

Psalm 51

A. Introduction

1. David is the author
2. Clearly a psalm of personal confession and plea for forgiveness
3. Prescript states that it was David's confession after he was confronted by Nathan about his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11-12):
 - 1) David stays home instead of going out for battle in the spring
 - 2) He sleeps all day, gets up in the evening and as he walks around his roof he sees a woman bathing in the courtyard of her home
 - 3) He inquires about her and learns that she is married and the wife of one of his mighty men, Uriah the Hittite (the mighty men were a group of 37 of David's most trusted and trustworthy/faithful soldiers)
 - 4) David summons her anyway, commits adultery with her and she ends up pregnant with his child
 - 5) Upon learning of this, David tries to cover it up by calling for Uriah and trying to convince him to go home and have sex with his wife
 - 6) When Uriah refuses (because his men are still at war and not able to go home to their wives) David then tries to get him drunk so he will go home to be with his wife
 - 7) When that doesn't work, David orders the murder of Uriah and tries to make it look like a casualty of war
 - 8) After Uriah is murdered, David calls for Bathsheba and makes her his wife
 - 9) David's sin does not go unnoticed by God who sends His prophet, Nathan, to rebuke David
 - 10) David ultimately confesses his sin
4. Outline
 - a. David's petition for forgiveness (1-4)
 - b. David's petition for cleansing (5-9)
 - c. David's petition for renewal and restoration (10-13)
 - d. David's petition for a broken spirit and contrite heart (14-18)

B. David's Petition for Forgiveness (1-4)—there are two parts to this petition

1. First Part: David begins by pleading for something he doesn't deserve: God's grace (1-2): **"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."**
 - a. Notice a few things here: First, look at what David is asking God to do:
 - 1) **"blot out (wipe out) my transgressions"**
 - 2) **"wash me thoroughly"**
 - 3) **"cleanse me from my sin"**
 - b. Second, notice that he pleads his case for grace based not on his own merit, but on two of God's character traits: His loving-kindness (covenant loyalty) and the greatness of His compassion
 - c. Finally, notice the depth of his sin: he uses three different words to describe it:

- 1) **“transgressions”**: refers to willful disobedience or presumptuous sins
 - 2) **“iniquity”**: probably premeditated or planned sin, moral decadence or wickedness
 - 3) **“sin”**: probably the most general of terms for doing anything that violates God’s principles or commands, missing the mark, falling short of God’s standards
2. Second Part: David confesses His sin (3-4)—I want you to notice three things here as well:
- a. He admits his sin:
 - 1) **“For I know my transgressions”**
 - 2) **“My sin is ever before me.”**
 - 3) David doesn’t white-wash his sin by calling by other names or making excuses (i.e. “an affair”, “a mistake”, “I’m sorry IF I did something you didn’t like”, etc.)
 - b. He recognized that his sin was ultimately an offense to God (4a):
 - 1) **“Against you only have I sinned”**
 - 2) **“and done what is evil in your sight”**
 - c. He accepted the fact that God was right and just to judge him (4b):
 - 1) **“you are justified when you speak”**
 - 2) **“blameless when you judge”**

C. David’s Petition for Cleansing (5-9)

1. David’s sin created a dilemma because it put him at odds with God and what God desired of him (5-6)
 - a. His condition—he was a sinner:
 - 1) **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity”**
 - 2) **“and in sin my mother conceived me”**
 - b. God’s desire:
 - 1) **“You desire truth in the innermost being”**
 - 2) **“in the hidden part you will make me know wisdom”**
2. David’s only hope was God’s willingness and power to cleanse him (7-9): --there are a ton of word pictures here
 - a. **“Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean”** (word picture from ceremonial cleansing laws in the OT)
 - b. **“Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”**
 - c. **“Make me to hear joy and gladness”**
 - d. **“Let the bones which you have broken rejoice”**
 - e. **“Hide your face from my sins and blot out my transgressions”**
3. 1 John 1:9

D. David’s Petition for Renewal and Restoration (10-13)—David makes three requests here and one promise or pledge

1. His first request is for a renewed spirit (10):
 - a. **“Create in me a clean heart”**

- b. **“renew a steadfast (upright) spirit within me”**
- 2. His second request is that God not abandon Him (11)
 - a. **“Do not cast me away from your presence”**
 - b. **“and do not take your Holy Spirit from me”**
 - c. **These are both references to what happened to Saul and ultimately a plea that God would not abandon David as king (see 1SAM 28)**
- 3. His third request is for God to restore his joy and a willing spirit (12):
 - a. **“restore to me the joy of your salvation”**
 - b. **“and sustain me with a willing spirit”**
 - c. Notice that David wants a return of the joy he had before his sin with Bathsheba and return of the desire he had to obey God (NET: **“Let me again experience the joy of your deliverance! Sustain me by giving me the desire to obey!”**)

My own “I don’t care” attitude when struggling with sin

- 4. His pledge (13):
 - a. **“I will teach transgressors your ways”**
 - b. **“and sinners will be converted to you”** (lit. turn back to you...sounds like David, doesn’t it??)
- 5. This petition for renewal by David is a plea for God to work in his heart, to help him accept God’s chastisement as a positive thing in his life—see **HEBREWS 12:1-11**

E. David’s Petition for a Broken Spirit and a Contrite Heart (14-18)
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- 1. David names the sin (**“blood guiltiness”**=murder) and knows that only God can remove the guilt—and consequences--of his sin (14)
- 2. But, he knows that guilt-less-ness or having his sins forgiven was not enough
- 3. God desires the sacrifices of a broken spirit and contrite heart (15-17):
 - a. A broken spirit is one that is submissive to God
 - b. A contrite heart is one that feels and expresses genuine remorse when it sins
- 4. It is only then that God finds delight in our sacrifices and offerings (18)

F. Conclusion

1 John 1:5-10