

The Book of Beginnings



*Messages by various speakers mostly on the book of
Genesis at the Streetlight Mission Church
in the 11:00 a.m. services of April 2007*

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April 1, 2007

Pastor Paul Aasman

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Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

I will put enmity between you and the woman

Reading: Genesis 3:14-19

Text: Genesis 3:15

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church:

We saw last week how Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they had fallen into sin. God wanted Adam and Eve to explain what they had done, even though he already knew. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. God had heard enough and rendered his judgment on the sin that they had committed against him. There are two parts to God's judgment. First, he curses three things: the serpent, the woman, and the man. Secondly, he expels the man and woman from the Garden of Eden.

There is a hymn based on a passage in Habakkuk that says “Lord, in wrath remember mercy.” God doesn't show his anger here, but we know God is full of wrath at what they have done. In his judgment, he expresses his wrath by cursing them. However, in his wrath he remembered mercy. Each one of us will one day stand before the judgment throne of God. If we know that in his

wrath God remembers mercy, we will not be afraid, but instead pray for that day to quickly come.

In verse 14, God curses the serpent by saying *“Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.”* Whenever I see a snake slithering along on the ground, it always reminds me of this curse upon Satan, in the same way that a rainbow should remind us of God’s promises through Noah that he will never again destroy the world with a flood. Genesis 3:15 says that God will put enmity between the woman and the serpent, and that the serpent will be crushed. What does this mean? God is cursing Satan with everlasting warfare and promising that Satan will go down in defeat. Once Satan led Eve into sin, he crossed the line. He could no longer be saved by God and brought back into fellowship with God. Satan would never have peace and rest, but always warfare against him. This is the full wrath of God against Satan: no mercy, no grace.

Then God turns to the woman and says in verse 16 *“I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.”* So many times in history, we hear of women that died during child bearing – so great is the agony and pain of this curse. Furthermore, God says *“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”* She will always be restless until she has a husband, but often in the very act of seeking

a husband she will experience pain and sorrow. The relationship between the sexes will now be troubled. In paradise, this was a beautiful relationship, but now that sin has come there will always be an element of pain and trouble. However, this is the only way the human race will be able carry on. So this curse is not total damnation, but it does include pain and suffering.

Then God turns to the man, and says in verse 17-19 *“Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”* The curse against Adam is more stark and frightening because every day for the rest of his life, Adam will be confronted with the evil of what he has done. He will have to labour very hard to provide for his family, and by doing that he will drive himself to the grave.

After these curses had been expressed, God expelled them from the Garden of Eden. Man and God could no longer enjoy sweet fellowship, because of their sin. This was the wrath of God.

But God remembered mercy. If we take a moment to reflect on these curses, we are also able to see his mercy. There is no mercy shown to Satan: He will be destroyed by the offspring of

the woman. A son that would be born to Eve would crush Satan's head. Satan had thought he had made allies of Adam and Eve in the revolt against God and righteousness, but God would not allow that. God told Satan that Adam and Eve would instead turn out to be his greatest of enemies as he would be crushed by one of the descendants of Eve. God allows the human race to be a partner in salvation – that is God remembering mercy in the curse against Satan. In the curse against Eve, there is also mercy there, for Eve will bear children and have an intimate relationship with her husband. The curse makes Adam and Eve draw closer together. The mercy in the curse against Adam is that he will be able to eat the fruit of his labour and provide for his family. In this way, Adam and Eve could continue to fulfill their mandate to fill the earth and have dominion over it. The last curse of being expelled from the Garden also includes an element of mercy. Verse 24 says *“After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”* God wanted to protect the tree of life, and that is merciful because God preserved the tree so that one day we will be able to come back and eat its fruit. There is mercy in judgment. All mercy is shown through Jesus Christ. Christ was the one born through the painful child bearing of Mary. He was brought up in a family with some trouble in their relationships, and yet Joseph provided for his family. Christ was

raised by the loving labour of a father. Christ is the one who came to earth to crush Satan's head. Christ opens the way back to the tree of life. Through Christ, all God's mercy was poured out upon us.

This week is a very special week in the Christian calendar. This coming Friday is Good Friday, a day when we can remember and reflect on Christ's suffering and death on our behalf. It is through Christ's suffering that God's mercy was shown. God in wrath remembered mercy, and he returns to us in mercy through Jesus Christ. It is well for us to think carefully about Christ, because when we understand God's mercy in Christ and think of that day when we must face the Judge, we will not have fear for our God, for he is one who in wrath remembers mercy for you in Jesus Christ.

