

Psalm 51

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,

you who are God my Savior,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion,
to build up the walls of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous,
in burnt offerings offered whole;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

1 John 1:5-10

Light and Darkness, Sin and Forgiveness

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

It would be good to have your Bibles opened up at Psalm 51.

There's a **sermon outline** for you to take **notes**.

Let me **pray** first. Let's pray...

Intro/Context/Confession

This is the 2nd part of our four part on series on **prayer**

[Slide-Prayer]

Last week we said **prayer** is:

pouring out our hearts to God, bringing every need and thanksgiving to Him, as we draw near in trust and confidence through Christ.

[Slide-Abraham]

And we talked about **Abraham being a friend of God**

And that **friends of God build an altar and pray** - Adoration

And that **friends of God pray for others – compassionately, in faith, boldly and persistently.**

[Slide-Context]

The **context** this week is we are talking about **surrendering unconditionally to God** and we're looking at **King David's prayer from Psalm 51**

David wrote this Psalm after a time **he committed the most scandalous sin!** You can read about what he did in 1 Samuel 11 and 12.

But in **summary** this is what he did.

One night from the roof of his palace – King David saw a beautiful woman bathing. Her name was Bathsheba and she was married to Uriah a soldier in King David's army. All of David's army were off fighting against the Ammonites. When King David saw how beautiful Bathsheba was – he sent a messenger to bring her to the palace. King David slept with her and she became pregnant.

When David found out Bathsheba was pregnant – he tried to bring Uriah back from fighting the battle and return home to his wife, hoping Uriah would sleep with his wife and it would seem like the baby was Uriah's.

But when David realized that Uriah would not return home until all the other soldiers returned from battle – he sent word to the army commander to make sure Uriah was on the frontline – hoping Uriah would be conveniently killed in battle – which is exactly what happened!

What a terrible episode in David's life – yet David is described as '*a man after God's own heart*'! (1 Samuel 13:14)

In this incident – **David broke all of the 10 commandments**

1. You shall have no other gods before me

David put his desires above obedience to God. David was his own God!

2. You shall not make idols

Pleasure and power became idols that ruled David's heart.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD

As God's anointed king, David dishonoured God's name by his actions.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, rest and keep it Holy

Instead of resting in God's ways, David acted in selfish restlessness and sin.

And he could hardly keep the Sabbath holy whilst covering up this sin!

5. Honour your father and mother

David failed as a moral example, dishonouring his family line and legacy.

6. You shall not murder

David arranged the death of Uriah.

7. You shall not commit adultery

David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

8. You shall not steal

David stole another man's wife.

9. You shall not give false testimony

David used deception and cover-ups to hide his sin.

10. You shall not covet

David desired what belonged to Uriah and acted on that desire.

As much as David tried to cover it up this sin for 9 months – God knows everything – and sent the prophet Nathan to confront David. The result was David wrote **Psalm 51 - a heartfelt confession and submission to God**

[Slide-Mirror]

Application

Before we can pray a prayer of heartfelt confession, we must have an honest look in the mirror

And follow what Psalm 139 (another of David's psalms – and the last hymn today is based on Psalm 139) says:

²³Search me, God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting.

When was the last time, we honestly looked in the **mirror** and asked God to show us what things we have done against others and against God!

Are there things **we** still haven't confessed to God?

(pause)

Now let's look at Psalm 51 [please turn there now] - to learn how to **surrender unconditionally to God**

1st we see – **A Cry for Mercy** – vv1-2

[Slide-Mercy]

A Cry for Mercy (vv1-2)

Look at v1

Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your unfailing love;

according to your great compassion

blot out my transgressions.

David asks for God's **mercy**

By definition **mercy is undeserved**. David deserved to be punished - but David appeals to **God's character** – **God's unfailing love** – and **God's great compassion!**

God could easily have stripped David of his Kingship.

And besides - the punishment for **both adultery and murder** was the **death penalty** (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22; Exodus 21:12) and according to Deuteronomy 17:18-20, even the King must obey God's law just like everyone else.

David also feels the weight of all the sins he has committed so he continues v2

Wash away all my iniquity

and cleanse me from my sin.

The two verbs he used – **wash** and **cleanse** – might sound the same. But it's more like David is desperate and saying '*if water won't wash away my sins – then cleanse me with fire – do anything, God, to make me pure!*'

God heard David's cry of mercy.

We read in **2 Samuel 12:13** – that God told Nathan the prophet to tell David – ***"The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."***

Application

What about us?

Have we cried out for mercy – like David?

The Good News is – because God the Father sent His Son Jesus to die for the sin of the world – we have God's mercy – as we look to Jesus on the cross!

