

Psa. 51:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

The events being referenced are related in 2Samuel 11-12. It references the time that David committed adultery with the wife of one of his mighty men and then had him put at the front of the battle when he found out that the woman was pregnant. Uriah, her husband, was killed.

Psa. 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Psa. 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

David knows that in light of his sin, his only hope is in God's mercy. I've always heard mercy defined as not getting what you deserve. That is a true definition, but Webster had another definition which seemed to go hand in hand with the Hebrew: "Disposition to exercise compassion or favor; pity; compassion; willingness to spare or to help." Although He is righteous and just, He is also a God of love. He is ever ready to respond to a man who is sincerely repentant. David knows this. The history of his people is full of examples. God still pronounces judgment on the sin, but He is always eager for restored fellowship with the child of faith. Jeremiah tells us in the book of Lamentations that God's mercy is directly connected to His compassion which is limitless.

Lam. 3:22 *It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

Lam. 3:23 *They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.*

David wants no less than for his transgression to be blotted out/erased. He can't stand the thought of their being anything that would keep him from fellowship with God. David realizes he is helpless. Only God can wash him and make him clean again; the Hebrew clarifies that David desires spiritual cleansing.

Psa. 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

David is aware that cleansing cannot happen until he admits his sin. The sacrificial system that God established for the Jewish people gave emphasis to that truth. David is acknowledging not only his sin, but his transgression. *Transgression* is a reference to direct rebellion and disregard of God's law. *Sin* is a term that includes trespassing but also embodies the fact that we all "fall short" of perfection. David is acknowledging his specific disobedience, but he is also aware that he can never measure up on his own. He is dependent on God's provision for him.

Psa. 51:4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

I've often thought about the first phrase in this verse. Why does David consider his sin to be only against God? Why wasn't it also against Uriah, and according to the circumstances against Bathsheba? I guess as I think it through, the sin/transgression is identified as such because it goes against God's established law. Other people suffered because of David's actions, but his sin was against God.

David doesn't mince words; he calls his sin evil. In this case the sin involved murder and is easily recognized as evil, but we (those who follow God in faith) need to identify every sin as evil. When we try to candycoat our sin, it sets us up to more readily repeat that sin. If we recognize it as evil, we are more apt to want to avoid that sin.

The wording in the KJV makes it sound like God's judgment is righteous only because David's sin is evil. That is not the case. God's pronouncement of judgment on David's sin is righteous and justified--period. (5/07) It's because of evil that we understand righteousness.

Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

David is stating that he knows that he was born a sinner. David is not saying that it was sinful for his mother to become pregnant and give birth to him. He knew the truth that Paul taught in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...
Because of Adam's sin, each and every person born into the world possesses a sin nature.

Psa. 51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

David is also aware that God looks on the heart. God desires (is pleased with) truth (trustworthiness, faithfulness). David knows that wisdom comes from God.

Ex. 36:2 And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom...

Job 38:36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? (God is speaking to Job in this verse.)

This truth is supported in the New Testament in the book of James.

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Psa. 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Hyssop is some type of plant that became associated with cleansing because of God's instruction for its use in purification of the person cured of leprosy and in preparation of the ashes of the red heifer, which were used by the priests for purification from sin. David is expressing his desire to be made pure based upon the system that God had established for the Jewish people. David knows that when God purges/cleanses him he will be "whiter than snow."

Psa. 51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

David is so filled with such painful remorse that he feels like all his bones have been broken. He knows that the only way he can again experience joy or gladness is through God's forgiveness—through spiritual healing.

Psa. 51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

The Hebrew for the word *hide* states “to hide (by covering).” Because David is a Hebrew poet, I know he is using the poetic tool of repetition. This helps clarify the meaning of the first phrase. He is not asking God to cover His face or to avoid knowledge of David’s sin; David is asking God to cover his sin—to blot out all his iniquities. The phrase *rub out* is from the Hebrew word for “erase.” David wants a clean slate before the Lord—a new beginning. He knows that he can again be “whiter than snow” before God if God is the One that cleanses him.

Psa. 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

David continues to express his desire for God’s cleansing and forgiveness. The word *create* stood out to me. David is basically asking for a brand new heart—a heart that is pure. He is asking for his spirit to be restored to fellowship and peace with God. He is completely aware that his fellowship with God can only be restored by God.

It is exactly the same awareness we must have in coming to God for salvation. That salvation can only be obtained through accepting God’s provision of His Son, His gift. There is nothing that we can do to earn that salvation.

Psa. 51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

David greatly feared being separated from the presence of God in His life through the departure of the Holy Spirit. He was not secure in his position before God. David’s knowledge of forgiveness was rooted in a sacrificial system that served to only temporarily cover one’s sin. (8/08) Sacrifice provided forgiveness, but only to that point in time. The next sin would require another sacrifice.