April 8, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

The Promise

Reading: Hebrews 2:10-15
Text: Genesis 3:15

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

Today is Easter Sunday. Today we think about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do so in light of what happened on Good Friday, the day that God's wrath was poured out against his Son. On Good Friday when we worshipped together, we considered that darkness which came over the whole land. It represented God's anger. Christ took all our sins upon himself and bore the punishment from his Father. The good fight was more than just between heaven and Christ, a man of the earth. It also has to do with Jesus confronting the Devil, the great adversary of God and his people. This was the hour when darkness reigned, when Christ was struck by the powers below. Good being struck by evil. Love being attacked by hatred. The offspring of the woman was being attacked by the seed of the serpent, just as we read in Genesis 3:15. Never has there been rest or harmony between them. God had foretold that this would happen in Genesis 3:15. God wanted to tell Satan that he had not won the war. The war had just begun in Genesis, and God told Satan that he would not win.

In this warfare, there will be pain. The last part of verse 15 says *"he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* This is kind of puzzling because the verse is talking about the offspring of the woman and Satan, but then goes on to say *"he will crush your head."* The words "your head" refer to Satan's head. So

"he," someone from the offspring of the woman, will crush Satan's head. That "he" refers to Jesus Christ. Satan will strike Christ's heel. The battle will be fierce, it will be to the death, and it will be painful. Even Christ would know the pain. Not the pain of giving into sin, but the pain of suffering and enduring the punishment that sin deserved. God said that the conflict will be painful, but the conclusion is certain – Satan will be destroyed.

It seemed that Satan had struck Christ's heel and done more damage than he could have hoped for, because Jesus died and was put in a tomb. Jesus appeared to be defeated by Satan, contrary to what God had said. However, Jesus died for a very special purpose. Hebrews 2: 14 says *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil."* The purpose of Christ's death was to destroy the devil, to overcome Satan's power at last. Jesus died although he had never committed any sin.

The apostle Paul says "the wages of sin is death." Jesus died, but he had never sinned. A righteous person laid in the grave even though death had no right to hold him down. Jesus died in order to confront death (Satan) with the awesome power of righteousness. The result can be shown in Hebrews 2:15 *"- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* We don't need to fear death anymore. We are set free

because the power of righteousness is given to us, who believe in Jesus Christ. We, too, will be raised by the power of Jesus' righteousness.

Even though Christ confronted and overcame Satan, the struggle continues. It is the will of God that the struggle goes on. If the struggle had not gone on, we would not be here today. We wouldn't have these 2000 years of history since Jesus' resurrection. Jesus wanted us to have the opportunity to receive the power of righteousness. But the eventual destruction of the Devil is sure and sealed. Satan has been mortally wounded and will die.

If you experience pain in your life and wish your life were different, don't be surprised. God foretold pain in this world. It is the way history will continue to unfold. But the victory is sure. Christ will come soon and destroy Satan. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. When Satan leads us into temptation, he is delighted at the possibility that we might sin, but we must continue to resist him so that he will flee from us. Choose life inside of Jesus Christ and God will take great delight in his victory in your life.

April 15, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 4:4b-5a "The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor."

Cain and Abel

Reading: Genesis 4:1-12
Text: Genesis 4:4b-5a

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

You may have heard me mention a man by the name of Augustine before, mainly because he has said so many remarkable things. One of those things was: "Our hearts are restless, Lord, until we find rest in you." This was a prayer written in the book called *Augustine's Confessions*. As a child, Augustine was very wild and had no interest in Christianity, even though his mother was teaching him about it (his father was not a Christian). As he got older, he became more serious and began to search for the truth. The world of his day offered the truth in many different ways, similar to our world. There were all kinds of religions and belief systems for him to try out – Christianity was merely one of many choices. He tried them all. He was looking for the truth, and the more he searched, the more he realized that he was looking for rest in his heart, a way to have peace inside himself. He didn't find it in ancient Greek religion or the widespread pagan religions. At last, Augustine described his experience as follows: God grabbed

me and made me his own, showing me love through Jesus Christ. When I finally surrendered to his grace, then all of a sudden it was like light flooding into my heart. For the first time in my life, I experienced peace inside me. Then in his “Confessions” he writes “Our hearts are restless, Lord, until we find rest in you.” We do not find rest within ourselves until we surrender our lives to God. Genesis 4 teaches this powerfully, where the lives of Cain and Abel are contrasted. One was at rest and one was restless – he became a restless wanderer.

