

THE CRY OF A BROKEN HEART

Psalm 51

Psalm 51 is considered one of the *richest* of all the Psalms... but you need to know the *background* of Psalm 51 to fully appreciate it.

It was *spring*...the time when *kings go out to battle*. So David *sent his soldiers* out to battle (**II Samuel 11**). But instead of *joining his army* in the battle as was *appropriate* for the king to do, David decided to *stay in Jerusalem*.

One evening, David *arose from his bed* and *walked around on the roof* of his house. And the Bible says that from the roof he *saw a woman bathing*...and the woman was *very beautiful* in appearance. The woman was named Bathsheba ...the *wife* of one of David's *soldiers*...Uriah the Hittite.

So he sent for her. When she came to him, he *laid with her* and she *conceived*...she became *pregnant* with David's *child*. David then tries to *hide his sin*. When that *doesn't work*, he had Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, *killed*!

Well, *after 9 months*, the baby is *born*. The Bible says...

"...The thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord."

~II Samuel 11:27

The Lord *sent Nathan* to David (he was *like David's pastor*). When he comes, he basically says something like...*"David, I heard something recently that really concerns me, and I thought you should know about it."*

At this point, David *doesn't think anyone knows* about his sin, except of course Bathsheba, and maybe a couple of accomplices. But it *wasn't publicly known*. Nathan begins:

"There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children (It was like a pet to them). It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him."

~II Samuel 12:1-3

Nathan continues. This *rich guy* (**vs. 4**), who *had more sheep* than he *knew what to do with*, had a *visitor* from out of town stop in for a *visit*. Instead of preparing *one of his own sheep* for his *guest to eat*, he *stole* that *one little lamb* from this *poor family*...just because *he knew he could away with it*, and he knew that they *didn't have any power* to stop him.

Scripture records how David responded to Nathan's story.

"Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion'."

~II Samuel 12:5

That's when Nathan looked at David and says...in the *most direct application point from a sermon*, ever...

"Nathan then said to David, 'You are the man!'"

~II Samuel 12:7a

- I've always wondered what *David's countenance* showed.
- Talk about an *awkward moment*.
- The *conviction was inescapable*. David's actions are *inexcusable*. David has *condemned himself to death* with his own words.

“Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.’ So Nathan went to his house.”

~II Samuel 12:13-15

Everybody sins.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

~Romans 3:23

It’s what you do when you are confronted with your sin that makes the difference between life and death. What happens next is what makes **David a man after God’s own heart.** Psalm 51 is David’s *response* to God.

I. A CRY FOR MERCY: (vs. 1-2) Seeking forgiveness

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions (vs. 1)...

What is the *basis* of David’s *plea*? Where is his *hope*? *The love, mercy, and compassion of God...not human merit.*

David doesn’t try to *rationalize* his *sin...or justify* his *sin*. He doesn’t try and make it seem like, on the scale of things, that *his sin isn’t that bad*. He puts *all of his hope* in *the love* and *mercy* of God. He basically says that he had only one *plea...one hope...it’s You, Lord, and nothing else!*

Be gracious to me...a request not for what he deserved... divine discipline...but for what he desperately needed... divine grace.

Notice the *three-fold request* expressed by **David** for *complete forgiveness* by the Lord. **Blot out...wash me...cleanse me.**

Blot out...means *to wipe the slate clean*. As if **David’s sins** were *accurately written* by God in a book, he pleaded that his acts of *sinful rebellion* would *be removed* from the record.

Transgression...literally means *disobedience...to step over the line...going somewhere you shouldn’t go (trespassing)* or *taking something that doesn’t belong to you*.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin (vs. 2)...

Wash me...*wash away* all my *iniquity* as a person would *wash dirty clothes*. Remove the *dirt, stain, and defilement*.

Iniquity...literally means to *twist, to distort, or to pervert...morally unclean*. This is the *darkness* of the *soul* that accompanies *sin*.

Cleanse me...this is a picture of the *purification* necessary for *temple worship* under the *ceremonial law*.

