

Psalm 51 is David's response after Nathan confronted his sin. As you'll recall David had an affair with Bathsheba and had her husband Uriah killed in battle to cover up. At one level he was aware what he was doing was wrong, and yet he deceived himself. I love the way Nathan met with David and told this story in 2 Sam 12.

"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

When David thought it was someone else, he was quick to judge. When he realised that the story was about him, he was quick to turn back to God in repentance. David knew the joy and peace of God and didn't want to be separated from that. In verse 8

Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

In John 8, the woman caught in adultery brought to Jesus is set-up to either break Moses' law or Roman law. It should have been both guilty parties, so Jesus could have called that out. Instead he chose to confront the sin of those that brought the woman. The older men slipped away first, perhaps recognising their weakness and reflecting on their motives. Eventually all the accusers melt away.

As I reflected on these passages, there's a message of a second chance. There's nothing we've ever done that can't be forgiven. David was a murderer and adulterer who showed contempt for God. Yet even he was forgiven and restored.

There's also a deeper message about being aware of our own need for God. David faced up to his failings completely. The accusers of the women caught in adultery reflected and recognised their short comings and slipped away. There's that complete openness with ourselves and God. God receives us with complete forgiveness that transforms our lives.

I became a Christian at 27, and before that I thought I was alright. I wanted to be a good person, trust worthy and reliable. I wanted to be a good employee, a good friend, a good son, a good brother etc. I had all these values and expectations that I was trying to live up to. Somewhere in the middle of juggling all these masks was me.

In truth, I was far from alright. I was in conflict with myself, and there was no internal integrity, and so when I was under pressure the masks would slip and I'd say something or do something that didn't make sense and invariably would hurt someone I cared about.

I realised that the hardest thing about being a Christian was looking myself in the mirror. Being truthful about myself and what's really going on. Becoming more self-aware of my motives and my need for God. I still find looking in the mirror the hardest thing.

It's extremely hard, because I find I'm so caught up in myself I can't see the wood for the trees. Fortunately, we have three powerful weapons, the Bible, Prayer and the Holy Spirit.

When we open our hearts and talk openly to God about our struggles, as we see in so many of the Psalms, then something truly amazing happens. When we bring our failings and struggles to God we're transformed through God's blessing, through his Holy Spirit. There's a liberation and freedom that's quite different from any other human experience. To paraphrase David, - joy, gladness and rejoicing.