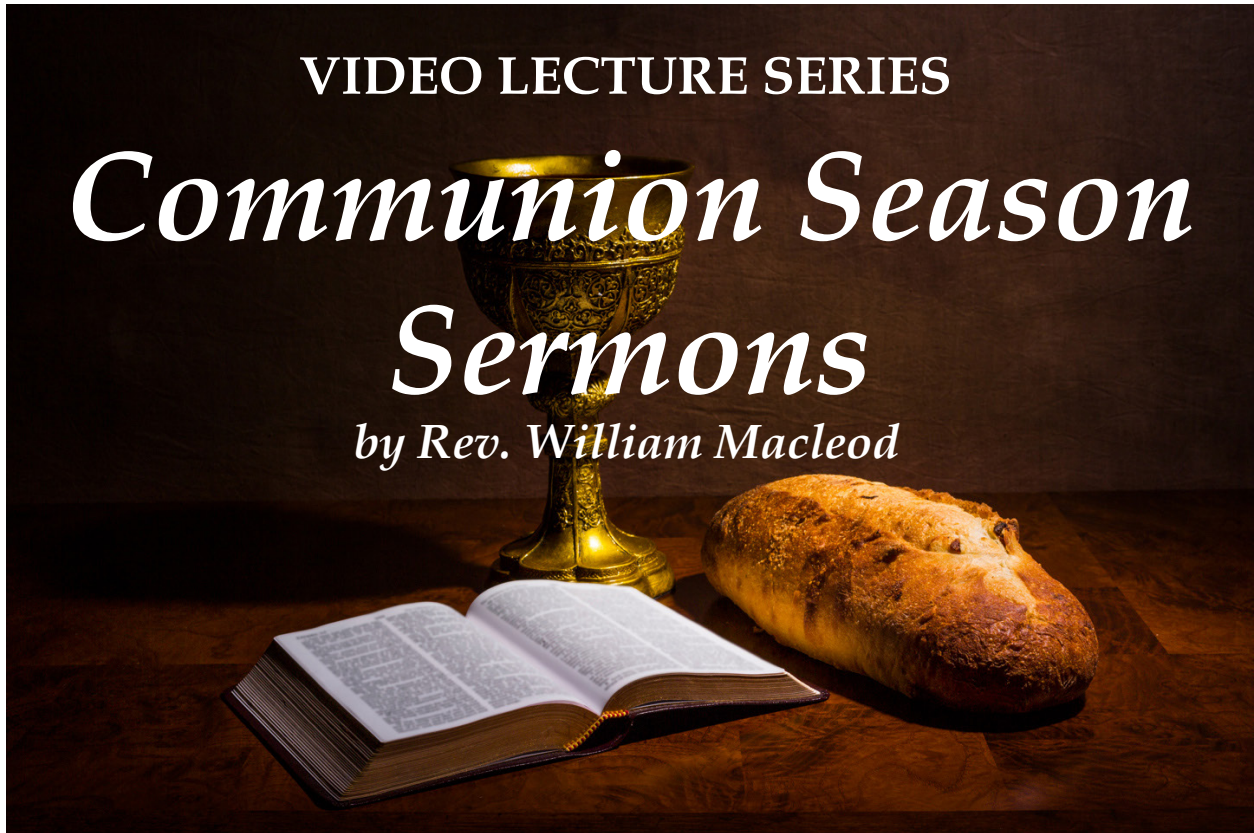


VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

Communion Season *Sermons*

by Rev. William Macleod



Sermon #1

Pardon My Sins *Psalm 51:9-10*



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Communion Season Sermons

*An Introduction and 7 Sermons
by Rev. William Macleod*

Introduction (Luke 22:14–20)

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Communion Season Sermons

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Sermon #1

Pardon My Sins (Psalm 51:9–10)

Today I would like to preach to you from Psalm 51. So we'll read the Psalm together:

“To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.”

So today, I would particularly like to direct your attention to verses 9 and 10. Psalm 51, verses 9 and 10: “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” So here we have a prayer—a prayer of a real Christian. And indeed, it's a mark of grace, an indication that we are true Christians, when we realize that we are sinners. We are convicted of our sin, and are aware of the eye of God upon us. The psalmist fears the chastisement of God. God corrects us when we sin. But there's also a sense of shame. He feels sad at what he has done, and the disgrace that he has brought upon himself and upon God's people. He is also conscious that he has hurt the loving God that he serves. God is good to him. God has blessed him in so many ways, and yet, he has sinned against God. He's asking the question, “How could I do this?” It is good if we too can see our own sins, and we're asking the same question.

