment.

My hope and my goal and my prayer in studying Psalm 51 together is that we could leave feeling really blessed, feeling really valued by God. The most treasured thing about us should be that we have God's forgiveness. Peter said it wasn't purchased with "perishable things like silver and gold," which I'm thinking, wow, that's not perishable. Well, it is in the temporal scheme of things. But even compared to the most precious commodities we have of metal on our planet, he said we were redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb. And frankly, when you think about the most important thing about us, it's not any of our accomplishments, it's not anything we've done, it's not anything we have, other than the fact that we have God's forgiveness, complete, full forgiveness. It's the most treasured and valuable thing we have, which to just turn on that thought for a second, that makes us really realize how treasured we are.

We're going to leave these doors, go through the patio, find your car, head home. We're going to scatter on the streets of South Orange County this morning and you will be the most treasured people in God's economy. Think about that. Does God love his creation? Yes. Does God love the non-Christians? Sure. He demonstrates his love for them just by letting the sunrise on their homes today. But you are his treasured people because he went to the greatest extent to forgive your sin. "God demonstrates his love for us in this: that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." The precious blood of the Lamb. I do want you to leave feeling special. I'm not here to pump up your ego. I'm not here to stroke in your fallen, fleshly mind about, "Yeah, I came and felt good about myself because I went to church today." As a matter of fact, you realize we went through the portal of humility and shame and specificity about sin. But out the other side you drive home feeling so treasured because Christ would give his all to forgive you.

I read of an auction several years ago now where a toothbrush was sold for \$21,000. It was a used toothbrush. There was a pair of, in the same auction, costume jewelry, some fake pearls,



sold for \$200,000. And at the cap of that auction was a pair of rusty old golf clubs in a white Sunday bag, a small bag. They sold for over \$720,000. I mean, nearing and edging toward a million dollars for some old rusty clubs. You want some clubs? Go garage sailing today, you can find some clubs really cheap. You want a toothbrush? CVS has got a new one for a lot less than \$21,000.

But of course, those things were valuable at auction in New York City not because there was any intrinsic value in those things. I mean, there were some but not much. But because of the hand that picked up that toothbrush every morning, because of the neck that graced that fake costume, cheap jewelry, because of the aristocratic hands that swung those golf clubs on a fairway and people said that's valuable. You can leave here feeling the weight of guilt and shame as a sinner, which of course is what we have to feel to grab his forgiveness. But you should leave with joy and gladness feeling that you are the most treasured and most loved people on the planet. Your value is off the charts. You can walk by people who know nothing of the love of Christ and say, "Man, I am so loved and cherished and valued by God because he holds me in his hands, he's forgiven my sin. Like an old used toothbrush, nothing in it of ourselves. But loved by God, forgiven by God at the highest unimaginable price. "That God would make him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." If that's where your heart is and you have trust in Jesus Christ then I invite you now to eat this bread and drink this cup.

God, we want to do our best to grasp the amazing value of being forgiven. Like David, knowing that we deserve your punishment but instead have been the recipient of your grace. Like the Apostle Paul, a blasphemer, a persecutor of the Church, looking in the mirror and thinking I'm the chief sinner of them all and yet God has demonstrated his perfect patience toward him. He celebrates the grace of God. Lord, let us celebrate that Grace today, not to get cocky, not to get prideful, not to be arrogant, but to be humbled by how loved we are, that you would cherish us in Christ to pay the ultimate price to see us forgiven, fully forgiven, "though our sins were like scarlet, they're white like snow. Though they're red like crimson, they're made white like wool." God, we claim that promise because of the power and the payment of the cross. The power of God and the payment of the cross - we trust that. We're not going to leave here feeling like poor miserable worms. We're not going to wallow in our sin or our past. We're going to look to the future trusting in the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In whose name we pray. Amen.