In Genesis 4, we read about a terrible thing between two brothers. It all began with Cain and Abel having a desire to offer something to the Lord. This was probably a tradition of worship that Adam and Eve had already established, so the sons did it as well. In verse 2 we read “*Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.*” They had different interests, and provided for their families in their own way. Verse 3 says “*In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.*” Cain wanted to sacrifice to God *some* of the fruits of the soil. He had harvested his crop and wanted to give some to God. Abel’s sacrifice is described somewhat differently in verse 4: “*But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.*” There are two things that are special about Abel’s sacrifice in comparison to Cain’s. First, he brought fat portions, which means he brought the very best of his flock. He would not keep it for

himself. Secondly, he brought God the firstborn. He gave his very best and the very first. In this way, Abel acknowledged that whatever he received was from God, so he gave to God first. In the way Abel brought his sacrifice, he showed a deeper sense of love for God compared to Cain. Cain just gave *some*, but Abel gave the *best* and the *first*.

Verse 4b-5a says “*The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour.*” There are some that suggest that Cain’s sacrifice wasn’t as good as Abel’s because Abel offered animals while Cain just brought crops. That is an unlikely reason for God rejecting Cain’s sacrifice. God is not so much interested in the external sacrifice, the form in which you bring it to him. God is much more interested in the inside, the reason *why* one would offer a sacrifice, sing a song to him, or put money in the collection. It’s not how or how much, but *why*. God is interested in the motive we have for the worship we offer. This is why these two sacrifices were so different. God looked with favour on Abel’s sacrifice because of Abel himself, the person he was inside. This is very strongly taught later on in the Bible. In Hebrews 11:4 it says “*By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*” Abel offered his sacrifice by faith, and that is what made his

sacrifice better. He offered it because he loved and trusted God, and wanted to give a sacrifice to express his desire to give his whole life to God. He wanted to be held by God, to live in relationship with God. Abel wanted to hold on to what he could have with his Father, being near to him in any way he could.

This is the reason why God could not accept Cain's offering. He looked inside Cain's heart and saw wickedness, especially unbelief. This doesn't mean Cain didn't believe God existed, but he didn't love and trust God. He did not want to give himself to God. He was trying to substitute his offering in place of himself. He wanted his life for himself. He didn't mind giving up *some* of the fruit of his labour, but not himself. He was trying to bargain with God, giving an offering in exchange for God's blessing. But you can't bargain with God. He wants our sacrifices to be pure acts of devotion and love. When we worship God, we must give ourselves to him. Therefore, God did not accept Cain's offering and verse 5b says "*So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.*"

This was a bad situation. Cain was angry at *God*. This could not be allowed. Cain needed to be shown that he was not allowing his heart to rest in God, as Abel was. So God says in verse 6-7 "*Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at*

your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." This was a challenge issued to Cain – he needed to master the emotions rising up in his own heart. But how was he going to master this emotion? He should have realized that he couldn't bargain with God when he didn't give his best and his first fruits. He should have given God his life. He could only master his feelings if he humbled himself as Able did in faith to God.

But Cain did not believe or trust in God. He wouldn't surrender his heart to God. In that situation, it was impossible for him to find rest. His heart was going in the opposite direction – his heart was getting away from him, and anger was growing inside him. This anger consumed him and turned his heart against everything that was good. This anger focused on Abel. This, too, is mentioned later on in the Bible. 1 John 3: 12 says "*Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.*" He was jealous of the fact that God looked with favour on Abel and that Abel's heart was filled with peace. This hatred ruined his relationship with God and with his brother. In a premeditated way, he invited Abel out into the field, rose up against him and killed him.

God immediately confronted Cain about what he had done. Verse 9 says "*Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'*" In the same way that he had confronted Adam and Eve

with their sin in the garden of Eden, God now gives Cain a chance to confess his sin and ask for forgiveness. But Cain lies to God “‘*I don't know,*’ he replied. ‘*Am I my brother's keeper?*’” So God punishes Cain and tells him in verse 12 “*You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.*” A restless heart is tormented. We cannot bear it when our hearts are restless. We have to seek rest; otherwise we are torturing ourselves. If we don't find rest, we torment others, even to the point of murder.

