

Psalm 51

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.

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In this Psalm, King David is finally confessing to God his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. The contrite heart of David is evident and the whole Psalm is a great model for us when we approach God in confession.

- Notice in verse 1 that David is appealing to God's character and not his own.
- How is it possible for David to exclaim "Against you, you only, have I sinned?" (vs. 4) What about his sin against Uriah or Bathsheba? I think from David's perspective, sin was something that was against the Holy One – God. Sin by his definition was something that was away from God's character or will. Yes sin affects other people, by bringing pain and sorrow, but from David's perspective sin was against God and God alone. Contrast this with Matthew 17:3-4.
- Verses 10-12 are some of the most beautiful in Scripture. They are a prayer we can pray over and over as we confess our sins to God. These are great verses to memorize!

The final thought I want to share with you is to take verse 13 into focus. I do not believe God's plan is for us to sin, but when we do He is able to redeem the situation. One way He does this is by allowing us to speak into other people's lives and to tell our story as a way of helping them avoid or overcome the same sin. Be willing to share your story and teach someone how God transformed your faith and life through confession and repentance.