



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
March 8, 2015

PSALM 101

Psalms – Book IV – Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I ask you right now that you would give us knowledge, you would give us understanding, and you would give us wisdom to be able to handle life situations every day. We ask for a discerning heart to know about evil and righteousness, to know how our current actions will impact our future results. Lord, we know that we're here today, not by accident, and that you speak to us in the midst of worship, you speak to us in the midst of your teaching. So we're asking you now to speak to us, to teach us, to give us some truths that we can apply to our lives this week. Lord, we don't want to be the same people every day. We want to be changed by you and your word. So we're asking you to do that deeper work in our hearts now. In Jesus' name, amen.

Please open your Bibles with me to Psalm 101. We've talked over the last few weeks, as we've looked at the psalms, about some of the passages that talk about the holiness of God. Those are great passages because they give us a greater understanding of who God is and what He does for us and how He's made. All those things about God are fascinating. But today we're going to talk about the holiness of people, us. What does that look like for us to be righteous, to do what's right?

I want to share some things with you and then I want to look at some New Testament theology just to put it all in perspective. So we're just going to look at the one psalm today, Psalm 101.

Notice right underneath the psalm there it says that this is a psalm of David. David was a man who just had a real heart for the Lord. He's often remembered for his mistake that he made with Bathsheba. Obviously not an example of holiness, but here's a guy who for the most part in his life he really loved the Lord. He really tried to do what was right in his life. This is a psalm that he wrote, a song that he wrote. I don't know whether he wrote it before the incident with Bathsheba or afterwards, but it just described his heart. It's describing his desire to be righteous both in his public life and in his private life.

Whenever you're trying to be holy, you're trying to be righteous, it's not just about separating yourself from bad stuff. It's really important that you also be drawing yourself to something. See, when you're in love with someone it's not that you think about all the things I can't do because I'm in love with this person. You're drawn to that person; it's because of that person that you decide that you're not going to do certain things.

That's exactly what David is describing here. He's not only going to talk about the things he's abstaining from or not doing, but he's also going to be talking about what he's drawn to. We'll see that as we continue on in this passage.

This is a psalm that uses the words *I will* a lot, demonstrating commitment on the part of David. So you'll see that. Just recognize that. That's all by introduction, so as we read through the passage, you'll remember those things, hopefully, and they'll draw your attention to this particular dynamic in this psalm.

Verse 1 says this: *I will sing of your love and justice*. The word *love* there is the word *chesed*. It's this covenant faithfulness of God. It's the beautiful word for love in the Old Testament that's used over and over again for the faithfulness of God and how God wants to work in our lives over and over, even though we fail Him. So even though we are not holy, God is faithful to us.

The psalmist starts by drawing attention to God's love and justice. *I will sing of your love and justice*. Two words that are very different. We need both of them.

Sometimes it's hard to know which one to emphasize when we're with people. Do we love them and tolerate some of their issues? Or do we be firm with them and say, "No, you can't do this"? Those are challenges we all face. We face those as parents. Do we take a stand and say, "No. I'm sorry. I'm not going to support you in this," or "you can't do this," or do we let it go and ignore the situation?

Obviously if we become too loving without the truth side of things then we become permissive in our parenting. If we become so focused on justice and truth then we become uncaring and unloving. So we have to balance those two concepts no matter what we're doing. We want to make sure that we're balancing. It's hard to know sometimes how you handle those things.

I like the story of the minister who was looking around for a parking place and he couldn't find one, so he parked in a no-parking zone. He wrote a note and put it on his windshield that says, "I drove around the block a hundred times. Couldn't find a parking place. If I don't park here, I'm going to be late. Forgive us our trespasses." So he comes back after his meeting and there's a ticket on his car with a note that says, "I've been driving around this block for ten years and if I don't give you a ticket it will cost me my job. Lead us not into temptation."

Whether we focus on the firmness or we focus on the grace, it's a hard thing to know sometimes. We all make those choices in our lives as we're moving forward.

David is saying I will focus on God's love and His justice. I'm going to focus on both of those things. They're important. That's in his opening line, and we need that as we continue on. Notice the rest of verse 1 – *to you, LORD, I will sing my praises*.

Verse 2 says, *I will be careful to lead a blameless life*. Do you see how he moves right into holiness? Once he gets this picture of God, he understands who God is, then he moves right into this sense of I'm going to lead a blameless life.