Romans 8:1 says - ***There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.***

(pause)

There is more to a prayer of confession than simply crying for mercy

2nd – there must be – **an Honest Confession of Sin** – that's vv3-6

Honest Confession of Sin (vv3-6)

[Slide-Honest Confession]

Look at v3 – David knows exactly what sins he has committed and they are always before him – it's like his conscience reminds him daily of what he has done – and that's why he **MUST** confess them!

And David says to God in v4 - ***Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;***

Of course, David has sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah and involved the Army Commander in the murder of Uriah – and David has disgraced his family – and as a King has set a terrible example to his subjects – and they all deserve an apology – but ultimately all sin is against the Lord (Genesis 39:9). You see sin is **horizontal against people** but also **vertical against God** – because sin breaks God's Law. Also, God is the ultimate judge of sin and the One we must answer to. And God is the only one who can truly forgive sin.

David continues his confession still in v4 saying – ***God, you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.***

What David is saying is that his sins deserve the strictest punishment and if God sent him to Hell, David would have said “Yes, Lord, that is fair!”. David offered no excuses for his sins because he knew that no excuse would hold up!

David also acknowledges in verse 5 – ***he was sinful from the birth*** – this is **the doctrine of original sin** - the truth that all humans are born sinners, receiving a sinful nature as sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.

I know sometimes I've sinned after I have sinned "**Lord, that wasn't like me to rebel against you**" – when in fact – it is like me – it's like all of us – **we are born sinners!**

And that is why we all need Jesus - to be saved from our sins!

What David realizes in his confession here is as he says in verse 6 – God **desired Faithfulness even in the womb / inward parts**". What David means is:

- God doesn't just want outward obedience
- He wants **real truthfulness, integrity, and loyalty to Him deep inside us**
- From the very beginning of our life, God's standard has always been for us to have **faithfulness in our hearts, not surface religion**

David's sin has exposed that his heart was not right, as well as his actions.

And still in v6 – David says: "**You taught me wisdom in that secret place**" It's like David is saying:

"Lord, you are the only One who can teach me your wisdom and put it in my heart. My sin has shown I can't do that on my own."

You see David has been living the lie – that because God chose him to be King and blessed him greatly and he is '**a man after God's own heart**' – He can get away with anything!

Even today, many people who commit **adultery** will say '**they're having an affair**' or '**they're in a meaningful relationship now**'.

Society now calls **abortion** – "**interruption of an unwanted pregnancy**" or a "**medical procedure**"

We talk about "**white lies**"

We justify sin because “***everyone does it***”

We talk about how ‘God is for love’ – so **homosexuality** is “***an acceptable alternative lifestyle – and besides God wants us to be happy!***”

Even drug taking is referred to as “***recreational drugs***”

Abraham Lincoln once asked a critic “How many legs would a dog have if you counted its tail as a leg”

The critic answered “five”

“No!”, Lincoln said “The answer is four. Just calling a tail a leg doesn’t make it a leg!”

Likewise – calling sin something else doesn’t stop it being a sin!

God requires an honest confession!

You see King David – had made himself his own God – and David thought he was the boss of the universe.

A friend of mine recently said her lesson from last year was she was resigning as CEO [[chief executive officer](#)] of the universe – and submitting to God.

Perhaps that should be our New Year’s resolution – confess our sins – submit to God - and resign as CEO of the universe!

David is not done yet!

He’s **cried for mercy** – he’s **made an honest confession**

3rd – **He asks for a Cleansed and a Renewed Relationship with God vv7-12**

Ask for a Cleansed Heart and a Renewed Relationship with God (vv7-12)

[Slide-Cleansed Heart]

Notice that the best prayers of confession also include faith – David says in v8 –

“Wash me, and I will be as white as snow”

David, even though he is in the deepest spiritual pain, had faith that he would be cleansed ***“as white as snow”***.

David went on to make another bold request in v10: ***“Create in me a pure heart, O God”***

David had lusted with his **eyes** for Bathsheba, but he didn't ask God to give him pure eyes; he pleaded for **a pure heart**! He went to the source of the problem – his heart! He begged for a cure that would change him from the inside out!

If we tell **lies**, our problem is not our **tongue**; it's our heart.

If we love listening to **gossip**, our problem is not our **ears**; it's our heart!

If we crave **food** to the point of being a **glutton** or we have a drop of **alcohol** which causes us to lose control and become drunk – the problem is not with our **taste buds**; it's our heart!

The attackers at Bondi recently - used **guns** – not because their **hands** were murderous but because their hearts were!

So how do **WE** get a **pure heart**?

