

Pentecost

May 24, 2015

Psalm 51b

The Ongoing Work of God the Holy Spirit in the Christian

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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

God the Father and God the Son work more externally. By that I mean we see God's creating and preserving work daily in nature and its participation in our daily bread. We see God the Son work for us during his ministry, on his cross, alive again with his disciples, and ascending into heaven. The Holy Spirit, however, works internally in our hearts through God's Word.

We call on God the Holy Spirit to do his work in us every time we sing the Offertory in our Lutheran liturgy. We also know the Offertory by the first words of our text, "Create in me." Like repentant King David, we call on God to create in us a heart cleansed from sin, and a mind willing to obey his holy will. God grants those requests through the joy of our salvation he works through the gospel of Christ.

The Holy Spirit's work of cleansing us and giving us a right spiritual attitude is ongoing because we live daily attached to our Old Adam, our sinful nature. Thus the repeated callings on God to continue his saving work in our hearts and minds.

On this Pentecost Sunday we take a look at **The Ongoing Work of God the Holy Spirit in the Christian**. First, He moves us to repentance and brings us forgiveness. Second, He opens our lips and arouses our praise.

The writer of this Psalm is quite a different King David than the scheming adulterer and murderer we read about in 2 Samuel 11. David had sexual relations with Bathsheba, another man's wife. The king then murdered Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, by arranging his death in battle. The last verse of that chapter reads, "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord."

For over a year David lived in impenitence for his sin. His guilt made him groan all day long. It sapped his strength like the desert heat, he tells us in Psalm 32. Earlier in Psalm 51 King David acknowledged and confessed his sins. He repented. He knew that repentance and cleansing from sin is more than cleaning up our act, and behaving a little better than before.

Repentance is a change in heart and mind. Only God can create that purity in heart and moral uprightness. The words of our text are part of David's prayer for those new creations in him. This repentance comes not only if we fall away from faith and repent as in David's case. This is the Christian's daily repentance for our sins. This repentance is the constant attitude of the Christian's New Man even as our sinful nature wars against us. It is our prayer that we never fall away.

God the Holy Spirit move us to repentance and brings us forgiveness. The Spirit brings us forgiveness in the word of Christ which creates faith to hold that forgiveness. That forgiveness cleanses, purifies our hearts from sin and guilt. It creates a new heart that beats by the power of God's love in Christ. It creates a new mind that thinks in sync with God's will that we use to serve him and each other.

David's words are in the form of a prayer. David prays, and we pray his words, as we ask God to keep us steady and strong so that we will not fall into sin and unbelief. We may also understand David's words as an expression of confidence that God will answer our prayer. After all, isn't that what we do in every prayer? Our asking is our confidence in the One whom we ask.

God restores "the joy of our salvation." We receive that joy every time we lay our sins on Jesus and the Father restores us for his Son's sake, and the Spirit strengthens our faith. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work in our repentance and forgiveness and faith. This reminds us that next Sunday is Holy Trinity.

The new heart and willing spirit in repentance not only avoid sin and serve God more faithfully. The Holy Spirit opens our lips and arouses our praise. These words of Psalm 51 also are very familiar to us from the liturgy aren't they? They are a bit different in NIV 11. "Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise."

We open our lips not only in praise but in proclamation of the gospel. Our praise is sincere and joyful. You would have heard such sincere and joyful praise and proclamation last Thursday and Friday when our preschool children sang, "I am a light" for their families in our closing programs.

David reminds us also that mere outward praise like merely outward sacrifices are of no value. God does not want them nor will he accept them. Far from calling for a cessation of sacrifices among God's people, King David calls for sacrifice and offerings that flow from broken and contrite hearts. I can't be holding on to the love for sin with one hand, and extending the other hand out with offerings to God in thankfulness for forgiveness.

The ongoing work of God the Holy Spirit is to open my lips and arouse my praise. The Spirit begins that work in the heart so that my worship and service may be genuine and pleasing to God. They are not pleasing in the sense that my works save me. They are pleasing to God in the sense that my works of love flow from a heart broken by sin but created anew by Christ's love.

Psalm 51, I encourage you to read it in its entirety sometime today, is a one of richest and most important of the psalms. It displays the extreme depths of sin and God's perfect cleansing in forgiveness. We need to use its thoughts in both public worship and in our private devotions. May God daily grant our request for a pure heart and a willing spirit as he granted repentant King David. Amen. <SDG>