

PSALM 51:6. (EHV)

Surely you delight in truth in the inner parts;
and you will teach me wisdom in what is enclosed.

Last week your pastor revisited the Bible's teaching of original sin. David said in Psalm 51:5 that we are guilty at birth, sinful from the time our mothers conceived us. That means we are not sinful because we sin; we sin because we are sinful. Poisoned waters flow from a poisoned spring.

That truth leads nicely to the point that David makes in the next verse, verse 6. Tonight David teaches us to remember God's perfect, heart-focused demands.

David begins verse 6 by saying, "Surely you delight in truth in the inner parts." The Hebrew word translated *truth* could be translated several different ways here and could be referring to several different things. David could be referring to truth in what we believe. He could be referring to truth in morality, that is, attitudes and actions that are truly good. He could be referring to truthfulness, to honesty and sincerity, to not being disingenuous, hypocritical, or half-hearted. He could be referring to trustworthiness and faithfulness with regard to God's word and will. Perhaps he is using *truth* to refer to all of these together.

But David's point is to stress where God looks for truth, where he delights in truth. He delights in truth in the inner parts. He is not just concerned with what we say and how we act on the outside. He is especially concerned with our thoughts and life on the inside.

Do you remember the rich young ruler who approached Jesus and asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life? Jesus listed the commandments from the Second Table of the Law, and the man said, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth!" It reminds me of the time I visited a shut-in, and when I spoke the confession of sins and then asked her if it was her confession too, she responded, "There hasn't been any sinning going on around here!"

So Jesus cleared all the commandments off the table and just gave him one: "Sell everything you have and give the proceeds to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." The man hung his head and went away sad. Jesus had shown him that, even though he thought he had kept all the commandments, what the Law is really after first and foremost is the heart, and the man loved material possessions and money more than God.

Or we could think of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, where he stressed that murder isn't just unlawful killing, but also unjust and selfish anger and hatred. Adultery isn't just sleeping with someone who is not your spouse, but also lusting. Loving your neighbor doesn't just mean getting along with them and not feuding or fighting with them, but also looking for opportunities to be generous to them, even if they are your enemies. Prayer and other religious exercises shouldn't be for show, but should be done from the heart. And the list could go on.

God doesn't just want us to say true things and good things, but also to mean them. He doesn't just want us to confess the truth on Sunday; he wants us to apply that truth and live according to that truth every hour of our lives. It is a fundamental truth of Christian ethics, that true morality is ultimately defined not by outward actions, but by the attitude of our hearts. This is God's perfect demand. This is what he delights in.

But what does God actually see in us? Jesus once told his audience that it's not what goes into a person from the outside that makes him unclean, but what comes out of a person from the inside that makes him unclean. And then he gave a list of what comes out of people, and not one of the things was good: "Out of people's hearts come evil thoughts, sexual sins, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, unrestrained immorality, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness."

God delights in truth in the inner parts, but he doesn't find the truth inside us by nature. Poisoned waters flow from a poisoned spring. And the poisoned spring is our heart.

Thankfully, David continues: "And you will teach me wisdom in what is enclosed." Since God delights in truth in the inner parts, he has to teach us truth and wisdom there. He has to purify the poisoned spring. He has to make the unwilling willing. And David says he will.

In Jeremiah 31, God prophesies that he is going to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. He says that, rather than writing his demands down on stone, he is going to put his law in their minds and write it on their hearts. That's a poetic way of saying that, rather than forcing them to do the right thing outwardly through threats, he will make it so that they will spontaneously and willingly do the right thing. And then he says how he will bring this about: "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

It is through the gospel that God teaches us wisdom in what is enclosed, in our inner parts. In the gospel we see Jesus winning God's full and perfect delight for us. He not only did what was right, but did it with honesty and sincerity, did it wholeheartedly, did it faithfully. As a child, he was obedient to his parents, even though he made them and knew more and better than they did. When he didn't have time to pray, he was happy to make time. And when he got up early to pray, his disciples had to go looking for him, because he wasn't putting on a show. He interacted with women as humans with souls loved by God, not as mere objects of pleasure. He listened attentively before speaking. And when he spoke, he not only spoke the truth, but did so in love. When he prophesied Jerusalem's destruction because of her stubbornness, he wept over her. When he was in anguish over what he would suffer for us, he still prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." David speaks for the Messiah in Psalm 40: "Here I am, I have come. The book written on a scroll tells about me. My God, I take pleasure in doing your will. Your law is in my heart."

And then he went to the cross and paid for all the falsehood in our heart—the falsehood in what we believe; the falsehood in our morality, that is, bad attitudes and actions; our insincerity, hypocrisy, and half-heartedness; our unfaithfulness with regard to God's word and will. It is all paid for. It is all cleansed. The mountain of the Lord, which may only be ascended by those with clean hands and a pure heart (Ps. 24:3–4), may be ascended by us. God demands perfection, and in Christ, his demands are perfectly met.

This good news is the fountainhead of wisdom and truth in our hearts. Jesus does not just possess the truth. He is the Truth who changes us from the inside out. With his gracious word of forgiveness and salvation, he reaches us where no one and nothing else can—in the inner parts, in what is enclosed. "Surely you delight in truth in the inner parts, and you will teach me wisdom in what is enclosed." Yes, heavenly Father, do that, for your holy name's sake and for the sake of Jesus your Son, that we may be saved. Amen.