At Communion time, we draw near to God. We come to the Lord's Table. And as we come to the Lord's Table, we are conscious of our unworthiness. And so it's right that in preparation, we should humble ourselves, confess our sins before the Lord, and seek to repent of them. In and of ourselves, we are unworthy, but worthy is the Lamb that was slain, "the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Jesus tells us about two men who went up to the temple to pray. One of them was a Pharisee. He said, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, and unjust adulterers, or even like this publican here. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess. He felt justified in himself. The other man, the publican, stood afar off, beat upon his breast, and wouldn't lift up his eyes to heaven, but cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Jesus said that the second man went to his house justified, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). And that's the attitude that we have here. We have to come before God in humility, with a broken and a contrite heart.

Now, you'll remember the background to this Psalm. David was the king of Israel. His army was away fighting against the children of Ammon. He hadn't gone with the army. He was kind of lazing about. He was on his bed at midday, and he gets up in the afternoon, he struts around on the roof, and from the roof of the palace, he sees a woman bathing. And he lusts after her, sends for her, commits adultery with her. And then the woman, Bath-sheba sends to him, to say that she is pregnant. He has to cover up his adultery, and in doing that, he murders her husband—he arranges for the death of Uriah. And then he marries Bath-sheba, and they have their son. And he's going on, his heart is hardened, he's careless. And God sends to him Nathan the prophet. Nathan tells him a story, tells him about a man, a poor man who just had one lamb, and looked after this lamb as if it was his daughter. He feeds it, he cares for it, he has it in bed with him as his pet at night. And then one day, a stranger comes to visit a rich man who lives next door. The rich man doesn't take from his flocks and herds to cook for the traveler who's come to him, but takes the poor man's lamb, and he makes a meal out of that for the traveler. When David heard this story, he was very angry. He said, "That man must be put to death, that rich man. And he must restore fourfold, he must give back to the poor man four lambs. And then Nathan the prophet says to him, "Thou art the man. You're the man. You are the one who stole Uriah's wife, and then you killed Uriah. God has seen what you have done. And David feels his sin, confesses it, and repents (2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12).

You and I are called upon, as we approach the Lord's Table, to repent of our sin, to look into our own hearts, and to see the things that are not right there, and to come before God in penitence, and confession, and repentance. So we have here then a Psalm of praise, and at the same time, a prayer of penitence.

What are the words that are here? First of all, "Hide thy face from my sins." We like to hide our sins from others, and sometimes we're quite successful in doing that. We can be very clever hypocrites. We pretend to be holy, and we're ashamed if somebody finds out. If people could read our hearts and see our pride, the lust, the anger, the idols, we would be so ashamed if they could see our thoughts. But what we forget is that God sees us. The eye of the Lord is upon us. He sees what is going on in secret. The darkness is light to him. He hears every word that we speak, and knows every thought going through our heart. But sometimes we forget this, and we become careless. And then some trouble comes our way. Maybe we have an accident. Maybe a sickness comes. A loved one is in trouble. And God is speaking to us through these things. We ask "Why? Why did this happen to me?" It's God's displeasure with us. God hates sin. He must correct us when we sin. Is there a sin in your life that you're trying to cover up?—some secret fault that you're hiding?

some backsliding that has taken place? Remember the words of Psalm 139: “O LORD, thou hast me searched and known. Thou knowest my sitting down, and rising up, yea, all my thoughts afar to thee are known” (verses 1–2, SMV¹). Or at the end of the Psalm: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (verses 23–24). As we find in Hebrews 4:13, we are “naked and opened in the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

So what about you today? Do you feel your shame, your guilt because of sin in your life? Now, of course, there’s none of us that are perfect, but we mustn’t make an excuse of that. We are to examine our hearts and our lives, to look into our life, to feel our sin, and to pray to the Lord as the psalmist does: “Hide thy face from my sins.” Do not condemn me, Lord. We are to be sorry for our sins and come to the Lord with them, confessing them. So that’s the first thing that we have here, a petition that God would hide his face from our sins.

