

Pure in Heart

By Warren Zehrung – March 24, 2012

Passover begins another year, another year of walking with God, and with Jesus Christ. It begins another year of striving to overcome, and understanding what God expects of us, right now. As we prepare for Passover and Unleavened Bread, we put leavened bread and leavened products out of our homes, just as Israel of old did.

As New Testament Christians, we apply the spiritual lessons also, by putting sin out of our lives. We are told to examine ourselves. Are we regularly putting sin out of our lives? We are instructed by God:

I Corinthians 11:28 "Let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

It is appropriate that we examine ourselves throughout the year, but especially as Passover approaches. The Passover is necessary, and the need for God's forgiveness of our sins is quite real. We have all fallen short; and we still have problems to overcome. We do not yet reflect the mind of Jesus Christ.

Passover and Unleavened Bread not only picture putting away sin, but they picture putting ON Christ. Are we actively and regularly putting ON Christ? We are told in Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:22-23 "Put off concerning our former conduct - the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."

That is the mind of Christ that we read about in Philippians 2:

Philippians 2:5 "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 4:24 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

We need to change from the way that we were when we were in the world. But the question is: "How do we honestly, and thoroughly, examine ourselves?" We tend to examine ourselves on the points that we excel in:

"Do I keep the Sabbath?" Check!

"Do I fight and kill?" Of course not!

"Have I robbed any banks?" None that I can remember!

You see I am scoring 100% on my self-examination. How can we have a deep and accurate introspection of our spiritual condition? How can we know the state of our heart?

Psalms 51:6 "Behold, thou desire truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

How can we have a correct self-observation, without deceiving ourselves? Perhaps, we think that we know our spiritual condition as well as it can possibly be known. A hard question to ask ourselves is: "Am I forgiving others, as God is forgiving me?" The first thing that Jesus expounded on, after teaching the disciples how to pray, was on forgiveness:

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

So it is contingent; because we do not have forgiveness unless we forgive others.

Matthew 6:15 "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

So, Jesus says to us that we need to take a closer look, and deeply and diligently examine ourselves...

"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Psalm 14:2-3, Romans 3:12)

From God's perspective there is none that does good. Sometimes, we sit around and think that we are doing pretty good. Why is that?

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

We think that our heart is not deceitful and desperately wicked, but that we are good. We try to do it right, but our heart and our mind has to be on track with what Jesus Christ teaches, and what He says. From God's point of view, humanity is deceitful and desperately wicked. We do not readily admit that those Scriptures apply to us, do we?

We prefer to think of ourselves as doing pretty good. We lie, exaggerate, and fool ourselves – how can our hearts ever be pure? How can we have a pure heart before God? We diligently desire to have a pure heart before God.

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the **pure in heart**: for they shall see God.”

This is where I take the title of today’s message from. It should be obvious by now that we need God’s help and intervention to be able to obtain a pure heart.

King David realized that he needed God’s help.

Psalm 139:23-24 “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.”

This was a very beautiful prayer.

Psalm 26:2 “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”

This is something that we can be very, very thankful for. When we have a relationship with God, we can be sure that He will direct us. We remember when Moses was about to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. There was a terrible problem in Moses’ life. He had not circumcised his sons. God dealt with him in a very, very hard way, to the point where Moses would have lost everything, down to even losing his life. God would not have a man lead His people if he were not led by God.

So David prays the same way. We want God to direct us and to show us, in His loving mercy, unless we come to nothing. As we come into the Passover season, we must discover and remember our own sins, shortcomings, and our deep, personal need for Christ's sacrifice. We need the forgiveness, and we need our sins to be covered.

Job 13:23 “How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin.”

We do not want to stick our head in the sand, like the proverbial ostrich, and live in the dark. We want to know, so that we can eradicate sin in our lives. Yes, it is difficult, and it does take the help of God’s Holy Spirit. That is something that we must achieve, if we are going to walk with Christ, and be in the Kingdom of God. We examine ourselves, and know that somehow God will forgive us one more time.

It is true, we can easily become discouraged. Sometimes, life's road has been a lonely one, and we find ourselves just a little weary from the journey. How do we know if our **heart is pure**?

We see the answer in Psalms 4:4, because we talk to God, we relate to God, and we ask ourselves, "Would God do it this way?" How does God view what we are doing?

