

March 28, 2001

Dear Friend,

The more I read the Bible the more I am impressed with what a scandalous and shocking book it is. I am regularly offended by what it says. Take for example Psalm 51:4, "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...". David, the King of Israel, wrote this psalm after the prophet Nathan confronted him for committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband (See 2 Samuel 11 & 12). What a bunch of pious, religious mumbo-jumbo! Give me a break! He sinned against a lot of people, not just God. He sinned against his wives (That's another scandal!). He sinned against Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, by murdering him. He sinned against the whole nation of Israel by covering up his crime. He sinned against the commander of his troops, Joab, by requiring him to participate in the murder and the cover-up. He sinned against Bathsheba by using his power to seduce her. Yet he has the audacity to say, "Against you, you only have I sinned"! There should be riots in church over this statement. How can we take the Bible serious when it says things like this!?

If the Bible is merely a human book, then this ought to be our response to these kinds of statements. But if the Bible is from God, that is, he made sure that it only contains TRUTH about him and us and the world we live in, then we need to stop and find out why he endorses such shocking language. God, through David, is telling us something that is true about all sin, not just the "private" sins we do. When I do not love others as I ought and when I am actually unkind and mean to others, the fundamental reason I am doing these things is because I do not love or trust God. I am not unloving or mean because of anything that another person does or because I didn't get enough sleep last night (or any other circumstance in my life). I am unloving and mean because I do not find the amazing love of God in Christ to be "enough" for me. When I treat humans poorly, I am merely declaring my contempt for Christ's dying and rising from the dead.

God, in his mercy, through the prophet Nathan, enabled David to see this reality. David mourned over his sin, repented of it and held fast to the grace of God because he knew how contemptuously he treated God. David would agree with the Apostle Paul, "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst." The reason we do not mourn, repent and trust like David is because we believe we've only offended a human being (Sometimes we are unwilling to admit even that!). We do not feel the burden of our sin because we do not see how our unloving or vindictive ways with humans are the direct result of our small views of the sufficiency and worth of God. When we mistreat other humans we are exposing ourselves to the just wrath of God against us because in our cruelty to humans we are despising the great love of God. O that God would have mercy on us and turn our hearts toward him with the result that we will love one another as we ought, out of the joy we have in Christ.

Crying out for mercy,