David’s experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit was as a temporary empowerment given by God to certain people to accomplish His purposes, but it was not necessarily a permanent gifting.

Since the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, we are privileged to enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His continual presence and all the benefits associated with that presence. The Spirit is our seal of salvation--our security.

Eph. 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph. 1:14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

The word *sealed* in verse 13 means “to stamp for security or preservation.” The *earnest* is a “pledge given as security for the rest” to come.

Psa. 51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.

David knew what it was to have the joy of the Lord in his life. He no longer possessed that joy. The word for *salvation* includes the ideas of liberty, deliverance, prosperity and safety. Those would all be terms descriptive of a person who is walking in obedience and fellowship with the Lord.

Being able to walk in obedience to the Lord is so liberating. You don't have to guess at what is OK and what is not; He has given us His word just as surely as David had His word to establish what is acceptable and what is not. You don't have to wonder whether or not you are pleasing God if you are being obedient to God. When you are walking in obedience to God, you can count on God's deliverance in times of testing or temptation. You can count on spiritual prosperity, which is the most important. You can feel safe and secure knowing that the *worst* thing that could happen to you (death) is that you get to go to heaven sooner than anticipated.

David also expresses his desire to be able to rely on God's provision for him through the presence of the Spirit, The Source through whom God reveals His truth and provides comfort and wisdom etc.

Psa. 51:13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

The word *then* has been added by the translators, unnecessarily in my opinion. At no point do I get the impression that David questions that he will receive God's complete forgiveness and cleansing. David is declaring his resolve to teach other transgressors about God's mercy and forgiveness. A teacher is always more effective if he has had personal experience with the subject matter. David is experiencing the very depths of God's mercy and forgiveness and righteous judgment because of his sin. He believes his personal testimony will have a great impact on those who hear it and will result in causing other sinners to "turn back" (from the Hebrew for *converted*) to God.

Psa. 51:14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

In this verse David is specifically asking forgiveness for murdering Uriah. He knows that only God has the right to take a man's life. Sad to say, David was a man of war, a man that had taken many lives under the authority that God had established over/through him. I would assume that most of those who died at his hand were "allowed" under God's authority under King Saul or as God's appointed authority as the king. I would assume that as a man of war one would become desensitized to the value of human life along the way. It was honorable for a warrior to die in battle, so David didn't hesitate to put Uriah at the front of the battle when it became obvious that that was his only out. Somehow he lost sight of the fact that God saw his actions and knew that it was a deliberate act of murder.

David acknowledges God as the only One Who can deliver him from the penalty he deserved as established by God's law. That law stated that one who killed a man was to be killed by man. God did judge David for his sin, but He judged

him in mercy based on his repentance. Innocent blood was shed in judgment of David's sin, the blood of his son.

David is not shy. He is ready to sing aloud the message of God's righteousness. It is only fitting that a musician would want to express his feelings in song.

Psa. 51:15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

"praise" = laudation, a hymn, to be clear, to shine, to make a show, to boast

I thought it was interesting that the word *praise* was described as a hymn, a form of musical expression. What would the song be boasting about or calling attention to? God and His attributes—His love, mercy and forgiveness. Songs are an expression of the heart. David knew that it was up to God to give him a clean heart before he could sing God's praise.

Psa. 51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

Psa. 51:17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

These verses are a good example of why David was considered a man after God's own heart. He was living in a culture that was dominated by sacrifices offered according to God's own instructions. The natural thought would be that these sacrifices were pleasing to God since they represented a response of obedience. Obedience is always pleasing to God. That is the key. When the child of God does sin, it is the heart of that child with which God is most concerned. The offering of sacrifices is an outward expression of repentance and the desire to be forgiven, but just because someone is going through the motions of what was expected doesn't mean their heart is involved. In that case it is just a ritual act with no true repentance. David is aware that it is a *broken* (crushed, destroyed, hurt) and *contrite* (broken down with grief, deeply sorrowful, thoroughly penitent) heart in which God delights.

Psa. 51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

David has unburdened his heart before the Lord and now asks for God's blessings on his beloved city and its people. As I looked at the Hebrew, I got a sense that David was asking for spiritual healing for his people and his city. "Do good" had reference to "making well, sound and acceptable" among other things. The word *build* made reference to repairing. David is asking for God to do whatever is necessary to bring Jerusalem and its people into right standing before God—a people that will bring God delight.

Psa. 51:19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

If the people of Jerusalem repent of their sin and turn back to God, God can again take delight in their sacrifices and burnt offerings. When their obedience to God is reflective of a heart desiring to please God, the sacrifices and offerings become

actions that demonstrate dependence and faith in God to provide for them—an attitude that delights the Almighty.