

## 25 | Wrecking Balls and Restoration

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Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

PSALM 51:12

You know whether a house is being restored or condemned by the size of the tools that are out front. If you see a crane and a wrecking ball, the house isn't being restored; it's coming down. Wrecking-ball responses to the sin of another are seldom restorative. This is one of the things that's so striking about Psalm 51 and the history that surrounds it.

If God had had a wrecking-ball response to the sin of David, there would be no Psalm 51. He had every right to condemn David. David was the anointed king of Israel. He had been placed in his position by God in order to be a physical representation of the one true King of Israel, the Lord himself. All that he did was designed to be representative, that is, making the invisible King visible. So, David's position made the horrible sins of adultery and murder doubly reprehensible. It was right for God to be angry. It would have been just and righteous for God to tear down the house of David forever.

But God's response wasn't a wrecking-ball response. No, God's response to David was the small-tool response of restoration. I live in Philadelphia. It's an older city where much old-home restoration goes on. Pretend with me that you wander into one of those grand old stone homes that's being restored. And pretend that we're watching a craftsman remove one of the three pieces of a triple-crown molding that's on the wall of this wonderful old house. The carpenter is motivated by the vision that this house could be restored to its former beauty, so he's not yanking the molding off the wall with a crowbar. He knows that the wood of the molding is dry and brittle and, therefore, susceptible to cracking and breaking. So, he's using the small tools of restoration. He has a lightweight hammer and an

apron pocket full of wedges. He tap, tap, taps a wedge into place, then moves a few inches down and repeats the process. Gently, the wedges ease the molding from the wall. You take a glance behind you, and you see three piles that comprise the three types of molding that trimmed the walls. And you're impressed as you look that there's not a crack in a single piece in the three piles.

God's response to the sin of David is the small-wedge response of a Restorer. He uses the small wedge of the sight-giving words of a prophet, who tells a well-crafted story. He uses the small wedge of conviction, causing David's eyes to see and his heart to grieve. He uses the small-wedge of forgiveness, offering David his unfailing love and mercy. He uses the small wedge of reconciliation, drawing David to himself once again.

But here's what's vital for you to understand: he didn't respond in that way just for David's sake, but for you and me as well. Why didn't God have wrecking-ball responses to David's sin? The answer is that God had plans for David and his descendants. God knew that from the family of David would come the Messiah who would be condemned. Jesus would take the full brunt of God's wrecking-ball anger against sin. And he would do that so we would never face condemnation but have the hope of full and final restoration.

So, in his grace God hammers at you, not with the sledgehammers of condemnation but with the small hammers of restoration. He's constantly tapping the wedges of redemption into place. He's constantly working to separate you and me from our sin. He's refinishing us by his grace so that we can shine with his character. We're forever free from the fear of the wrecking balls of condemnation. He was willing to be condemned so that we may live in beauty and for the purpose for which we were first constructed, the praise of his glory.

### Take a Moment

1. Where do you see God's small hammers of redemption working restoration and change in your life?
2. Are you thankful for grace that is often painful but clearly accomplishing its work?

## 36 | Immanuel

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Cast me not away from your presence.

PSALM 51:11

You haven't really understood Psalm 51 until you have realized that every word of this penitential psalm cries for Jesus. Every promise embedded in this psalm looks for fulfillment in Jesus. Every need of Psalm 51 reaches out for help in Jesus. Every commitment of Psalm 51 honors Jesus. The sin that's at the heart of this psalm will only ever find its cure in the grace of Jesus.

Yes, Psalm 51 is a prayer of confession. And it's true that Psalm 51 is all about what true repentance produces in the heart and life of a man. Psalm 51 defines how true repentance always produces heartfelt worship. But more than anything else, Psalm 51 is Immanuel's hymn. The forgiveness of Psalm 51 rests on the shoulders of the One whose name would be Immanuel. The Jesus who would provide everything that David (and we) need took a glorious name. It is a name whose implications are almost too wonderful to grasp and too lofty to imagine. It's a name that summarizes everything the biblical narrative is about.

Genesis 1 reminds us that people were created for relationship with God. This was to be what separated us from the rest of creation and defined our lives. Genesis 3 chronicles the horror of people stepping out of the fellowship in pursuit of the vaporous hope of autonomy. The covenant promises of the Old Testament are God saying that he'll make a way for that fellowship to be restored. The cloud of glory in the holy place of the temple was a physical manifestation of God's presence with his people. All of these things were steps on a ladder that was leading to Immanuel. The announcement of the angels to those bewildered shepherds was God's announcement that Immanuel had come. The promise of the Spirit, fulfilled in the visible

flames of Acts, declares that Immanuel had come to stay. The hope of heaven is understood only when you grasp what it means to dwell in the presence of Immanuel forever.

What is all of this about for you today? David's hope is your hope because David's confession is your confession. You will only get what God has given you when you understand that you need much more than a system of answers; what you actually need is a Redeemer. Why? Because only a Redeemer can rescue you from you! And so God didn't simply offer you legal forgiveness. Praise him that he did that. But he offered you something much more profound. He offered you himself. He knew that your need was so great that it wouldn't be enough to simply forgive you. He literally needed to unzip you and get inside you, or you would never be what you were supposed to be and do what you were supposed to do.

And so the whole redemptive story marches toward Immanuel, the Redeemer who would destroy sin's dominion in our hearts by making our hearts the place where he, in his power, wisdom, and glory, would dwell.

So pray Immanuel prayers. Sing Immanuel songs. Exercise Immanuel faith. Live in Immanuel obedience. Be motivated by Immanuel glory. And be glad the hope of hopes has come. Immanuel is with you now and forever!

### Take a Moment

1. Do you live—in the hallways, family rooms, bedrooms, and boardrooms of everyday life—aware of the presence of Immanuel? Do you think of yourself as the place where Immanuel lives?
2. Read Galatians 2:20. Reflect on what it means to live believing that Jesus lives inside of you and empowers you to do what God has called you to do where you live every day.