What does that mean he's going to *lead a blameless life*? What does that mean that he's going to do? What does righteousness look like? None of us are perfect. We're trying to do what's right. We're trying to do the right thing. So David's making this claim. Notice he says *I will. I will be careful to lead a blameless life.*

In 2008, The Barna Group did a nationwide survey of the views of righteousness. Now the survey organization didn't put it that way, didn't talk about righteousness, but it asked the people to evaluate what they thought of eight specific activities – watching pornography, using profanity in public, gambling, gossiping, engaging in sexual intercourse with someone to whom they were not married, seeking your revenge against someone, getting drunk, and lying.

What they found was no surprise to us. Evangelicals were the group most likely to follow and embrace morality while atheists and agnostics were more likely to reject it. Those who respected the God of the Bible were more likely to embrace righteousness than those who didn't.

There's this commitment to integrity that's built into us. Because why? Because we worship God, we sing to God, His love and justice, we know who He is. And so we're enjoying that fellowship. There's something about knowing God and who He is that draws us to this desire to lead a blameless life and to do what's right.

Notice the next phrase in verse 2 – *when will you come to me?* That's really interesting. He says in verse 2, *I will be careful to lead a blameless life—when will you come to me?*

There's a sense of I'm always waiting for God to speak to me. I'm always waiting for this sense of in what way He might reveal Himself to me. So I'm committed to living this blameless life. The two are related very closely together in David's mind. That's important because we're waiting for communion with God. We're always saying, "God, I want to see you at work today. I want to see what you're going to do."

If you are involved in some kind of an addiction that you're trying to overcome, you're involved in some sort of a problem, that you're trying to lead a blameless life but you're captured in your heart by something that's bad, then I think there's a good piece of advice here. We don't try to stop one passion only, but the best way to stop a passion is to replace it with a different passion.

The idea here is I'm going to follow Christ, I'm going to love Him the most, I'm going to make Him the most important thing in my life. God, when are you going to come and meet with me? Therefore I'll be able to deal with the challenges that I face in this particular area of my life. I'm always ready for God to reveal Himself.

For me this is the most exciting part of the Christian life. Because I never know when God's going to reveal Himself. I'm always wondering. I'm in an airport and I sit next to someone and a dialogue starts. I wonder, "Is God going to talk to me through this person?" When I'm talking to a child or I'm talking to an adult, when I come here on Sunday morning, I'm eager to hear God speak to me. Maybe through a conversation that we have together with you or you share something with me, God encourages me or inspires me in some particular way.

I think that's the idea that David is sharing here. I want to lead a blameless life. Lord, when are you going to come and visit me? When are we going to be able to talk together?

As the passage continues it says, *I will conduct the affairs of my house with a blameless heart.* That's really interesting. Conducting the affairs of your life. The choices that you make. I think what he's saying here in New Testament terms is I'm going to take Jesus home. I'm going to conduct the affairs of my home in a blameless way with a blameless heart.

Thomas Carlyle says, "The greatest security against sin is to be shocked at its presence." Not to become used to it, but to be shocked at its presence.

David's saying, "I will conduct my daily affairs with integrity," which I think means we've got to clean up. You know how you have to clean up your house or your car or whatever you're cleaning up. You have to clean it up regularly or it gets dirty.

When I'm working with children I teach them that it only takes a minute to clean up a messy room...if you clean it often enough. So when we're working in our own spiritual lives, there's this constant clean up that we need to be doing. If we don't, we add clutter in our lives and sometimes that clutter gets in our way of seeing what God wants to do. There's a spiritual life that requires cleaning.

As I was looking around at some things in preparation for this message, I came across this message about cleaning. This kind of cute statement. This a person who says, "I suffer from ADCD, Attention Deficit Cleaning Disorder. It's where you start to clean one thing, but get distracted by another thing that needs cleaning. That causes you to bounce from one job to another, only to end up doing a lot of work with nothing to show for it."

That's me sometimes! I decide to clean something in my office and I pick this up to clean it and I put it here – oh, there's this other thing, and I've got to fix that thing, and then I find another thing. Pretty soon I've done all this work with nothing to show for it.

I would suggest that in our lives we also have a similar situation where we need to be constantly on top of our spiritual lives and we're cleaning ourselves up. We can have a tendency to find ourselves in dirty places. We're in our world. We live in a world where stuff gets picked up spiritually and we need to be cleaning regularly.

So now in the next several verses we're going to identify seven cleaning principles for our spiritual lives. We're going to take them right out of the text. What I did is I read the text where it says *I will* do this and then I tried to identify what is he saying there.

So the first principle, number one, comes from verse 3, which says, *I will not look with approval on anything that is vile.* I tried to restate that principle. I will be careful what my eyes see.

We find ourselves in places where our eyes see things that we shouldn't be looking at. So we have a response system built in. It's called lids. God has placed them there. We can close our

eyes. We need to have a response system to the things that we see that are inappropriate. We need to have a plan to shut them down so that we're able to avoid some of that stuff.