This is what makes the work of Jesus Christ so extremely important. He is known as the King of Peace. He brings peace to our hearts so that we may surrender our hearts to God without any reservation. We have learned of God's love and mercy, and he wants us to hold onto him. He wants us to have peace in his fellowship, so we may rest in God. Surrender yourself through faith to the Lord Jesus, and he will give you a peace in your heart that passes all understanding.

April 22, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Genesis 6: 6 “The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

Before the Flood

Reading: Genesis 6:1-8
Text: Genesis 6:6

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

You know what happens when a baseball hits a window? It shatters into hundreds and thousands of little pieces. But it all begins with one little crack in the glass at the point where the ball at first struck the window. But once a single crack forms in a glass window, it soon is followed by hundreds of other cracks and it looks like the glass shatters as soon as the ball hits it.

The same thing happened to the human race when Adam and Eve first sinned in paradise. The very first sin was when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is what we call the original sin. But it soon was followed by hundreds and thousands of other sins so that it looks like the human race became totally sinful as soon as Adam and Eve had committed that first, original sin.

Right away, all kinds of evil things began to happen. Adam and Eve became cruel toward each other. Adam blamed his wife for his sin, not showing her love. Eve blamed the serpent for her sin. And then worse things happen: Cain was filled with jealousy when his brother Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God while his was not, and he killed Abel in anger. So God sent Cain away to be a restless wanderer on the earth. The Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him, and Cain and his wife (probably a sister) left for the land of Nod, where he began to establish his family. He had a son named Enoch, who

also had a son, etc. Seven generations later, Lamech was born. Lamech took two women to be his wives, because he was not satisfied with just one. He was a brutal man who abused his power to make others serve him. Lamech said to his wives in Genesis 4:23 *“I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me.”* He boasted to his wives about killing a young man, probably just a boy. The brutality of Cain against Abel became worse and worse through Cain’s descendants. Compassion and care for one’s neighbour was dead and the exalting of self was the only thing that mattered.

We need to understand what was going on at this time because the very same forces are at work in our time. The same thing that caused Cain to kill Abel and Lamech to take two wives, to boast, and to kill, are ideas, feelings and passions that move in the hearts of people on the streets of Hamilton, and even in the hearts of each one of us. If we do not pay close attention, we will slide down into the same depravity, horror and suffering as we read about in Genesis 6.

What happened? Why did thing slide in to such despair? Amazingly, we find in Genesis 6 that the reason why evil spread so rapidly was because of marriage and family. God created marriage and family so that parents could raise their children to behave, show respect and have morality. Parents are placed by God to form the hearts of their children. But Satan got a hold of the

institution of marriage and used to for his own evil purpose. Genesis 6:1-2 says *“When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.”* Some would say that the “sons of God” were angels, and others say that they were kings or the highest level of society. The most common and logical description would be to say they were male children of believers, and therefore were in a position to make decisions about who to marry. The “daughters of men” were any women who were not yet married. The sons of God married any daughter of men he chose, as long as she pleased him somehow. The sons of God were not thinking, “Is this woman a believer? Someone who will devote herself to forming the hearts of our children to serve God?” Very often, godly sons were marrying unbelieving daughters, and their children had divided hearts, and their children were divided even more, and so on. After a couple generations, those families had produced children who no longer loved the Lord at all.

This is something that really deserves our attention. If you are in the middle of a battle and don’t know it, you will probably will die because you aren’t protecting yourself. That is what was happening here – people didn’t realize that there was a war going on, a battle for the hearts of every child that was born to them. To whom would this child give his heart: to God or Satan? If

believing parents do not work to form the hearts of their children for God, they will go to Satan. The reason why they were losing the battle was because believers did nothing to stop it. The only thing God's people need to do in order for evil to triumph is to do nothing.

This was happening in Genesis 6. Parents were not teaching their sons to marry godly women, so many married unbelievers, and when they had children, those children were not raised by their mothers to love God. Where the love of God fails, love for one another begins to fail too. Cain did not love God, and therefore did not love his brother. If you do not love your brother, then given the right situation, you will kill your brother. The children in Genesis 6 no longer loved God, and therefore no longer loved each other and only loved themselves. Their individual glory was the only thing that mattered.

