

PRAYER BULLETIN #214, 18MAY2022

“IT’S SIN... BUT BY WHOSE STANDARDS?”

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.”

Psalms 51:1

REFLECTION

We struggle with the word SIN. Our cultural and societal norms do not seem to define it. Even if they do, it varies through the generations, oftentimes within the same generation. In the end, most of us prefer not to articulate what it is. We fear offending someone, of being seen as “medieval and obsolete”, or worse, of being “divisive and opinionated”. We may prefer instead to rationalize: describing, interpreting or explaining what has happened (or not), making it proper, acceptable, and even honourable.

The Bible does not give us any room to wriggle through SIN. Texts like Psalm 51 that describe King David’s response when confronted with his SINS (arrogance, dereliction of responsibility as a king, lust, adultery and murder) sets out what SIN really is. It is “any lack of conformity to the moral character of God or the law of God” as revealed in His Word. We SIN by thinking evil, speaking evil and acting evil. We SIN when we do not do what pleases God. It’s SCARY! By God’s standards then, none of us can claim that we have not sinned. Others may not know our SINS and it may be easy for us to pretend that they do not exist, but He knows, and we cannot hide them from Him.

Thanks be to God that He is merciful. Like King David, let us confess our SINS, call on God’s unfailing love and plead for His compassion to “blot out our transgressions” with the blood of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Just remember that King David did not call on God’s mercy so as to carry on as before. Like him, let us call for God to transform our hearts and spirits (v. 10) with a new attitude that is committed to Him and His standards.

PRAYER

Almighty God, my Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your unfailing love for me as Your child. I confess my sins to You, whether they be by thought, word or deed, known and unknown to others. Be merciful to me. Blot out my sins by the blood of Your Son Jesus, Whom I call on as my Saviour. And by Your Grace, I call on Him now also as my LORD. Create then in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit in me to be committed to You and Your standards of righteousness. In Jesus’ Name, I pray, AMEN.

SUPPLICATION

- Start asking yourself what you know about SIN and take steps to grow in your understanding of how pervasive it is in our times. As you pray for a pure heart and a steadfast spirit, ask also for eyes to see clearly. A good starting point is with

issues prevailing in society that requires a response as a Christian. “Go deep” into God’s Word. Read up what society and culture are saying. Research and gather differing perspectives. Reflect on where you must stand as a child of God. And as you gather and collate what you find, journal your thoughts so that you can keep track of your journey.

- As you work through these issues, do you have anyone who you can call on to discuss what you have uncovered? Someone who you can trust in confidence and safety as you articulate your thoughts as you develop them. Someone who can review and also share his or her understanding with mutual respect. As you meet up and share, pray to avoid the dangers of “rationalizing”. Psychologists use this term to justify controversial feelings in a logical and rational manner to avoid the true explanation. It hijacks our abilities to see errors, let alone correct them. It also makes it hard for us to accept criticisms and feedback that obstructs changes of mindsets.
- Is it time to form a **CONNECT** group and work through these issues collectively? If so, be sure that the group does not become an “echo chamber”. This is a trend that has been accentuated by social media. In such a chamber, “beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system and insulated from rebuttal.” Group members will come up with different perspectives and stands on issues, but there must be mutual respect when sharing and everyone must prayerfully work through the process to be convinced of their stand based on God’s Word and His standards of righteousness.
- Alongside this process of discovery, you will come across Christians, individuals, groups and communities who hold views, mindsets and lifestyles that are contrary to God’s Word and His standards of righteousness, even in Singapore. Your loved ones may be involved. Remembering that we are all sinners and are in need of God’s mercy and compassion, pray for them instead. Withhold judgement. Maintain peace in spite of differences. Seek wisdom and discernment on how to continue to engage them as children of God. And if you are willing, pray for opportunities to engage them.

“We have to understand our sin, its severity, its incurable power...its pervasiveness, its deadliness...it’s why things are the way they are...it’s why everything dies...it’s why we need a Saviour...”

John F MacArthur, American Minister

If you need any prayer or pastoral care support, kindly contact the pastoral care team via:

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