Then the second petition is, “Blot out all mine iniquities.” Every sin that we commit is written in God’s book, and there’s a judgment day coming, when the books shall be opened, and we shall be judged everyone according to their works, whether they are good or evil. There are far too many sins in our lives, and all these sins written down in God’s books. These sins are like debts, and they increase with each passing day of our lives. And that’s why we cry out to God, “Blot out! Blot out all mine iniquities.” How can they be blotted out?—only by the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. In the past, with typewriters, we use to use Tipp-Ex to paint over a mistake. Well, the blood of Christ is far better than Tipp-Ex. Yes, it blots out our sin. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). How can that be? Simply because Christ has suffered for our sins. He’s been punished in our place, and his blood washes us white and blots out our sin. “There is therefore now no condemnation for them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). We can’t be condemned. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). As this Psalm says, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7). Blot out my sins. Forget them. Does God forget anything? Well, God can, of course, forget nothing. He knows everything. He knows everything there is to know. But yet, he treats our sins as if they were forgotten. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). But if we don’t confess our sin, he will not forgive us. We must confess. We must cry out to God and tell God what we have done wrong.

We must remember that God hates sin. And because God hates sin, we should hate it too. And we are to put our faith in Christ, who took our sins upon himself and was punished in our place. Our faith must be in him. Is your faith in Jesus Christ? Are you trusting in the blood of Jesus? Are you confessing and forsaking your sin? And we mustn’t make an excuse out of the blood of Christ and think we can go on sinning, just because our sins are forgiven. Paul says, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!”—away with such a wicked thought (Romans 6:1–2). How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein. If we have died to sin, if we’ve been born again, we cannot have an attitude of complacency towards sin. We must hate it and turn from it. “Blot out all my transgressions.”

And then, thirdly, the psalmist prays, verse 10, “Create in me a clean heart.” The psalmist doesn’t just want forgiveness, he wants a new start. A real change. He wants to be a new creation in Christ Jesus. He wants to be born again, as it were, almost like a second conversion. Remember

Peter. Peter denies his Lord seriously and terribly three times. And Jesus said, “Satan hath desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31–32). Peter denied the Lord three times, and then he was converted. There was a kind of second conversion, as it were, and he had learned greatly from what had happened. He was a much humbler man, and he was a greater blessing to the church.

I remember many years ago, a woman who came along to my church. She was an older woman, but in her teens, she had professed faith in Christ. And for a number of years, had lived as a good Christian. But then her husband died, and she was still quite young, and some time after that, she committed adultery with another man. And she was very conscious of her sin and guilt, and for years she had drifted away from the church. But then she came back, and she was restored. I remember asking her how she felt about things now, and how she would compare her situation now to when she was first converted, and she said, “Well, it’s almost like a second conversion, only this one is deeper, and this one is more real in that sense.”

And so it is with David. He’s saying, “Create in me a clean heart.” How could David do what he did? It wasn’t something that happened suddenly and unexpectedly. He’d obviously been drifting away. He’d been growing cold in his faith. He was failing to watch and to pray. He had begun to play with sin, allowing it a little place. And bit by bit, he was weakened, not watching, not praying, and then he fell. And how careful we must be that we are not drifting away from God, that we’re not backsliding. What a danger there is nowadays with pornography. It’s so available everywhere. Wherever you look on the internet, there’s pornography, and it’s addictive, and it’s destructive. Let us remember that little sins grow, and are very harmful. Don’t treat sin lightly. Remember, Satan tempts, and he says, “It’s just a little sin. It doesn’t matter. Nobody will know about it. Everyone else sins. It’s okay.” But it’s not okay with God. The eye of God is upon us. We’ve got to think of Christ on the cross. It was our sins that nailed him to that tree. It was our sins that kept him there suffering. We are to watch, and to pray, and to be careful. Be careful about going to certain places where there’s danger, or doing certain things that will leave us open to temptation. Don’t play with sin. Don’t make excuses. If God leaves us, what a mess we can get into.

David sinned terribly against God. As king of God’s people, what a mess he got into. He maybe was arguing, “Well, I’m the king. I can do this, I can do that, it’s okay. I’ve got liberty of conscience. I can go here and go there.” But now, he’s crying out, “Create in me a clean heart. I need to be different, I need to be careful. I need to watch.” And so we have this great petition: “Create in me a clean heart.” We all need a clean heart. How filthy our hearts are by nature. Lord, make me clean.