Well – our NT reading tells us in 1 John 1:9: ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

You see – it does not matter what sins we have committed – if we genuinely confess our sins – we are forgiven – and are hearts are pure – because Jesus has taken our sin from us – and our sins are placed on Him at the cross.

Sometimes we might confess our sin to others – and they are unwilling to forgive us – but God is not like that – **He will always forgive us – if we are genuinely sorry – and make a heartfelt confession – like David did!**
That's the fantastic grace and mercy of God that we have in JESUS.

David was also concerned about his relationship with God...

So, he also asked God at the end of v10 - ***to renew a steadfast spirit within him.*** Along with a new pure heart, David needed a **steadfast spirit** to continue in the way of godliness. This expressed his humble reliance upon the LORD.

David also – v11 – said to God - ***Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me***

For David, the whole point of cleansing and restoration was to renew his relationship with God. David didn't want a God who cleansed him yet still remained distant.

David continued by praying – v12 – ***"Restore to me the joy of your salvation"***

David understood that even though he didn't lose his salvation through his sin; he did lose the joy of it, and that was bad enough!

David's request for renewed joy came only after an honest heartfelt confession of his sin and deception. Many people try to reverse the order; they beg God to 'make me happy' or 'take away my misery' – but they haven't first asked God to remove the sins that have caused their misery. Happiness is never found when we directly pursue it – it comes as a by-product of being right with God and

approved by God, after we confess our sins and believe Jesus is our saviour from sin!

Just a word of caution here...

Confession of our sins - does not remove the consequences of our sins. Yes we are free from punishment and yes, we are forgiven – but we may have to live with consequences for the rest of our life. The baby that Bathsheba and David had – died (2 Samuel 12:15). Also, later on in his life, David had lots of strife in his family as another consequence of his sin.

Whatever the consequences of our sin – they can be lived with the knowledge of knowing we have the joy of salvation – and knowing we have Heaven to look forward to – where it will be everlasting peace and joy – and no sin - no death!

After confession – comes **David's response** in vv13-19 – which is **our response!**

Our Response after surrendering unconditionally to God (vv13-19)

[Slide-Response 1]

1st response – teach others about God's forgiveness in Jesus!

David's response to confessing his sin and being forgiven – in v13 – is that he will **teach transgressors God's ways, so that sinners will turn back to God**

What David realizes is that God's forgiveness is not just meant for David, but also for others! David did indeed teach others about God's forgiveness, and this Psalm 51 he wrote, is still teaching others today!

Isn't that our response too – can't we tell others how much God has forgiven us – and encourage them to repent and believe in Jesus' death for their sins to be forgiven too!

[Slide-Response 2]

2nd Response – Praise and Worship God!

Despite – the child Bathsheba had with King David, dying a few days after birth .

We learn in 2 Samuel 12:20 – *David got up from the ground [from his grief] and after he washed and changed his clothes, he went to the House of the Lord and worshipped God!*

That's why David can say in v14 here – *my tongue will sing of your righteousness!*

And in v15 - *Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.*

To put it in one word, **worship is surrender!** In his prayer, David surrenders his sin, his life, the death of his son – David surrenders all to God!

One word found on David's lips in prayer more than any other is **praise!**

Many of David's psalms praise God!

Praise is an unconditional expression of worship, love and thanks to God!

There's a great old hymn called "*O for a thousand tongues to sing My great Redeemer's praise!*"

God hasn't given us a thousand tongues but He has given us one!

Are we using our tongue to sing God's praises unconditionally?

The opposite is to use our tongues to curse, lie, grumble, criticize and gossip!

[Slide-Response 3]

3rd response – surrender to God with a broken contrite heart

David goes on to say the best thing he can offer God – is not all the sacrifices he makes at the temple – some of which he made during the 9 months of his unconfessed sins! No, the best thing - David – and us - can offer God is v17 – **a**

broken and contrite heart – a heart that is broken by all our sins committed and

heart that is contrite – that is - full of remorse for the sins we have committed!

David realized that in his sin he did not only fail as a man, a husband, and a

father. He also failed as a king over God's people. He humbly asked God to

restore his kingdom to a good standing again – in v18-19 – which will make

Israel's worship and sacrifices again bring glory to God!

Likewise as a church – if we all have contrite hearts and make a heartfelt

confession our sins – our worship together will be more sincere and heartfelt –

and bring glory to God!

Let's pray

Heavenly Father, create in us clean hearts and renew a right spirit within us.

Help us not to hold anything back from You, but to surrender our lives to You completely. Restore to us the joy of Your salvation and lead us by Your Spirit day by day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction (Jude 24-25)

²⁴To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— ²⁵to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.