There's a difference between pornography and heroin addiction. In heroin addiction you have to go looking for it. Pornography you don't have to go looking for it. It shows up. It comes sometimes when you're not even looking – it just happens to be there. So we've got to have filters on our computers. But more importantly we need to have a filter on our hearts.

The filter on our hearts is going to help us guard the eye gate where things come into our hearts through the eye gate. We need to have something there that's protecting us. When you see something, you know how to shut it off so you don't dwell on it. You don't allow those things to get into your heart.

A New Testament verse that ties along with this is in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 – *avoid every kind of evil*. Avoid it. If you're going to be blameless, you're going to live a blameless life, you want to avoid evil.

Let's go to the next verse, principle number two. The verse says, *I hate what faithless people do; I will have no part in it*. I describe principle number two – I will not participate in activities that lead me astray. I don't want to be connected to them.

Backsliders have their own little clubs, their own little rules, their own little sayings. Sayings like “a little bit won't hurt” or “it's okay for me. I can do some of this” or whatever they say that get them in trouble. I don't want to be around that. I need to be careful about that in my life.

God has placed a conscience in each one of us to help us. The conscience needs to be trained, but the conscience is there to provoke us, to prompt us, to say, “You shouldn't be doing that. You need to be careful about that.”

A man went to the psychiatrist and said to the psychiatrist, “I've been doing some bad things, Doc, and my conscience is bothering me.”

The doctor says, “Okay. So what you want me to do is give you something to increase your willpower?”

The man said, “No. I want something to weaken my conscience.”

Now at first I thought that was kind of funny, but then I started thinking, there are a lot of people who do that. They have a hard time going to sleep at night, so they take alcohol or drugs because their conscience is bothering them. They're trying to get rid of that. They don't want to be left alone to think because if they're thinking alone, they'll think about their regrets, they'll think about the things they've done wrong. So they always have some kind of entertainment going on.

We have to be careful about unrighteousness. We don't just want to feel better about wrongs that are around us; we want to be able to do something about them. That's why in the Lord's Prayer, I think, Jesus made it clear that part of the prayer that we want to offer to the Lord is the one that says *and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*. It's a part of our daily prayer that we're coming before the Lord and talking about.

Let's continue on in the passage to verse 4 where I identified a third principle, where he uses *I will*. It says, *The perverse of heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with what is evil*. So principle number three, I suggest, is I will not let evil get into my heart.

How are we going to do that? How do we prevent evil from getting into our heart? Well, the Bible has a prescription for that and the prescription is in Psalm 119:11 – *I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you*.

Those of you who have young people in our discipleship group meeting with Tim, ages 10-14, many of those young people are memorizing Psalm 1. The whole psalm. I'm trying to get someone of those young people to come in here and share it with the rest of us. I think it would be encouraging if they would. But many of them are memorizing the whole psalm. Psalm 100. It's one thing to get it into your head and getting it in your head is good because then you're able to have something to bring down to your heart. The idea is the word of God protects us. It becomes this something that helps us deal with the evil that so easily can challenge us. So God has given us a directive there.

Let's go to the fourth principle in verse 5. *Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate*. So the words *I will* are used twice in that passage and he's drawing attention to those things there. So principle number four is I will speak out against evil.

This is hard sometimes. How do you know when someone is saying something that is slanderous or is saying something that has pride? That's what it says there in verse 5 – *whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate*. How do you speak out against that in a way that is not mean or cruel? It's something that psalmist, David, is saying here that he does.

Now David has particular prerogatives. He was the king. He could control a lot of the power that he had. But even in our lives we have some influence. Either we have authority (whether that authority is in our home or in our business about how things are going to happen) or we have influence sometimes to take a stand and speak out against evil in whatever way that we can.

It's interesting in the New Testament, in the body armor that is designed for fighting spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6, that it says, *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place*. The breastplate. The part that covers your heart. Your vital organ is made of what? Righteousness.

So when we're committed to righteousness it's like putting on that breastplate that's going to protect our heart, protect the vital organs of our spiritual lives. When we are committed to righteousness it's part of the spiritual armor that we put on to fight the wickedness that's out there, to fight the darts of Satan that are talked about in that passage. Righteousness becomes a very important thing that we do and we want to be aware of its power as we're moving forward.

Now in this passage we're going to see the psalmist is saying I don't want these people near me. I don't want a slanderer near me. I don't want a proud person near me. We're going to see down

in verse 7 I don't want a deceiver near me. I don't want a liar near me. I wish those were the rules in Washington D.C. We don't want to be around those people.

