Two Roads Lesson 7: Create In Me a Clean Heart

The Road Less Traveled: Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Matthew 5:8

Read: II Samuel 11-12:25

 Psalm 51

 Colossians 3:1-4

God called King David a man after His own heart. (I Sam. 13:14, Acts 13:22) During David’s reign as king over Israel, he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and received from God the plans to build a temple for God. (I Chr. 28:19) He defeated the enemies of Israel and he wrote many psalms of worship and praise to God.

Yet, David, at one point in His life, strayed from God. He did not go to war with his men as kings usually do. And, since he wasn’t doing what he was supposed to be doing, he spent his time wandering on his roof, looking down over the city of Jerusalem that he had built. On one occasion, he looked down and saw a beautiful woman bathing on her roof. He found out who she was, sent for her, slept with her, and she became pregnant. Her husband, Uriah was off at war (where David should have been.) The penalty for an adulteress was stoning so David called for Uriah to come home, thinking he would sleep with his wife and assume the child was his. But Uriah was more noble than David and would not go home and sleep in comfort while his fellow soldiers were on the battlefield. David then instructed Uriah’s commander to put Uriah at the front of the battle lines where the fighting was fierce. He did so and Uriah was killed. So David brought Bathsheba home as his wife. Problem solved.

Or so he thought. God sent Nathan, a prophet, to see David. Nathan told him a story about a rich man who had a large number of sheep and cattle. But when a friend came, he took a poor man’s only ewe lamb to make a meal for him. David became enraged at the story and the rich man. Then, Nathan said to David, “You are the man!” (II Sam. 12:7) David immediately recognized the sin he had covered up and blinded himself to. He said: “I have sinned against the Lord.” II Sam. 12:13) How can a man who committed such sins be a man after God’s own heart?

Psalm 51 expresses David’s repentant heart. He asks for God to have mercy on him, to blot out his transgressions, to cleanse him, wash him. The depth of his sorrow made him feel as if his bones had been crushed by the weight of his sin. He describes the sacrifice God desires as a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. He also knew and expressed that God is a God of unfailing love. So, he asks God to create a pure heart within him and renew his steadfast spirit. David humbled himself before the Lord, confessing, repenting, and mourning his sin.

David recognized he had a major fall from the steadfast spirit he once had. This can happen to any of us, but there are ways we can keep our hearts pure. Solomon writes in Proverbs 4:23 “above all else guard your heart: for it is the wellspring of life.” Paul admonishes us to keep away from anyone who is idle, to devote ourselves to prayer, to look for opportunities to do good, to study the Word to get the truth in our minds and hearts, to be thankful for where we are and what we have at this moment. (Col. 3:1-4) David also recognized that the heart can be deceitful and that only God can reveal its deceit to us and correct our path. (Ps. 139:23-24). He also recognized that others can lead us astray: “Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies.” (Psalm 131)

Because of his humbleness before the Lord, God called him a man after His own heart. While David’s humility is noteworthy, Jesus is our example of perfect humility. Jesus committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth. (I Pet. 2:22)) It is through Jesus’ sinless life, his death, and his resurrection that we are able to have a pure heart. When we believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, God imputes His righteousness to us. As John writes: “Everyone who has hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (I John 3:3)

So having a clean heart is not unattainable. Believers are constantly being cleansed by the blood of Christ. As we recognize the sin in our lives, as we confess it, repent of it, and become obedient to the Word, God renews our spirit within us. Paul writes that as we set our hearts on things above, our lives will become hidden in Christ’s. Then when God sees us, He will see us through the pure heart of Christ. (Col. 3:1-11) We too can then become men and women after God’s own heart who are moving along the road less traveled.