

HEART CLEANING 101

Psalm 51

Key Truth:

Transformation comes through confession

Israel's king David. A man the bible refers to as "a man after God's Own Heart" (Acts 13:22) is one of the great figures in all of scripture. But, he didn't always look like such a great and Godly figure. To read the full story of David's great sin, see 2 Samuel 11-12. The plot line goes something like this: David slept with the wife (Bathsheba) of one of his most committed soldiers (Uriah), and when he was unable to cover it up, he had Uriah killed, and took Bathsheba as his wife. This is one of the most awful betrayals and evils in scripture, yet even after this takes place David is held up as a great man. How can this be? How could someone who had done such evil, be restored to prominence? Simply put, David's heart was transformed through a confession which relied completely on the **steadfast love** and **abundant mercy** of God. David was and is an example of Godliness, because he was a man who deeply desired that God would change his heart. And God did just that.

Psalm 51

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!
- 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
- 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
- 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
- 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.
- 14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.
- 15 O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.
- 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- 18 Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;
- 19 then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

This is one of the most famous Psalms of David. It is a powerful poem of confession that we can read and echo in our own hearts and minds. It begins and is truly build on two powerful aspects of God's nature toward us. His "steadfast love" and his "abundant mercy". Without the love and mercy of God there is no such thing as confession and forgiveness! With these two powerful truths about God's character firmly in the front of his mind, David turns his gaze onto his own character. This is a bleak picture as David uses numerous different terms to describe the evil he has done. Iniquity, Sin and transgression. He is not brushing it off or making light of it. He is calling it what it is. He also recognizes who ultimately he has sinned against. Even though he has killed, injured, hurt and lied to a number of different people, David recognizes that God is the one who he has ultimately sinned against, and God is justified in His judgment and punishment of David's actions.

David then turns and recognizes his own character. He doesn't stop at confessing the actual actions, he identifies an even deeper problem. David is born in sin. Sin isn't just the evil actions he has done, sin is at the core of who he is, producing evil actions, thoughts and attitudes. Sin is the tree that bears bad fruit. In order to deal with bad fruit, you can't simply remove the fruit, you have to deal with the tree. In vs 6, David begins to deal with the tree. He recognizes God desires truth and wisdom in the place where sin resides. But there is a purging and cleansing that has to take place, as God hears David's cry of confession and responds by forgiving him and hiding His face from the evil, and blotting it out. Once this is done the transformation continues by a re-making David's heart and spirit, and restoring the joy of his deliverance from the guilt of his sin.

David's response is a beautiful example to us of the true response of a forgiven and free heart. He moves from the downcast head and broken voice of sinner in confession, to the uplifted head and ringing voice of one who is set free! Teaching others the way to forgiveness, and singing and praising God in response to His great love and mercy. David's mention of the sacrifices and burnt offering aren't telling us God no longer desires those things, but that those things are meaningless without the "broken and contrite heart" they should come from. The tree of David's soul is now a broken and contrite heart that will produce the fruit of Godliness.

David then moves from thinking of just himself to thinking of his people and nation. He desired that Jerusalem would be protected and that the people's hearts would be broken and contrite toward God in their own lives. This is the foundation for the sacrifice system. God's desire was never that the sacrifices would simply be completed, but that the nations hearts would be transformed through confession and the sacrifices would be brought out of that here, and that is what will please God.

This Psalm is rich in truth that immediately and powerfully impacts our lives. Let's just look at a couple of them. First, in order for us to be forgiven of our great sin problem, we must fall fully and completely upon God's love and mercy toward us. No amount of "sacrifices" like going to church, giving to the poor, helping our neighbors can make us right with God! God desires that we all would understand His great love for us, most powerfully seen in the coming of Jesus Christ to bear the penalty for our sin. When we understand this, confession of our sin is the only response! Second, David was a man of God because he continued to have a broken and contrite spirit even after all the guilt had gone. How easy is it for us to say a quick prayer of confession over a specific sin then move right along with our day. When we do evil, it would be wise of us to prayerfully pause and pray that God would reveal to us where in our hearts this sin has fruited from, and allow God to transform us. And lastly, let us follow David's example in responding to the love and mercy given to us so freely, by seeking to share the truth of God's love with others, and by joining in the praise and worship of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, the one who truly washes us whiter than snow, and forgives all our sins, past present and future.

David's sin was great indeed! Yet God's love and mercy are greater still!