

Strength for Today

“Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6).

True confession involves a proper understanding of oneself.

The supreme goal pursued by many in our narcissistic culture is a “healthy” self-esteem. Even Christians have jumped on the self-esteem bandwagon, misconstruing Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 19:19) as a mandate for self-love. But the Bible nowhere commands us to pursue self-esteem; instead, it commands us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16). In Psalm 51, David gives three reasons why holiness is imperative in the life of every Christian.

First, because of unbelievers. David knew he could be a witness for God only if his life was holy. In verse 13 he noted that it was only after God forgave him that he could “teach transgressors [God’s] ways” and see “sinners . . . converted to [Him].” “You are a chosen race,” Peter agrees, “a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Nothing shuts a Christian’s mouth so tightly as guilt over unconfessed sin.

Second, because of God. In verse 14 David acknowledged that only when his life was pure could he praise God. He prayed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Thy righteousness.” In verses 16-17 David attested that God desires holiness of life, not conformity to external ritual, in His children. When believers lead holy lives, God is pleased; when they sin, He is dishonored (2 Sam. 12:14).

Third, because of other Christians. Believers’ sin always affects, directly or indirectly, other Christians. As king, David’s sin affected both his family and the entire nation of Israel (2 Sam. 12:10-12). Thus he concluded his prayer of confession by praying for the nation: “By Thy favor do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then Thou wilt delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then young bulls will be offered on Thine altar” (vv. 18-19).

Does your confession reflect a right view of yourself?

Suggestions for Prayer

Pray that God would enable you to “cleanse [yourself] from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

For Further Study

What do Psalm 66:18 and 1 Peter 3:7 teach about the connection between holiness and prayer?

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