God became sick of it all. Genesis 6:6 says *“The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”* Every inclination of the thought of everyone's heart was only for themselves- evil all the time.

This may be true for our day too, for Jesus Christ warns in Matthew 24:12 that the day is coming when *“the love of most will grow cold.”* They will fall so far from God that they will love nothing, only themselves. The apostle Paul also warns that the earth will once again become like it was before God destroyed it

with the flood in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”*

Exactly what happened before the flood happens today as well, where people are focused only on serving themselves and do not love God. When God saw this society, he was filled with pain in his heart. God had invested his hopes, desires, love, and heart into his creation, especially the creation of Adam and Eve. They were created to be his image, in order that they could show their origin from God and master creation and use it in a beautiful way to serve God and each other, to discover the beauty of life by doing the right thing. Instead, they did the wrong thing. Things became worse and worse until every inclination of people's heart was only evil, all the time.

That is when God said “from now on, man's life will be short. From now on, people will only live to be 120 years.” In Genesis 5, we read about people that lived 700, 800, even 900 years, so 120 years was very short. The only thing God could do now was to wipe out the earth and begin anew with Noah.

If we want to live together as a community, we need to know love. The only way to know love is to know Jesus Christ. Jesus is the love of God, and we can only love when we are related to God through Christ. Only then can we begin to love ourselves, others and God. This is why Jesus Christ is called the Hope of the World. Let us seek an intimate relationship with God and may God bless his church everywhere, also here in Hamilton, that more and more people will learn to love God and one another.

April 29, 2007
Pastor Paul Aasman

Psalm 51:6 “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”

Self Examination: Humble Yourself

Reading: Psalm 51:1-6
Text: Psalm 51:6

Brothers, sisters and friends of Streetlight Church;

God has been very good to Streetlight; he has blessed us enormously. The fact that we are gathered here this morning is evidence of his goodness and saving work. There are many here who were far away from the Lord in the past and have come here and discovered something of his love, mercy and grace. We

rejoice together at the working of his grace in our hearts, especially those hearts which he has drawn from darkness and ignorance.

God has done this in a very special way. How has God done this so far? Through the preaching of the gospel, opening the Bible and explaining passages which people have found amazing and interesting. Aside from his word and the preaching, God has provided his church with another tool to bring people into deeper relationships with him: The sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. We look forward to administering these sacraments here in Streetlight church. On May 13, we hope to have our first celebration of the Lord’s Supper. What a rich blessing that God has given this to us.

The church from its earliest time has said that when the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, we need to think about that carefully. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11: 28, 29 “*A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.*” Those who eat and drink at the Lord’s Supper without understanding its full significance speak ill of the body of Christ. Therefore, we need to give this sacrament in a very careful way. The congregation doesn’t come to the table just because they want to, but because the church gives it to them. In the whole of Christian history, this is the way the sacrament has been administered - people have been

admitted by the church. The sacrament is given to the church, and the church gives it to the people, person by person.

People also need to be able to come based on their own conviction, because they *want* to come. The church must first allow you to come, and then people need to desire to come to the table as well – both aspects are important. In order that we may have a deeper desire for the Lord’s Supper, both by the people coming to the table and those who are watching from their seats, we all need to examine our hearts. Do you want that bread and juice?

Self-examination, or examining our hearts, has three parts. The first questions you need to ask yourself are “do I know my own sinfulness? Do I know my absolute need for Jesus?” The second questions are “do I know who Jesus is? Do I know how great and sufficient his sacrifice is?” The third question is “do I want to respond in a life of thankfulness and worship, giving myself to God?”

In this sermon, we will be dealing only with the first set of questions. David speaks clearly about knowing his own sin and misery in Psalm 51. The title of this Psalm is not part of the inspired scripture, but it helps us to understand the meaning of the Psalm. The title tells us that David wrote this Psalm when the prophet Nathan had come to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Some of us may not be familiar with that

story, so the broad details are as follows: David is king in Israel, his glory is becoming great, and his power is reaching over other nations. He has an army which fights against the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Philistines, and every time his army goes out they win the battle. David is at the mid point of his reign, and he is starting to recognize his glory. At the same time, he begins to sense a growing distance from God. One day, David is in his palace and looks down and he sees a woman bathing outside on the roof of her home, below. David wants her, so he has her brought to him and he takes her to bed. Bathsheba later sends word to him that she has become pregnant by David. David thinks the only way to deal with this problem is to have Uriah (Bathsheba’s husband) killed. Uriah was a soldier in one of David’s armies, so David makes arrangements to have him killed in battle. Then David takes Bathsheba for himself.

