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STUBBORN BLINDNESS

❖ CALL TO CONFESSION: PSALM 32:8–10

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

which must be curbed with bit and bridle,

or it will not stay near you.

Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in

the LORD.

❖ PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O Lord, our God,

Help us and heal us. We are stubborn, blind people who repeatedly and willfully stray away from you. Like children who don't want their parents to hold their hands while walking through a dangerous city, we will not stay near you. In our blindness, even our ability to confess has been distorted. Some of us are emotionally unaffected by the fact that we are helpless sinners without your mercy, indifferent to the cost of our rebellion. We speak words of confession out of principle, out of duty, or out of habit, but rarely out of a deep awareness of our need and helpless state. Others of us are so undone by our habitual falls into sin that we can barely look up to you for help. Lost in the anxiety of our unbelief, we speak words of confession out of fear, out of desperation, out of hopelessness, but seldom out of confidence that you love us and have invited us into the blessedness of repentance and forgiveness.

Yet Christ has recognized our helpless estate, and has shed his own blood for our souls. This blood, that speaks righteousness for us, gives us confidence to confess our failures to you today. Where we have failed to approach you with honest, sincere, and confident words, Christ stands in our place, laying before you his heart in truth and passion, with no sin or mixed motives.

As he hung on the cross, tortured for our iniquities, the sorrows that were rightfully ours were given to him in fullest measure. Your steadfast love surrounds us because your steadfast love was taken away from him. What a precious, atoning, ransoming love!

Loving Father, create in us clean hearts that are truly broken for our remaining struggles with sin yet utterly confident that your love is more than enough to reach the foulest sinner who trusts in you. Give us this trust in great abundance, Lord, as we continue to wrestle through this earthly journey. Help us to sing now with confidence that Jesus truly is our only boast, and when he returns to take his ransomed children home, let us sing anew, “Hallelujah, what a Savior!” Amen.

❖ ASSURANCE OF PARDON: LAMENTATIONS
3:21-23; PSALM 30:11-12

This I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.



You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

❖ HYMNS

“All I Have Is Christ”
“Nothing but the Blood”

PRIDE

❖ CALL TO CONFESSION: LUKE 11:37–41

While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.”

❖ PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Precious heavenly Father,

It is difficult to see the Pharisee within ourselves, and painful to admit how hypocritical and judgmental we really are. We see the sins of others with crystal clarity, yet are deceived and mesmerized daily by our own outward goodness. We excel at performing for the applause of a watching world, while ignoring and hiding the foul cesspool of wickedly sinful thoughts that dominate our minds for most of the day, every day. We lust, covet, and exalt ourselves constantly. We steal your glory by taking credit for your work in our lives, and create entire kingdoms in our imaginations where we are worshiped instead of you. In this we have offended your holiness and committed treason against you in every corner of our depraved hearts and minds.

Kind and holy Jesus, your glowing righteousness rescues us from our wickedness and greed. You never performed for others or lived to impress them. You were perfect in honesty and truth from the inside out, and even now your radiant goodness replaces all our sin and disobedience. In your perfection, you had every right to judge and humiliate sinners around you, yet you dearly loved the most sinful of humans and forgave them freely. Our guilt and treason were your undoing, yet even now you think of us with loving pity and unswerving devotion. Jesus, thank you for living and dying for each one of us.

Powerful Holy Spirit, put to death the Pharisee in our souls. Give us true and sober judgment about ourselves, and honest courage to admit what incredible sinners we really are. Convict us daily of our sin and of our goodness, of which we are so proud, and never let us escape from our need of a Savior. Help us to live a life of honesty before others, confessing our sin and asking for their help to see more clearly. Rescue us from the love of our own reputation, and change our hearts, we pray. Cause us to see Jesus daily, to love him deeply, and to become like him as we adore him in all his brilliant glory. Amen.

❖ ASSURANCE OF PARDON: HEBREWS 9:13–14

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

❖ HYMNS

“Ah, Holy Jesus”

“Blessed Assurance”

LOVE (I)

❖ CALL TO CONFESSION: JOHN 13:34–35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

❖ PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of glory and love,

You have loved us from the beginning with a vast and boundless love. Before we took our first breath, your Son breathed his last and accomplished what we never could: our full and free salvation. You endured the searing loss of your most precious treasure to pay our ransom, and for this we adore you today with joy and gladness. You have called us to love one another as you have loved us, and we confess before you our complete unwillingness to obey this command. Like Cain, we are often consumed with jealousy of our brothers and sisters, harboring deep hatred in our hearts toward them. Instead of laying down our lives for others, we require them to serve us, and resent them when they fail to meet our expectations. Forgive us, Lord.

Jesus, we thank you that we can have confidence before your Father because your blood has purified us from our sin. You endured the deep and boundless anger of your Father so that his love and approval would flow over us endlessly. You took on our humanity and loved others on our behalf, forgiving and confronting people around you with sacrificial and generous compassion. You freely gave your life to provide us with a new record, and in you we have become lovers of others and commandment keepers. Thank you, Jesus, for your shining goodness that dresses us in glory to stand before the King.

Holy Spirit, we need your strength and help to survive our many failures to love others every day. Please give us swift and true repentance for our very real hatred toward others. Convict us of our selfishness and pride, and soften our hearts to cherish

and love one another. Help us to believe that you love us, and cause that love to transform us radically into people who extend grace and mercy to others. Let us see the cross more clearly and more often, where the power of your love is openly displayed, where our sin is crushed and destroyed, and where our names are written in the wounds of our crucified Savior. We come in his name, amen.

❖ ASSURANCE OF PARDON: 1 JOHN 4:9–10

In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

❖ HYMNS

“How Deep the Father’s Love”
“Poor Sinner Dejected with Fear”
“The Power of the Cross”