Psalms 4:4 "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

Can I rest assured that I have done everything possible to examine my heart – or do I let myself off easily? I fear that sometimes in God's Church, we let ourselves off very easily. We go on making the same mistakes, and God deals with us, and we continue to make the same mistakes. God tries to get our attention in various ways, and we continue to make the same mistakes. When you cannot sleep at night, this verse tells us what we should do:

Psalms 77:6 "I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search."

We want to know that we are walking with Jesus Christ, and we want to know that our hearts are pure. We want to know that our motivations are pure. Check your heart, check your motives, and check your desires, against the Word of God.

We reflect often on the times that we did not get it right, on the mistakes that we made, and on the many times that we fell short. We are told in II Corinthians 13:

II Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Right before Passover is the time to examine ourselves. Fast, pray, commune with our own hearts. We need Jesus Christ in our lives. We need to de-leaven ourselves as much, or more, than we do our homes, as Passover approaches. It is not just enough to go around getting the crumbs out of our house. We must clean our hearts. We must de-leaven ourselves.

The last thing that we want to do is to fool ourselves – there is no profit in fooling ourselves – or others for that matter. Too often in the Church of God, there are folk that think if they look good to everybody else, that they are riding high. It does not work that way, and it does not matter what other people think. We stand or fall before God.

Galatians 6:3-4 "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

Brethren, we examine ourselves before God, according to the Word of God.

Galatians 6:5 "For every man shall bear his own burden."

Yes, we are all fighting the Christian battle. We all have that burden to carry. We do not see other people's burdens, but everyone carries their burden.

In I Corinthians 11, we are given the very clear context within which we must examine ourselves. When we go over to this chapter, let me beg of you, please do not say within yourself, "I have seen this scripture a lot of times." Brethren, this is meat in due season. Let's look at it as if we are seeing it for the very first time.

I Corinthians 11:28a "Let a man examine himself..."

We have a proclivity to examine others. We can see other people's specks in their eyes very easily, but we do not see the beam in our own eye.

I Corinthians 11:28b "...and so [then] let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

This verse clearly ties our self-examination with Passover. The verse says that we are to examine ourselves, and then take Passover. But then Paul goes on to give us a very specific warning. Why do we have a self-examination before Passover?

I Corinthians 11:29 "For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

Many times people say: "I am just not worthy to take Passover." Of course we are not worthy. It is only by the grace of God that we have been called to this way of life. Jesus Christ tells us to take Passover, but before that, He tells us to examine ourselves.

When Paul says, "*For he that eats and drinks unworthily,*" he is speaking of those who have not adequately examined themselves. We have to read these verses in context. He is talking about those who have not examined themselves before Passover, and they just go to Passover like they did last year, and the year before. God is still outside the door knocking, and wanting to come in. God is dealing with us sometimes, and we are not responding. Brethren, we need to respond.

If we take Passover in a flippant, frivolous, or haphazard way, then we drink condemnation to ourselves – because we have not discerned the Lord's body. These verses show that the primary thrust of our self-examination has to do with how we relate to others. How are my relationships with others? Are they open and honest relationships?

Hebrews 10:24 “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”

That does not mean that we just say, “How are y’all?” or “How is your Mom?” or “How are you doing today?” That is not a Christian relationship. A Christian relationship goes deeper than that. We are to help and care for one another. We are to be keepers and protectors of one another spiritually.

If we say in our self examination that we do not lie, we need to ask ourselves the question: “Do I manipulate people? “Do I take advantage of others?” “Do I only tell others what they want to hear?” “Do I schmooze people?” That is a term that is often used to describe an individual attempting to influence another, by means of flattery.

Isaiah 30:10 “Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits.”

That is a tendency of human nature, brethren. Do we level with people? Or do we live in some kind of a fool’s paradise, or make-believe world? Some people go through their entire lives being careful not to “rock the boat” or “make waves.”

They justify it by saying that they want to be a peacemaker. But is that being a peacemaker? Their philosophy is, “Live and let live.” They forget that we are to be our brother’s keeper. Some people go through their entire lives and never face reality! This is a sad fact, brethren, when you see somebody nearing the end of their days and they have never faced reality. Are we ashamed of the Gospel or are we willing to stand up and be counted? Jesus said:

Matthew 10:32 “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.”

