

# Forgiven.

## Psalm 51

A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

<sup>1</sup>Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup>Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity  
And cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup>For I know my transgressions,  
And my sin is ever before me.

<sup>4</sup>Against You, You only, I have sinned  
And done what is evil in Your sight,  
So that You are justified when You speak  
And blameless when You judge.

<sup>5</sup>Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,  
And in sin my mother conceived me.

<sup>6</sup>Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,  
And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

<sup>7</sup>Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup>Make me to hear joy and gladness,  
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

<sup>9</sup>Hide Your face from my sins  
And blot out all my iniquities.

<sup>10</sup>Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup>Do not cast me away from Your presence  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of Your salvation  
And sustain me with a willing spirit.

<sup>13</sup>Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners will be converted to You.

<sup>14</sup>Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;  
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

<sup>15</sup>O Lord, open my lips,  
That my mouth may declare Your praise.

<sup>16</sup>For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.

<sup>17</sup>The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

<sup>18</sup>By Your favor do good to Zion;  
Build the walls of Jerusalem.

<sup>19</sup>Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices,  
In burnt offering and whole burnt offering;  
Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

## *A Note about Summer Study Guides...*

Even though we have officially moved into the summer time and many of our community groups have begun their much deserved summer break, many of you have requested that we continue to publish studies, and we'll continue to do that for the majority of our messages throughout the summer. They seem to be a good resource for bringing the message out of Sunday morning and into real, everyday life. We encourage you to use them individually, with your family, or with your small group from time to time during the summer, should you guys decide to get together.

## *No matter how big you blow it...*

Last week we concluded our study of John's vision of the new heavens and new earth. Next Sunday, on Father's Day, we'll be looking at Proverbs 30. Tucked in between is this week's study of Psalm 51. In this powerful and passionate song of the ancient people of Israel, King David reveals this fundamental truth: ***no matter how big you blow it, you can be forgiven!***

This great song of confession and repentance is set against a landscape of profound moral failure and human tragedy. Before David wrote these words, at the pinnacle of his power and influence, he slipped into the darkest depths of human depravity. While his army went to war without their King, David cast his eye on the beautiful wife of one of his most loyal and courageous soldiers. Then this chosen King of Israel, forerunner to the Messiah, committed adultery with her, and she became pregnant. To cover his sin, he then had her husband murdered in battle (2 Samuel 11).

David thought that he had gotten away with these terrible offenses until God sent the prophet Nathan to confront him. (2 Samuel 12) As the King of Israel, David could have simply rejected the word of the God's prophet (and, likely, had the prophet killed). Instead, he repented, and he wrote this Psalm.

By grace David submitted to God's word, as brought to him by God's prophet, and then threw himself solely upon God's mercy. Both of his sins (adultery and murder) were punishable by death according to the law of God (see Deut. 22:22; Numbers 35:30) and yet, as we'll see, David asked for and then received pardon instead. He was forgiven! There is much to learn here about the kind of confession that leads to forgiveness.

As with many of the Psalms, Psalm 51 has a superscription (a short statement written about the first verse of the Psalm itself, in this case giving direction to the choir director and indicating the occasion for the Psalm). The superscriptions in the Psalms do not receive a verse number, but they are contained within the inspired Hebrew text. That is to say, they are scripture also and, at least in this case, have a lot to say.

Psalm 51 (NASB) - Superscription - "For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to (lit. 'went in to') him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

That's a graphic statement! David is dealing graphically and specifically with his sin right out of the gate. He also deals publicly with it (he gives his private confession to the choir director that it might be included in the hymnal of the people of God throughout all generations.

1) Why do you think that it's important that we deal graphically and specifically with our sin?

2) What causes us to be less than frank with God and others about our sin?

3) Why do you think that David took his private confession to the choir director and recorded it publicly for God's people?

4) Has there ever been a time in your life when you have made a past failure or struggle known to another person with the hopes that it would be helpful to them in some way? How did it go?

***Psalm 51:1 (NASB) <sup>1</sup>Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.***

The basis of David's cry for relief is rooted in his knowledge of the character and nature of God himself. Though he is guilty, he appeals to God's "loving kindness" (In the Hebrew, "Hesed" is God's covenantal love and faithfulness toward his people) and "compassion." (see also Jonah 4:2; Exodus 35:5-8)

5) Does David's understanding of God's loving kindness and compassion square with your understanding and experience? Explain.

***Psalm 51:1-2*** <sup>1</sup>*Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.* <sup>2</sup>*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity. And cleanse me from my sin.*

Whether you're guilty or not, when you stand before a judge, you want to hear that pronouncement: "not guilty!" David is no exception to that (to "blot out" means to erase - that is, he's asking to be declared forgiven in a legal sense). However, he then goes on and asks to be washed and cleansed.