Sin...is more than just *missing the mark*. Scripture defines *sin* as *lawlessness* and *all unrighteousness...rebellion*.

“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”

~I John 3:4

“All unrighteousness is sin...”

~I John 5:17

II. A CONCESSION OF SIN: (vs. 3-4) Repentance

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me (vs. 3)...

About a *year* had elapsed between his *sin* and his *confession*. It had *infected* his *whole being*. He *owned* his *sin...he didn’t excuse* it.

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 (vs. 4)...

All sin is first and foremost *against* God. Though David's sin *involved others* (Bathsheba...Uriah...even Israel as a nation) he recognized that it was *ultimately against* God.

The *repetition* of **You, You** in Hebrew indicates the *intensity of emotion*.

Evil...David called his *sin* what it was...not *weakness* but *wickedness*...not an *accident* but an *atrocity*.

He accepted God's *verdict*, admitting that God was **justified** and **blameless** when He *judged* him.

III. A CALL FOR CLEANSING: (vs. 5-9)

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me (vs. 5)...

David stated that his problem was a *corrupt heart*, saying that he was **in sin** from the *moment of conception*. He was *born* with the *Adamic sin nature*. The problem with what he *did...sin...*arose from what he *was...a sinner*.

Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom (vs. 6)...

David knew that he *fell short* of God's desire for his life. He knew that he *had been living a lie* before God by *attempting* to *cover up his sin*.

Truth...denotes the idea of *absolute certainty, sureness... moral integrity*.

Wisdom...he saw his *sin* from God's *perspective*.

Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow (vs. 7)...

This alludes to the image of *a leper seeking cleansing*. To be *declared clean*, **hyssop** would be *dipped in blood* and *sprinkled seven times* on the *leper* at the *altar* (**Leviticus 14:6**).

Hyssop...is used as a *demonstration of faith* throughout Scripture. (**Exodus 12:22; John 19:29**)

David saw himself as a *spiritual leper* in need of *divine cleansing*.

Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice (vs. 8)...

Indicates how *crushed* he was by **Nathan's indictment**. His *whole body ached* under the *heavy burden of sin*.

Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities (vs. 9)...

In other words...*Forgive me so You will not look upon my sins any longer...*when You see me You *will not see my sin*.

IV. A CONTRITION THAT BRINGS RESTORATION: (vs. 10-13)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (vs. 10)...

When we *confess* our sin, God *forgives* us and *cleanses* us.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

~I John 1:9

Clean...means to *purify...*to take away *impurity, filth, and defilement*.

Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me (vs. 11)...

This is a plea that God *would not remove* His *divine power* ...**Your Holy Spirit**...from David's life. He feared being *set aside* from serving God...a *severe discipline* that he knew he *deserved* and *would suffer* if God didn't accept his *confession* and *repentance*.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit (vs. 12)...

Sin and *joy can't exist* in the *same heart* at the *same time*. Note that David *didn't request* that his *salvation* be *restored* but the *joy* of his *salvation*. He *didn't lose* his *salvation*...just as *we can't lose* our *salvation*.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You (vs. 13)...

Once *forgiven*, David committed himself to *communicate* the *truth* regarding God's *forgiveness* to other *sinners* who *transgressed* God's *Word* and His *ways*...that he would *proclaim the Gospel* believing that *sinners* would be *saved*.

V. A CONSECRATION FOR WORSHIP: (vs. 14-17)

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise (vs. 14-15)...

David knew that he was *guilty* and *deserved* the *death penalty* for his sin. *Humility* before God and *brokenness* over sin are expressions of *genuine repentance*.

For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise (vs. 16-17)...

David knew that God didn't desire only an *animal sacrifice* or *burnt offering* from him for his *sin*. The

sacrifice that God required was a *broken spirit* and a *contrite heart* (**I Samuel 15:22-23**).

Broken...used to describe the *condition of the heart* in which a person is *shattered* by *sin*.

Contrite...means *crushed* or *broken*...a *broken* or *crushed spirit*. The one element necessary for *genuine repentance*.

