

We saw last week that David's sin of adultery was the highest crime a shepherd of God's people could commit. Along with all godly Israelites in David's day, we mourn for sin on the part of any professing believer (especially one in leadership). May this week's notes lift our saddened eyes away from hoping in any earthly ruler or presidential nominee – to place all our hope in Jesus' kingship. *He* is a King of absolute integrity and righteous holiness! And He is our Savior too! Praise His Name! Surely the Cup of our salvation indeed overflows (Psalm 23:5).

Monday: Read Psalm 23:1-5 & Psalm 51:1-2

My sins, my sins, my Savior!

Heed the cautionary warning of David's shocking sin. The LORD sought David out to be king as a man "after His own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14), and he was a mature, successful, and godly king. He wrote psalms, inspired directly by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless fell into sin at the height of his powers, in his days of maturity.

David is not the only believer who has fallen into terrible sin. We all have a history of sin and need. The writer Jerry Bridges says that even our tears of repentance need to be washed. We defile all that we touch. Our motives behind our good works are tinged with self-interest and sinful accommodations to the world and its pressures. Isaiah the prophet confesses:

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! (Isaiah 6:5)

Meditate and Pray: Oh Lord, protect us from abuse of all your good gifts to us; protect us from the hardening effects of sin *in the very days when we should be doing the most for your kingdom*. Amen.

Let us begin this week by humbly singing this hymn of confession (# 553):

1 My sins, my sins, my Savior!
They take such hold on me,
I am not able to look up,
save only, Christ, to thee;
in thee is all forgiveness,
in thee abundant grace,
my shadow and my sunshine
the brightness of thy face.

2 My sins, my sins, my Savior!
Their guilt I never knew
till with thee in the desert
I near thy passion drew;
till with thee in the garden
I heard thy pleading pray'r,
and saw the sweat-drops bloody
that told thy sorrow there.

Tues/Weds: Read Psalm 23:5 & 2 Samuel 9:1-13

Our Lavish Host

God's grace is beautifully demonstrated in David's care for the weak and disabled grandson of Saul, Mephibosheth. Yes, David sinned greatly, but we also see the Holy Spirit's fruit in David's life – particularly in his love for his enemies, including the house of his worst enemy, Saul.

Most Middle-Eastern potentates would have wiped out the whole of house of their defeated adversaries. But David seeks to show mercy to for the sake of Saul's son, Jonathan. He says literally, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

The word there for “kindness” is that beautiful word “Hesed,” meaning undeserved covenant love and faithfulness. David had mercy on this disabled grandson of Saul because God had shown the same kind of undeserved mercy to him as a king and as a sinner.

Meditate and Pray: If David was moved by the LORD to show undeserved mercy to his enemies’ house, ensuring that Mephibosheth would “always eat at his table,” then are we surprised that our King Jesus would show mercy to the undeserving “house of Adam,” taking us as sinners and inviting us to sit down at His table of salvation?

That is what Christ does. One of the chief criticisms of Christ’s ministry was that he had table fellowship with sinners, eating with “tax collectors and prostitutes.” But such an invitation list gives us hope. If Christ could declare infamous sinners like Zacchaeus to be “sons of Abraham” and tell the crowd that “salvation had come” to this tax collector’s house (Luke 19:9-10) then we too can have hope that one day we will sit and eat at the table of King Jesus!

Learn this first lesson then from Psalm 23:5: Just as David experienced table fellowship with his LORD and Shepherd “in the very presence of his enemies,” so our Savior is determined to be lavish in the feast of grace to which we are invited as hungry and thirsty sinners.

Sing about the table of the LORD Jesus to which we are invited with this hymn by Charles Spurgeon in the *Trinity Hymnal* # 427:

1 Amidst us our Beloved stands,
and bids us view his pierced hands;
points to the wounded feet and side,
blest emblems of the Crucified.

2 What food luxurious loads the board,
when at this table sits the Lord!
The wine how rich, the bread how sweet,
when Jesus deigns the guests to meet!

3 If now, with eyes defiled and dim,
we see the signs, but see not him;
O may his love the scales displace,
and bid us see him face to face!

4 O glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,
your present smile a heav’n imparts!
O lift the veil, if veil there be,
let every saint your glory see!

