

Have Mercy Upon Me

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!”

(Psalm 51.1-2, ESV)

I remember a humorous incident that took place on a family trip that we had back to my hometown of Kenora. Our four children ranged in age from nine to a year and a half. During one of our “pit stops” we noticed some creative writing on the ceiling of our Caravan. I rounded up the three boys and asked them if they knew who was responsible for this; to no surprise, they volunteered their little sister as the culprit. It was pointed out that she was strapped into a car seat, and, at a year and a half old, had not learned how to read or write. The investigation had stalled. Later, at another bathroom break, one of my sons came forward and said, “Dad, I’m ready to admit to doing it, ***but first I want to know what the punishment is going to be.***”

Sounds funny coming from a five-year old, doesn’t it? But in a way, does this not capture the hesitation many feel when they are out of relationship with God as a result of unconfessed sin? What’s the punishment going to be? One of my favourite devotional writers, the late Selwyn Hughes (Everyday with Jesus) famously stated that much of sin is rooted in “the suspicion that God is not good.”

Sin not only separates one from God, but distorts their view of Him! David’s journey of confession and restoration took much longer than the time it takes one to read 2 Samuel 11 & 12; Clearly, in the near year that David was silent and hiding out from God, worn down by the burden of his sin (Psalm 32) he had suspicions about God’s ability to hear his confession and to restore him. His “suspicion” led to greater distance from God, making him judgmental and yet not able to recognize the sin in his own life (2 Samuel 12). Isn’t sin deceptive? But then he prays: *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!”*

David gets it right, and clearly the Holy Spirit is at work in forming the words he speaks:

- **He cries out to God for mercy, recognizing that he is in need of it and only God can provide it!** What a wonderful starting place of honesty and humility to begin a conversation with God.
- **He recognizes that God is motivated by His Love to address this sin condition.** 1 John 4.9-10 provides a powerful expression of this understanding. Again, it is trusting, and not being suspicious of, the underlying work of God’s Love in one’s sanctification!
- **He anticipates that he can be made clean because of God’s abundant mercy.** Do you or I have that same confidence? Is He “faithful and just” as the Apostle John states (1 John 1.9)?

As we begin this week of prayer, let us come with an attitude of humility, confessing that which has been kept in the shadows, taking confidence in His Goodness and steadfast Love!