And then, the next petition we notice is, “Cast me not away,” verse 11—“Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me.” Cast me not away. God would be perfectly justified in casting David away, and in casting us away too when we sin. He could have left David to suffer. David had broken his law, and David was pleasing himself, and God could leave him to reap what he had sown. But we have to thank God for chastisement, and correction, and for pointing to our sin, and showing us our sin. God didn’t give him up, thankfully.

Think of Judas Iscariot. Judas had a wonderful start. He was one of the followers of Jesus. He was chosen to be an apostle. He was there, a preacher and a miracle-worker. And then God left him, left him to Satan—how horrible. And then he betrayed Christ, and after that, committed suicide—how desperate. We must beware!

Think of the Israelites who left the land of Egypt. God brought terrible plagues upon the

Egyptians, and brought Israel out with a mighty hand. He led them through the Red sea as on dry land, and drowned the Egyptian army. The Israelites were singing with joy, rejoicing in the deliverance that they had got from God. But then, in the years that follow, they sinned, and sinned, and sinned again, so that eventually there were only two of the adult men who came out of Egypt who entered the promised land. It's only those who persevere unto the end that shall be saved. Cast me not away, Lord. Let me not fall away. Strengthen me in standing for thee!

And then, the petition, "Take not thy holy spirit from me." King Saul was anointed by Samuel the prophet, anointed king—the Lord's anointed. When Samuel anointed him, the Spirit of God came upon him to enable him to worship, to enable him to rule. And to begin with, he was a very humble man. But bit by bit, pride came in. Samuel told him to wait for him, and that he would offer the sacrifice before battle with the Philistines, but Saul didn't wait, and offered the sacrifice himself. Samuel told him, instructed by God, to go and destroy all the Amalekites, and all their animals. But Saul spared the best of the animals, and spared Agag the king. Because he didn't carry out the Word of God and obey the prophet of the Lord, the kingdom was taken from him (1 Samuel chapter 15). The Spirit of God left him, and an evil spirit came upon him. He hated David, the Lord's anointed to succeed him. He murdered the priests of the Lord from Nob. He ended up consulting a witch and committing suicide. How horrible! David had seen this. He saw the Spirit taken from Saul, and so he prays, "Take not thy holy spirit from me." How much we need the Holy Spirit! We need the Spirit to make us holy, to keep us holy, and our prayer should also be, "Take not thy holy spirit from me."

And then, finally, verse 12: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." There's no joy like the joy of the true Christian. Worldly people have joy in drink, and drugs, and sex, and money, but these things are so empty, and there's often a sting in the tail. Drink and drugs sometimes lead to addiction. Sex leads to broken relationships. Money leads to worries and fears, and temptations too. But the Christian joy is pure. It's wholesome, and it's lasting.

When we're first converted, there's great joy. We've been convicted of our sin, and now we know that our sins are forgiven. And we have joy in the Lord, and joy in church and worshipping God, and joy in Sunday—the Lord's Day, and joy in the Bible, and joy in prayer, joy in the sacraments. But when backsliding comes in, there's coldness, and deadness, and hardness, and taking things for granted. "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Help me to repent, to confess, to turn back, and to have a new experience of joy. Give to me, Lord, a new start, new joy.

And so, we have here great petitions. "Hide thy face from my sin." Look into your heart, see the sin that's there, and plead with God, "Hide thy face from my sin." "Blot out mine iniquities," "Create in me a clean heart," with clean thoughts, clean desires, clean ambitions. "Renew a right spirit within me." "Cast me not away from thy presence." Keep me Lord, and "Take not thy holy spirit from me." We need God's Holy Spirit.

Let's pray.

O Lord, our God, we thank thee that thou has given to us the Holy Spirit, converting us, convicting us of sin, and bringing us to repentance. Forgive us, Lord, for hardening our heart against the teaching of the Spirit, and of thy Word. Forgive us for our backslidings. Keep us from falling. Where we have fallen, where we have sinned, pardon us, Lord. Wash away our sin. Blot out our transgressions, and hide thy face from our sins. Create in us, Lord, a clean heart and a right spirit. Grant to us, O Lord, to be different, to seek thee, to serve thee, to follow thee with a new enthusiasm, and restore to us the joy of thy salvation. Grant, O Lord, that the Holy Spirit would stir up our hearts with joy in the Lord. Forgive all our sins, for Jesus' sake. Amen.