Thursday: Read Psalm 23:5

The Shepherd’s Zeal to Provide

Old Testament scholars teach us the importance of hospitality in the ancient world:

In the ancient middle east, wealthy men were known not for their possessions, but for how they entertained their guests. Tales were spread from one town to another and are handed down from one generation to another about the different tables of wealthy hosts and how a particular relative was honored by being a guest to a feast at that table.

George Lamsa, quoted in David Gibson, *The LORD of Psalm 23*

Meditate and Pray: God's honor also depends on how He provides for us as His children. It may not be literal food that we need, nor literal enemies who surround the table as we sit down with the Lord. But God's Holy Spirit is lavish in providing the spiritual encouragements and graces we need to face the enemies of sinful temptation, spiritual doubts, cancer, stroke, undiagnosed pain and even the death of loved ones. Just as a generous guest "pours out the wine" and makes sure his guest's cup is never empty, so when we belong to Christ, God has "poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). Our cup will never run dry.

Friday: Read Psalm 23:5 & Matthew 21:28-32

Yes and No

Our Savior Jesus emphasizes His invitation to sinners to come and eat with him. Despite being roundly criticized for table-fellowship with sinners, He continues to invite such to sit down and eat in the kingdom of God. In fact, He even declares to the religious leaders that,

Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

How amazing! "Sinners" were pushing their way in front of the religiously proud and self-righteous!

Meditate and Pray: Lord of the harvest, please send forth workers into your harvest to find the sinners that you want to invite to the feast of salvation. Also, when your invitation goes out, please help these sinners *not to doubt the well-meant offer of your love and saving grace*. Do not let any stay away because of their sense of guilt, failure, and fear.

Finally, please give us patience in our evangelism. Even though many may initially say "No" to our invite, please change their hearts to say "Yes" to Jesus – even as the parable in Matthew 21:28 promises. Thank you, Jesus, that you came to seek and to save the lost. Please do that work of seeking and saving in our day. In Your Name, Jesus, Amen.

Saturday: Read Psalm 23:5

The Shepherd's Table

Jesus meets with His disciples in the upper room on the night when He was betrayed and sits them down at the table of the Lord's Supper, giving them a means to have communion with Him all their lives long, "as often as they eat the bread and drink the cup."

Christ is determined to feed His sheep spiritually – even in the presence of their enemies. This is why the world hates Jesus -- because of His commitment to call, save, clothe, and feed people who have done bad things.

Mediate and Pray: David Gibson sums up Christ's care for His sheep in Psalm 23:

The LORD displays His complete and total sufficiency for all our needs and His lavish love for the most wayward prodigal or most vile outcast. His enemies are not defined as people who have done bad things, and His friends are not defined as those who have done good things. No, His enemies are those who cannot bear the fact that He eats with people who have done bad things. People like me, and you.

Sunday: Read Psalm 23:5 & John 21:9-19

Breakfast with the Shepherd

How fitting that we close this week's notes with a meditation on one very simple but profound meal that Christ hosted. Here are the disciples, adrift in the new reality of Jesus' resurrected state, fishing, seeking to provide for their families. Then the LORD appears on the shore, miraculously providing for them an amazing catch of fish with which to feed their families. To their further amazement, Christ has already provided a meal of fish and bread on shore. As they sit down to His invitation to eat, none dare asks who it is, "for they all knew it was the LORD" (John 21:12).

What was the significance of this meal? One scholar points out that this meal on charcoal briquets would surely have reminded Peter of the night when he stood by a similar fire to warm himself (John 18:18-27) and denied his Lord. Once again the questions search Peter's heart. Will you deny me again, Peter, or do you love me? Three times Christ painfully probes with this question.

Meditate and Pray: Lord Jesus, please probe our devotion to you. Forgive us that our hearts are so impure and our motives so mixed in our love and service to you. Please by your omniscient Spirit, by whom you know all things, test us and find the ungodly thoughts and plans of our hearts. Cleanse us, deliver us that we might serve with more pure joy and thankfulness in coming days. Amen.

I close with this poem by George Herbert about how we, too, share with Peter a sense of unworthiness when Christ invites us to sit down and eat with Him:

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
 But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
 Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked any thing.
 A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
 I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
 Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
 And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
 You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.