That is a way of life, and that is living our religion, and standing up for what we believe. We must be open and honest.

Matthew 10:33 "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Jesus Christ was not ashamed of the gospel. If we are ashamed of the gospel then God will be ashamed of us. We have to stand for it. I am not saying that we need to stand on the corner saying that the end is near. But in our lives, let's not live a pretentious life. We must not pretend that everything is great, when it's not.

Matthew 10:34 "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Christ came to send a sword. A sword divides asunder. A sword separates situations, and cuts through the play acting. Is not that the opposite of the "Christianity" that we have learned? Aren't we supposed to be peacemakers and make peace at any cost? What is Jesus saying? Jesus is saying that if you are pure in heart, you will take a stand for Him, and His principles.

Matthew 10:35 "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law."

This is when one person is called in a family, and another person is not called. Their family members will be doing Christmas, Easter, and they will keep Sunday. We will be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, and we are going to keep the Sabbath. In a lot of cases, that will split a family, and it will cause a great deal of stress.

Matthew 10:36a "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me...."

Some people will go to church on Saturday, but then just to keep peace in the family, they will go with their Mom on Sunday too. There are cases in the Church, where people have one foot in God's Church, and one foot in the world's churches; but they slip and they fall into the world.

Matthew 10:36a "...and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

That means that we put God's principles first, even before family. That is very tough, but that is the gospel truth, brethren.

Matthew 10:38 "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

God puts us where He wants us. He places us in the Body where it pleases Him. We did not decide when to come into the Church, or where to come into the Church. When we find ourselves in a sticky situation, we cannot say, 'Woe is me, God never thought'. No, God put us there for the specific purpose of taking a stand for Him.

So when we examine ourselves – we must ask ourselves whether or not we are taking up the Christian battle to defend the faith and to defend the truth. Where is my heart and where is my desire? Let's be sure that it is where it should be.

Colossians 3:2 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

We are living a higher standard, and a greater calling. Each Passover, do we review our repentance, to make sure that it is deep and sure repentance? In the days of the apostle Paul, the brethren deleavened their homes.

I Corinthians 5:7 "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

He is talking about bread there, but he is also talking about putting sin out of our lives. Though the brethren were meticulous in cleaning their homes in every corner, and moving every piece of furniture, and getting every crumb out of the kitchen, there was the recurring problem then, just as today, of not discerning the Lord's body.

What does Paul mean by the "*Lord's body*?" Paul was speaking of the Church of God! Let's go to I Corinthians 10, and I want to look at this in context. Let's understand that this section of scripture is in the context of Passover, and it is in the context of examining ourselves.

I Corinthians 10:16-17 "The bread which we break, is it not the [fellowship] of the Body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body."

Paul is talking about the Body of Christ, the Church brethren. He is talking about the saints, the called out ones. He refers to them as the "Body of Christ." You will remember when God called Paul, he was persecuting the Christians. He threw them into jail, and he persecuted them in one town after another.

What did Jesus Christ say to Paul? He did not say: "Why do you persecute the Christians?", because they were His Body. He says, "Why do you persecute me?" When Paul was persecuting the Body of Christ, Christ told Paul that he was persecuting Him.

I Corinthians 10:16 "The bread that we brake is it not the fellowship of the Body?"

We need to keep this in mind. "The Body of Christ" was a common term, even in the Church then, meaning all the converted people of God. All the brethren who are in the Church of God are the "Body of Christ."

As Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 12:27 "You are the Body of Christ, and members in particular."

The Church is the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:22-23 "And has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, Which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all."

It is abundantly clear from these scriptures, that when Paul spoke of the tremendous importance of discerning the Lord's Body, that he was referring to all the members of the Church of God. Let's see what was going on at Passover. They have assembled at the beginning of the 14th of Abib, the sun has set on the 13th and it is the 14th. Passover is beginning, and they have all come together to keep Passover.

I Corinthians 11:21 "For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken."