We've got to have a plan that allows us to choose wisely or we're going to spend time with weeds because weeds grow quickly in our gardens in our spiritual hearts. We've got to be continually clean them up. We've got to continually be doing the housecleaning of our spiritual lives in order to remain blameless or pure, as he's talking about. David's saying I'm just committed to righteousness. That's what he's saying. We want to have that same commitment.

Notice principle five as we go onto verse 6. He says (this is a positive thing that he's doing), *My eyes will be...* He's not saying what he's going to do against wrong or injustice. Now he's using the word *will* – I'm going to do this and this is something positive. I think we can take heart in this as well. It says, *My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless will minister to me.*

In other words, he's choosing friends wisely. I would suggest (and I put down as the principle number five) – I will keep my eyes on the right kind of people.

The friends that we choose are important. I say to young people regularly, we (not just young people, but all of us) choose friends based upon something that we want drawn out of us. If you like to be around a funny person, it's because you like to laugh. You want that drawn out of you. If you're tempted to hang around someone who's mischievous, that's dangerous. Maybe there's something in you you ought to question. If you like hanging around someone who uses foul language, maybe you ought to ask something about yourself. Maybe there's something here that you want to ask about your own self and be careful about that. You don't want to hang around with people who are going to lead you down the wrong path.

You want to choose people, and he says here, *blameless* people, because there's going to be this reciprocal relationship. They're going to *minister to me*. In other words, they're going to bless me as well. Who you choose to hang around with is important. Those friends become strategic. I think that's why in the book of Proverbs Solomon writes in Proverbs 13:20 – *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*

I have the privilege to be around a lot of faithful and honoring people, and I appreciate that. They're edifying to be around, encouraging. Choose your friends wisely.

Principle number six comes out of verse 7. Verse 7 says, *No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.*

Both of these, practicing deceit, speaking falsely, are dealing with dishonesty. So what David is saying is he's going to make honesty a priority around him. He's not going to tolerate dishonesty. Dishonesty is so dangerous because it damages relationships. It's foundational for all that we do.

That's why we work hard to teach our children to be honest. That's why we work hard with young people to help them to be honest. Not only honest in the way that they talk but in the way they live. There's an honesty that's there.

So David saying, *No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house.* I'm not going to tolerate that. I will strictly enforce honesty with those who are close to me, he says.

I think that's why in the Ten Commandments we have a command specifically targeted for this issue of honesty. *You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.* It's one of the commandments.

Honesty is so important, God draws our attention to that and David, now as he's evaluating his life and cleaning house for himself, is saying that honesty is one of those things that's important. It's part of that doing righteous, being righteous, and having integrity.

Let's go to the last principle here out of verse 8. Verse 8 says, *Every morning I will put to silence all the wicked in the land; I will cut off every evildoer from the city of the LORD.* So I suggested that in principle number seven I will daily commit myself to righteousness. There's something about the daily-ness of this. Regularly doing the housecleaning in our lives. Regularly checking out the areas of our life that need to be cleaned out.

As I was a young person, I heard a speaker once say that there are three major sins that attract people. In fact, most people are overcome by at least one of these. I was very eager in my life to prepare and try to establish plans to deal with these three areas.

One is bitterness. For some people that's their weakness. They're drawn to be angry with life, angry with other people. They are bitter or they can be bitter. They're tempted to be bitter. The second one has to do with immorality. Attracted to things that are immoral and wrong. Then the other one is some people are attracted to materialism.

Those are three big areas that we could be attracted to. We need to have a plan for dealing with those. Cleaning our lives out daily is important so we don't get sucked into those. Because all of those have not only dead ends but destructive ends that we want to be aware of.

The daily part I think is interesting. *Every morning.* That's what he said. Do you see that? Every morning I'm going to be focusing on this blamelessness. It's a daily thing.

In the New Testament, again, we see in Luke 9:23 – *“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross **daily** and follow me.”*

You want to wake up every morning and say, “Lord, today I want to get it right. Lord, I want to do what's right. If there's something that's pointed out in my life that's wrong, I want to deal with it now. I want to surround myself with people that are doing the right thing. I want to do everything I can to set up the scene so that I can live a life that is righteous and I can move forward.”

Psalm 101. A strategic psalm. Now I want to take you to some theology for a moment and bring this into a context so that you understand some very important pieces about this.

We're talking in this passage in Psalm 101 about personal holiness. Personal holiness, righteousness. The first thing I want to remind you about is that your personal holiness and righteousness does not earn your salvation before God. In order to get saved, we don't rely on our righteousness. We rely on the righteousness of God. The New Testament says *there is no one righteous, no, not one*. None of us. None of us can get to heaven based on our righteousness.