There are a number of horrible and violent sins that David had committed here. He took a woman that didn’t belong to him, committing adultery and sinning against the 7th commandment. He also had Uriah murdered, sinning against the 6th commandment. David thinks to himself “I’m allowed to do this! I’m a king. I can have women if I want them, and can arrange the death of a man if I choose to.” Yet, David knows in his heart that that is not true. He is not allowed because the law of God says so. He still justified his sins to himself. This is also something that each one of us is

capable of doing, and we use great creativity in coming up with excuses of why we are allowed to sin. “Its not so bad” or “I’m allowed to do this under these circumstances” or “Its not bad at all!” are some of the excuses we use. When we justify our sin, we’re saying “we’re just going to keep going the way we are and I don’t need to change the sinful pattern in our life.” Everything on the outside looks fine, as it did with David. He went to the temple, offered sacrifices, doing all the things he used to do. But on the inside it wasn’t fine at all. On the inside there was tension between the excuses he is making for his sinful conduct, and the guilt he feels in his conscience.

David realizes that this is a big problem for the people of God, because it was a big problem for himself. That is why he says in verse 6 “surely you desire truth in the inner parts...” God wants truth and sincerity inside of us, and that we acknowledge the truth about ourselves. David further describes that inner conflict and tension that he experienced in Psalm 32. Verse 3 says “*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long*” - that is what his conscience did to him when he tried to justify his sinful patterns. Verse 4-5 “*For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’*”

- *and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*” So in verse 5, we read that he decides to acknowledge his sin and not cover them up.

There are sinful patterns that each one of us have struggled, are right currently struggling against, or need to struggle against. We need to be truthful inside – we need to stop justifying them. It often happens that we go to church, feel convicted by the preaching of the Word, but instead of repenting, we try to deny that message, divert attention elsewhere, ignore it, or speak contemptuously about the message. Many of the prophets experienced this in the old testament – they were hated by the people for identifying key sinful patterns. They were imprisoned and abused. Jeremiah was thrown in a cistern full of muck, Amos was told by the king to “go back to your farm”. Jesus Christ was hated so much, the people killed him.

God desires truth in the inner parts. He wants us to admit our sin and confess it openly before him. That is a very hard thing to do, but we must do it. Salvation always begins with repentance. When John the Baptist came to bring renewal to Israel, the first thing he preached was “Repent! Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand!” When the Holy Spirit was poured out and Gospel was brought, the people asked the Apostle Peter, “What shall we do?” He told them, “Repent and be baptized everyone of you”. Repentance is the beginning of the experience of salvation. Only when we admit to our sins and stop justifying them, only when we

are truthful in our inner beings, can we embrace Jesus Christ. Nobody may come to the Lord's Supper unless he is truthful in his inner being and acknowledges his sin.

David writes in verse 4 says *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge."* He says this about committing sin with Bathsheba and killing Uriah. Even though he had committed adultery with a woman and murdered a man, he still says that he had sinned only against God. That seems kind of odd, doesn't it? But David says this because he wants to bow his knee to God first of all. He was appalled that he had done these things in God's presence and hadn't cared about what he was doing. It was only when he confessed these sins to God and experienced restoration with him that he could begin to work on restoring the relationships with others. It was only when his relationship was restored that he could admit that God is *"proved right when you speak and justified when you judge."*

Christianity begins when we are honest to our own hearts. Honest to what God reveals within ourselves through the preaching of the Word. Then we can learn humility. What a blessing it is to simply humble ourselves and confess our sin! Then we can offer God a sacrifice as described in verse 19 *"Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar."* What is this sacrifice? The

sacrifices of God are broken spirits. He wants our broken and contrite hearts, for then we will embrace Jesus Christ. Then Christ's body, broken for us and blood shed for us, will become more important to us than anything else. May we be comforted in knowing that Christ offers himself to us through the preaching of the Gospel. May we be delighted that Christ offers himself to us through the administration of the sacrament, whether we partake or witness it. May we be a people who are blessed through examining and humbling ourselves before God's throne.