Nobody was respecting anybody, nobody was waiting on anybody. There were some that were well-off and had plenty of fried chicken and potato salad. Then there were some who had worked all day, and they did not have anything, except maybe a tortilla, or something. Some were hungry, some were fat. That is the way that it was going on at Church. Who is concerned about the one who is hungry? They did not care about their brother, their own body, if we understand the symbolism here. Then there was somebody who showed up at Passover drunk. Obviously he has a sin in his life. What is the concept of discerning the Lord's Body? Here is what we take from this:

If He were visibly present, as one of the members, would He be taking His own supper while somebody else is hungry, or would He show up drunk? How would Jesus Christ react to this Passover, what would He be doing? We have to ask ourselves: "How do we discern the Lord's Body?" We know how Jesus Christ would discern the Lord's Body; He would care for the ones who are hungry. He would be respectful of others. He would not just take care of Himself.

What about the brethren? Were they discerning the Lord's Body? Obviously they were not, and that was what the problem was. They were not worried about the other people, but they were just worried about themselves. Paul makes it very clear that there is division within the Church. There is in-fighting in the Church. There are groups and cliques. There were the well-to-do, and there were those who had nothing. There were the uppity ups, and then there was the low lifes. Everybody is pointing the finger, and not mixing with each other. This is not the way the Body of Christ should be described. And this was happening at a Passover service.

Paul has some real dire warnings for these people. He tells them that they are not going to live long if that is their attitude. If you are in the Church of God, and you disdain other people in the Church of God, then your life is in jeopardy. Your physical life and health are in jeopardy.

How do we then learn to examine ourselves, with regard to all the members of the Church of God, the Body of Jesus Christ? It is a big job, but it is an important task at Passover time.

Paul said that because of the ongoing division between members - described as, not discerning the Lord's Body, "*many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*" (I Corinthians 11:30)

Some of them were already dead. That is a very stern warning that God puts before us. Brethren, we have seen it happen in the Church. We have seen ministers and evangelists that opposed people who are trying to walk in the way, and walk in the truth, take a stand against the people in the Church. Even evangelists die and are taken out of the way like the dust of the wind. Is Paul speaking of brethren who are physically sick and prematurely dead, or is he describing the spiritual state of some of the members?

Paul then calls for self-examination using the same word again: "If we would judge [discern] ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Corinthians 11:31)

But let us understand what this discernment of the Lord's Body is, brethren. If you do not understand it, study through it. This is something that we need to understand. Paul tells us that if we would judge (discern) ourselves, if we would have the self-examination of what our attitude is toward other people in all of the greater Church of God, we should not be judged. It does not have to be that way. We do not have to be spiritually sick or dead.

Let us ask ourselves this question in self examination, "Do we truly love all the brethren – or are we very selective?". Not only do we not lie, we do not manipulate, and so forth. Do we truly love all of the brethren, or are we very selective?

Ephesians 4:31-32a "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted..."

Let me pause there for a second. We are told to go to our brother if there is an offense, or if we see a sin that he is doing. Is it easy? No, sometimes it is painful, and sometimes we do not realize how painful it is. But that is the love of God being expressed. If we see our brother headed for the pit, it is our obligation to turn him around. Indeed, it is a requirement for our own salvation. If we would let our brother go into perdition, and we just sit back and snicker and laugh, we are going to follow him. We are not going to be in the Kingdom of God. Sometimes going to a brother, even being corrective, has to be looked at this way: "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted...*"

Ephesians 4:32b "...forgiving one another..."

God says, "Let it go." We must turn it loose and look forward. Let the past be in the past once it has been ascertained what the problem is. We do not just cover it up. If somebody sinned terribly against somebody, they cannot say that they do not want to talk about and expect to just go forward from there. No, this concept has to be understood that it is dealt with. There was a sin committed, then that sin was repented of, and the two sides understood when one went to the other and said, "I was offended, brother or sister," and we finally get it straight and we know that it is understood, and it is not to happen again. Then we go forward, we do not just do like Dennis the Menace. He used to say, "He hit me back first." Obviously the offense had started before, and we need to conclude, move on, and forgive one another:

Ephesians 4:32c "...even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

God has forgiven us. What an example. God has forgiven us, so we have to forgive others.

I Corinthians 11:27-28 "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

We do not want to crucify Jesus Christ again, but if we do not examine ourselves we are doing that. What do we look for in examining ourselves? What questions do we ask ourselves?

We need to ask ourselves how God sees us. It is of utmost importance that our evaluation of ourselves matches God's evaluation of us. We welcome and desire His involvement in our lives. If we are off course we want God to put us back on course. Could we be deceived about the status of our spiritual lives? The answer is, "Yes."