6) Why do you think that David also asks for cleansing? What is he really seeking with this request (i.e., what is the practical effect of such a cleansing)?

***Psalm 51:3-5*** <sup>3</sup>*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.* <sup>5</sup>*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.*

The word "know" in verse 3 is the same word used in Genesis 4:1, where it says that Adam "knew" or "had relations with" his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. It is not so much intellectual knowledge, as it is experiential knowledge. David, who "knew" Bathsheba, is saying here that he also "knows" his sin. It is very transparent and, again, graphic in nature. He then goes on to confess the fact that he was conceived in sin and born in sin. He's not blaming his mother for his sin. He is, instead, confessing that his sin runs even deeper than merely his actions. That is to say, he doesn't just sin, he's a natural born sinner! He didn't just fall, he is fallen! He's confessing that, apart from God's help, he's liable to do something like this again! And here's the really important part: he doesn't want to do it again. He wants to live differently. To "repent" means to "turn from."

7) Why would David confess his fallen condition to God like this? What help does he seek?

8) If we confess our sins to God and yet plan to go out and do the same thing later on (or to continue to live in the very sin that we've confessed), then is our confession really valid? Does true confession simply equal feeling sorry for what we've done?

***Psalm 51:6-9*** <sup>6</sup>*Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.* <sup>7</sup>*Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* <sup>8</sup>*Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice.* <sup>9</sup>*Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.*

9) Since one cannot "hear" an emotional state ("joy and gladness"), what do you think that David is saying here?

10) David's statements regarding his "bones" that God had "broken" is actually a reference to his psyche. What does that tell you about the psychological effect that David experienced as a result of the awful sins that he committed? Who caused that effect?

11) Can you recall a time in your life when you were plagued or distressed as a result of some sin that you committed?

***Psalm 51:10-12*** <sup>10</sup>*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* <sup>11</sup>*Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.* <sup>12</sup>*Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.*

The word "create" here is the same word as that used in the beginning of the Bible, where God "created" all things out of nothing.

12) What then do you think that David is asking of God when he asks God to "create" in him a clean heart?

The Holy Spirit came upon certain people in the Old Testament and gifted them with great power and wisdom, etc. so that they could do the work of the Lord in their day. If you read through the book of Judges, you will find numerous examples of this. But you will also find some examples in which the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from these biblical characters (e.g., Samson). King Saul, David's predecessor and the first king of Israel (the first king after the period of the Judges) was just such a character. The Spirit came upon him and then the Spirit left him. That is David's fear here!

13) What does this imply about our ability to build God's kingdom apart from the power of the Holy Spirit?

14) If this confession was inspired by the *Holy Spirit*, what does that imply regarding the *answer* to David's prayer? Also, what does that imply regarding God's *response* to this kind of confession?

*Psalm 51:13-15* <sup>13</sup>*Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You.* <sup>14</sup>*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, o God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.*  
<sup>15</sup>*O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.*

When God delivers, we must say something! We must give him the praise that he is due. Even when it might be a whole lot less embarrassing to keep it to ourselves.

15) Is there anything in your past that God has delivered you from that you have publicly praised him for? Is there anything that you should publicly praised him for, but that, thus far, you have kept to yourself? If so, why?

*Insert Psalm 51:16-19* <sup>16</sup>*For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.* <sup>17</sup>*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.* <sup>18</sup>*By Your favor do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem.* <sup>19</sup>*Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.*

David is not denying the need for blood (see verse 7 - the hyssop that he references was dipped in blood and water and used to sprinkle God's people, indicating the covering of one's sins via innocent blood.) What he's referring to here is the great feast (think party and festivities) that was usually associated with sacrifices. He's saying, "This is no time for a feast. A woman has been defiled here; a man has been murdered here; an illegitimate child has been produced here, etc." He's saying that a feast is inappropriate. He's offering his broken spirit as that upon which it is appropriate to feast.

16) What is it that stands between sinners and true brokenness?

*If this study has caused you to reflect personally on a sin or situation with which you're struggling right now, seek through authentic faith and graphic confession, like David, to lay it before God and ask Him not only to forgive you but to declare you "not guilty" because of Jesus' sacrifice for your sins.*

*If you need to speak with someone, please don't hesitate to contact [Tom@riovistachurch.com](mailto:Tom@riovistachurch.com) or [Matt@riovistachurch.com](mailto:Matt@riovistachurch.com), or call the office at 954-522-2518 and ask for a pastor.*

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