The fact that we're emphasizing personal righteousness today or personal holiness isn't so that you can get saved. There are some people that have the misconception that good people are going to get to heaven. That's not what we're talking about here.

When it comes to salvation, every one of us are on the same plane that we all have sin in our lives. If you start thinking that "that person's good; they must be going to heaven," then you're thinking wrongly because it's not about a person begin good or bad who's getting to heaven. We all have sin in our lives and it's only the people who trust Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior who get to heaven. That's because we need the righteousness of Jesus Christ that's totally righteous. Every one of us has sin and so we have a problem.

Salvation isn't accomplished by our personal righteousness. That's principle number one.

The second theological principle I want you to understand is that our righteousness is a container. Our personal righteousness is a container so that God can use us. God is looking for people to use to bless other people. So in essence our container, if we have a container that's righteous, that we're trying to live a holy life, then we can take that container to God and He will pour grace into that container that we can distribute to others.

Furthermore, part of that process of being holy is coming to God and saying, "God, please forgive me of my sins." God takes them away and He cleans the container regularly. So we need to have this perpetual cleansing process. Not only of trying to prevent ourselves from sin, as it's talked about in the passage, but getting forgiveness for the sins we've committed and asking God to clean us up.

So the righteousness that we're involved in is very important. And that's important because some people believe, or they act like they believe, "Well I'm saved and I'm relying on Christ's righteousness, so what I do doesn't make any difference." It makes a difference what we do. We need to be blameless, we need to try to be righteous because that increases our ability to shine as a light in the world, to be able to effectively minister to others. That's important.

It's really hard to be righteous and that's why principle number three is important. Theological principle number three is that the Holy Spirit empowers us to do what's right.

Choose a problem. Let's say you're going to stop smoking, for example. You can try to do that with willpower. I'm just going to be determined to do something different. And (because it can

take a lot of willpower to stop smoking) you can rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you to do what's right.

The Holy Spirit is in the business of helping us to move in the right direction and He wants to mobilize us to go forward. So this idea of righteousness and holiness is something that is a work that the Holy Spirit does inside of us to help us to move toward that. Do we ever become perfect? No. We never become perfect. But we're working toward this process of being blameless in our lives.

Each one of us needs to take inventory, housecleaning inside and say, "Lord, what do you want me to change? How can I be more effective for you?" What God does for us is He puts His finger on something and He says, "I think you should work on that." I don't have to say anything from the pulpit. We've got the Holy Spirit inside of us who doesn't judgmentally say, "You better do this," but He comes alongside us and says, "I want to help you with this area of your life. I want you to be able to grow to be more Christ-like." He empowers us to move forward in our lives in some powerful ways.

So as we come together as a church, we're a group of people who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We're imperfect people and we're trying to encourage each other in that process of growing in our own righteousness, growing to be more godly. Not so we can have some spiritual pride over those people who aren't, but because we want to be used by God to be more effective for Him and His presence.

So we come to God and we pray, "God, create in me this heart that is following you. If there's any area of my heart drawing me away, would you please clean it up in my life. Take my hands and make them useable for you so that I can be a vehicle for your work to be used for your kingdom." I encourage you to allow God to speak to you this morning.

If God is speaking to your heart today and you've never asked Jesus Christ to come into your life, you can do that today. It means that you acknowledge that you're a sinner and say, "Yes, I need a Savior." Christ comes into your life, and so does the Holy Spirit to empower you. He's real. He comes into your heart to live there and to control you and to lead you and to guide you. That is a personal decision that every one of us has to make.

If you haven't made that decision for Christ, I encourage you to make that decision today. Invite Him to come into your heart, trust Him as your own personal Lord and Savior and allow Him to work the righteousness. You don't come to God and say, "God, I'm going to get righteous so that I can come to you." No. You say, "God, I want you to come inside of me so that you can make me that person you want me to be." And that's what God does. He's in the business of trying to improve us, build us, strengthen us. It comes first by admitting that we're sinners and we need a Savior to come in and do that deeper work inside of our hearts.

Would you stand with me. Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we ask now that you would be convicting us in our own hearts of what you want us to change this week. We want to go away different people today, Lord. So we

ask you to teach us, lead us, guide us, give us a different attitude about certain things that need to be changed. We want to have a heart that's protected, so this week give us opportunities to set those protection mechanisms in place so that we can honor you and be drawn to you, knowing that you will come and meet with us. You will reveal yourself to us. We want that. So thank you for who you are, what you want to do in our lives. We worship you now. In Jesus name, amen.