Hebrews 3:12-13 "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

God hates contention, and God hates division. Would we even know it, if we were not correctly scrutinizing our spiritual lives? If we were not taking a good look at ourselves, would we even know that we are off course? What if we are not really able to look deeply into ourselves to see what God sees? Could we actually be deceived about the status of our spiritual lives? The answer is that yes, we can, and often are deceived as to our true spiritual condition. That is scary, and that is disconcerting. We do not see ourselves as we are. Whenever we sin, brethren, and we all sin, it changes us for the worse.

Hebrews 3:12 "Take heed, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

So it is possible to be *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. The Greek in this verse shows that sin brings *delusion*, and it causes one to be in a fantasy world, lacking in reality. When we sin, our perspective changes so that we no longer can see the evil that is in us. That is a scary thing, and very sobering.

The deceitfulness of sin means that sin interrupts our clear thinking to the point that we can no longer trust our own judgment in spiritual matters. That is a real mess. We commit a sin, and truth becomes a different language that we cannot comprehend. Therefore, do not say, "I see myself clearly; I am doing okay."

King David praised God in the Psalms. He was converted, and he had God's Holy Spirit. He won the victory over Goliath, and he united the twelve tribes of Israel. David was a man after God's own heart.

How then, could David commit adultery with Bathsheba, have her husband, Uriah, killed, and then live in a state of deniability of the entire sordid affair?

It was *through the deceitfulness of sin*. David was blinded to his own sin. What do we say? "Oh that cannot happen to me." When we permit sin, or okay sin in our lives, and say that it is not that bad, especially compared to other people, immediately we become deceived. David was in a state of deniability of the whole thing, because of the deceitfulness of sin.

Of course, David knew that adultery and murder were sinful acts that were in violation of God's Commandments. How was it possible that he could not see himself? There is a lesson in this for us. These words were committed to the scriptures for us, so that we could read them, and not make the same mistakes.

If God reveals that David could not see his spiritual condition, then it is the same for us. We too, cannot see our spiritual condition when we are sinning. We too, cannot see ourselves. What are we to do?

How did David fail so miserably to examine himself, and see his sins? That is the important question that we need to ask ourselves.

A considerable amount of time passed after David's sin with Bathsheba, and his murder of Uriah, and David had not repented of his sins, nor had he been reconciled to God.

What was going on in David's mind? We would say, "How could David even live with himself?" But David was in some sort of a state of denial. He was saying to himself, "Everything is copasetic – it's okay - all things are completely acceptable, and very satisfactory."

Brethren, this is a perfect example of the deceivableness of sin. How could David be so out of touch with spiritual reality? How could he be so blind in not addressing his own problem? The answer lies in the fact that sin destroys discernment. Sin destroys right judgment.

People justify and they say, "God understands!" "God knows my weakness and overlooks my weakness because of His infinite love for me." "He knows how difficult it is and so He will be permissive." That is what people say to themselves.

Brethren, it does not work that way. Yes, God loves us, and that is why He gave us His Commandments and told us not to sin. Because of the deceivableness of sin, David was operating under an utterly false premise. Things were not satisfactory in God's eyes, *because the thing that David had done **displeased the Lord***. That is what the scripture says.

Nathan the Prophet was David's spiritual counselor – and a kind of checks and balances of power and authority that God had set up between King and Prophet. Even though King David was king over all of the land, God also had His prophets.

II Samuel 12:1 “And the LORD sent Nathan [the prophet] unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.”

David thinks that Nathan is bringing a case before him as the Supreme Court of the land, David being Chief Justice, to render a decision in a difficult case.

It is similar today, difficult legal cases are brought to the Supreme Court, but in David's day, the king was the supreme judge and ruler – holding the power of life and death in his hands. Nathan wanted David to rule on the matter.

II Samuel 12:2-4 “The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.”

Wow, did this appeal to David's sense of righteous indignation!

II Samuel 12:5 “And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die.”

That is the maximum sentence. So for stealing one sheep he is going to die. He is going beyond the law, as this is such a dastardly thing that somebody in Israel would live like this. David said, ‘We do not want anybody in Israel like that.’ His righteous indignation springs up in him.