VI. A CONCERN FOR GOD'S GLORY: (vs. 18-19)

By Your favor do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then young bulls will be offered on Your altar (vs. 18-19)...

David was aware of the *close connection* between his *personal holiness* as the *king of Israel* and the *national blessings* from God which the people would enjoy. The *sins of leaders affect* other people as well as themselves.

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

~Exodus 14:34

The *heart* must be right before *sacrifices* can be right. The *heart* must be right before *worship* is *genuine* and *righteous*.

In closing...Many of the *martyrs* of the **Reformation** in the **1500's** *quoted* over and over **Psalm 51** on their way to be *executed*.

The first was **John Rogers**...a pastor in **England** where he preached and pastored safely under the reign of **King Edward VI**, that is, until the day when **Edward** died. Soon thereafter **Edward's half-sister Mary** proclaimed herself *queen*.

Rogers knew where **Mary** stood on *religion*: she *stood steadfast* for the *church at Rome* and *against* all *Protestant teachings*. She arrived in **London** on **Thursday, August 3,**

1553. Rogers was *appointed to preach* the following Sunday. This was his moment and he *boldly proclaimed* the gospel of salvation *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for God's glory alone...*warning the church against *"pestilent potpourri and all idolatry."*

Commenting on Rogers' sermon that day, one biographer said, *"There was never any position in the whole history of the Reformation, all things considered, where the responsibilities thrown upon one single man were greater, and the results more important."* The same historian went on to say of Rogers, *"His conduct that day was more than noble...it was magnificent."* Rogers' sermon that day would be his *last*.

A week later, he was *placed under house arrest* with his wife and *ten children*, with *another on the way*. Six months later he was *put into prison*, where he lived in *cruel conditions* for the *next year*, which led to **January 1555**. He was then summarily *examined on three occasions* and subsequently *condemned for two offenses*:

- One, *standing against the church of Rome*.
- And two, *saying that in the sacrament of the altar there is not substantially, nor really, the natural body and blood of Christ...*he preached against **Transubstantiation**.

Rogers *hadn't been able to communicate* with his wife and family the *entire time* he had been in *prison*. He *had not even met* his *youngest child*. So he *pleaded for an opportunity* to see them, or at least to speak to his wife *before he died*. His request was *refused* and the next morning he was roused from his cell. He was *led outside* into the streets of the parish he once pastored, *walking in the shadow of the church where he had preached*. Thousands of spectators lined the way and in that sea of faces he *saw his wife holding a baby*, with *ten*

other children standing beside her, looking at their father. It was the *first time* he'd ever *seen his youngest child*.

One writer said, *"Their anxious faces were all fixed on him and their voices of pain reached his ears."* Another remarked, *"It's difficult even to imagine anything more tender and affecting than this parting scene, this last adieu, to a beloved wife and so numerous an offspring, all in tears. He stood the shock with the feelings of a father and husband, but with the unshaken confidence of a Christian marching to his death."*

John Foxe, in his [Book of Martyrs](#), tells us that he walked calmly to the stake, saying over and over again the **51st Psalm**. When he arrived, the sheriff gave him *one last opportunity* to *revoke his confession of faith*, to which **Rogers** responded, *"That which I have preached, I will seal with my blood."* Within moments, the *fire* at Rogers' feet was *set ablaze*. His body slowly began to burn and as he *lifted his arms* high in the air, **J.C. Ryle** said, *"The enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause."* Ryle goes on to say, *"For up to that day, men could not tell how English reformers would behave in the face of death, and they could hardly believe that some would actually give their bodies to be burned for their religion."* And some it would be.

Why would **John Rogers** quote this **Psalm**? He, as well as others who were martyred, believed *love like this, forgiveness like this, was worth losing their lives to proclaim*.

TRUTHS WE NEED TO KNOW:

- True repentance only comes through a **BROKEN** and **CONTRITE** heart.
- When we **REPENT**, God is faithful to **FORGIVE** us, **CLEANSE** us, and **RESTORE** us.
- Restoration depends on God's **LOVE** and **GRACE**...not on our **MERIT**.