It is so easy to judge others – when you are not doing what God says to do. And besides the death penalty we see, in verse 6, that he is to restore the lamb **fourfold**, because back in Exodus it says that you have to restore more than just the one.

So David is sitting up there in all his dignified court apparel, and feeling rather smug and justified that he had rid the nation of Israel of such a callous brute.

You know the story already, and you know that David is about to get it. He is falling right into Nathan's hands. Nathan is there, as the minister of God, to teach David a lesson. God did not want to do to David what David just proclaimed the penalty to be to this man. God could have smitten David, and that would have been the end of the story.

II Samuel 12:7-9 "And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the [guilty] man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon."

David, **you are the man** who stole the one little sheep. You had everything going for you.

II Samuel 12:10 "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife."

Why did God do that? He did it because David despised God, and he took the wife of Uriah the Hittite.

II Samuel 12:11 "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give *them* unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun."

All this is so that David would learn not to sin. God was working in David's life. Please take from this that God is working in our lives as well. God will turn the table on us. He is not going to quit on us. But when we realize that we have sinned, when it is against God's Law, and we are doing something that we are not supposed to be doing, no matter how small or how large. It is not pleasing to God. God is going to deal with us.

God tells us in **Luke 12:2**, "*For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.*"

God knows what is going on. God has this great plan of salvation that He is working out. Will we examine ourselves? Will we be found to have a pure heart?

II Samuel 12:12 "For thou didst *it* secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun."

Finally, David's heart was smitten and he began to see his horrific sins. David in his royal decree had pronounced **his own death sentence**, which Nathan declared to be commutated. It was forgiven and God reversed David's own death sentence.

Why did not God require David's death? Because if God has desired his death then we would all be dead, because we are all sinners. It is because of God's mercy. And why was God merciful to David? We find the answer in the next verse – God was merciful to David because David was repentant.

II Samuel 12:13 "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."

Brethren, we are near Passover and we must admit that we have sinned against the Lord. Say it to yourself: "I have sinned against the Lord, please forgive me Father. Have Jesus Christ cover my sins." But God did discipline David in many areas, for the rest of his life. That was God's righteous judgment, and it came to pass.

II Samuel 12:14 "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die."

Whenever we go against God's instructions, we too give great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme. If that baby would have lived, everybody would have said that child was conceived while Uriah was still alive, he would have been an illegitimate child and it would have brought derision on God, and on Israel. So God, in His mercy, let the child die.

We do not want to give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. When we sin, our families see it, and our neighbors see it. What do they say? "You call yourself a Christian, and you act like that?"

Brethren, this Biblical story was not preserved for David, but for us.

Psalms 19:12 "Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*."

David could not see that his sins would keep him out of the Kingdom of God – that is because of the deceitfulness of sin. When we sin be sure that we are deceived and we cannot see what we are doing; and that is because of the deceitfulness of sin. David's sins were ruling his life, and they were taking away his judgment.

Psalms 19:13 "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

That is the unpardonable sin, and we can get to the point where we will not repent. That is when the unpardonable sin takes place, when we will not repent. We have to pray to God, just as David does here in Psalms 19.

God does not have to send us a prophet today, as He has done that once, and we have the written record – the Bible. As we examine ourselves, our blindness will be removed when we repent of going against God's clear instructions for a holy people.

Psalms 51:1-2 "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."

Psalms 51:3 "For I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin *is* ever before me."

That is true repentance. We say that we are sorry, and that we will not do it ever again. Sin is against God, but He is willing to forgive us. That is His greatness. But we must repent and come to Him. Repentance is a prerequisite.

Psalms 51:4 "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 judge."

God's judgment is always fair, and it is always balanced

Psalms 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

Get me back on track, and restore my clear thinking. Restore my judgment that has been taken away, because of sin. David prayed to be useful to God once again. Brethren, we want to be useful to God. We want to be the children of God; and we want to love our brethren. We want to recognize all that are in the Body of Christ. We want to discern the Body of Christ. Just like Jesus Christ has done. Jesus Christ died for us all, and we are to love all.

As we approach Passover this year, let us remember not only Christ's sacrifice, but the life that it makes possible. We get to live, David got to live. Let's take these lives that God has given us, and let's put them to good use in serving one another. We are being given the opportunity to **choose life**. With God's mercy and forgiveness, and with His Holy Spirit, we can live with God eternally.

End:wz