

CONCISE NOTES

PSALM 51

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF REPENTANCE

AUTHENTIC REPENTANCE

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PSALM 51

Introduction to Psalm 51

Charles H. Spurgeon

A Psalm of David. This is just such a psalm as the man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel. It is David all over, straight forward, resolute, devout; there is no trace of policy or vacillation, the Lord has appointed him to be king, and he knows it, therefore he purposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch whom the Lord himself has chosen. If we call this THE PSALM or, PIOUS RESOLUTIONS, we shall perhaps remember it all the more readily. After songs of praise a psalm of practice not only makes variety, but comes in most fittingly. We never praise the Lord better than when we do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

Outline

- I. The Importance of Repentance
- II. How to Repent
- III. What it Means to Repent

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

A Psalm of David. The background for Psalm 51 is told in 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25. It is a disturbing story for it challenges the testimony of Scripture that David was a man after God's own heart. In this instance David violated his righteous heart. He who normally exercised a righteous and noble character, debased himself. He who was a Renaissance Man, before there was a Renaissance, cast aside knowledge for a moment of foolish carnal self-indulgence. He took another man's wife for himself, and then had his loyal soldier, murdered. David continued without remorse his relationship with Bathsheba after the murder of Uriah until he was confronted by the prophet of God, Nathan. Then David repented. In summary, David's transgressions were as great as his exploits for God and Israel.

Special Note.

The Renaissance (re-birth) was a cultural movement that emphasized an individual's renewed interest in all the arts and sciences from the 14th to the 17th century. Beginning in Italy in the Late Middle Ages, the Renaissance spread to the rest of Europe and into America.

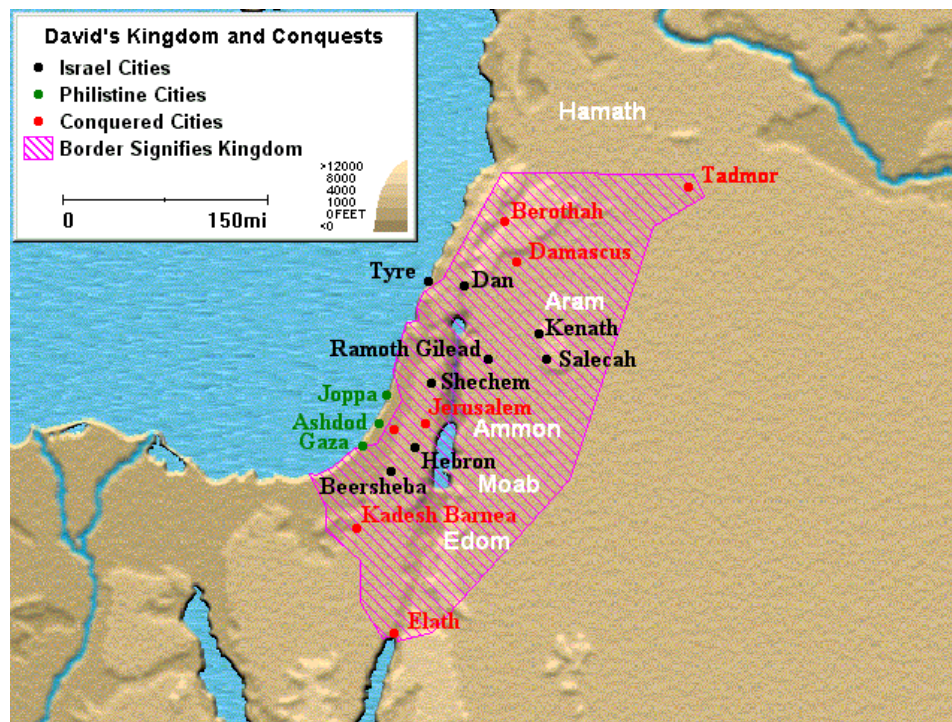
THE STORY BEHIND THE PSALM

2 SAMUEL 11

Lingering Outside the Known Will of God

And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

11:1. Ammon. The children of Ammon descended from Ben-ammi, the son of Lot by his younger daughter due to an incestuous act (Genesis 19:38; Psalm 83:7, 8). The Ammonites were a fierce and warring people given to marauding.



11:1. Rabbah was on the east side of the Jordan and existed as a leading city of the Ammonites. Here the bed or sarcophagus of the giant Og lay (Deuteronomy 3:11). Joab was successful in capturing a portion of Rabbah at the command of King David.

Lusting After Bathsheba

2 And it came to pass in an evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

11:2. he saw a woman. It is tempting to try and exonerate David to some degree by saying that his initial view of Bathsheba was not something he had planned. David simply responded in a biological way God had created him when gazing upon a beautiful and naked woman. He desired her. Unfortunately, such a defense does not hold up for a simple reason. David allowed his lust pattern full reign. Martin Luther said, “You cannot stop the black birds of sin from circling, but you can stop them from landing.” David let the black bird of lust land upon his heart and roost to the point he was drawn away of his own lust and enticed.

- *James 1:14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

Special Note.

James 1:14 has been called “The Spiritual LSD Passage of the Bible” for it speaks of Lust – Sin – Death.

3 And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?

11:3. And David sent and inquired. All sin begins with a general inquiry, a desire to know more. Then the next step is taken, and the next, until that which was first thought about conceives a way to partake of what is desired.

Special Note.

It is possible for the heart becomes hardened. It becomes calloused to the voice of conscience and wills to break through every barrier to obtain the desired prize. Truth is suppressed. Anyone who stands in the way of the desired object is viewed as an obstacle to overcome. Uriah the Hittite was not a loyal soldier in the sight of David. He was part of the problem to be overcome.

"Sin is a monster of such awful mein
that to be hated needs but to be seen
but seen to oft familiar of face
we first endure, then pity, then embrace."

-Alexander Pope

11:3. Hittite. The Hittites were descendants of Heth, the second son of Canaan. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah from the “children of Heth” The Hittites settled in the town of Hebron and grew to be a powerful tribal nation in Palestine. As such they initially opposed the Israelites considering them to be invaders (Joshua 9:1; 11:3 etc). Later, after the Hebrews had conquered the Land of Promise, David was willing to use Hittite warriors in his own army.



A Relief in Yazilikaya, Turkey Showing a File of Hittite Soldiers

4 And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

11:4. and took her. The degree of willingness of Bathsheba to give herself to the king is unclear. The Bible says that the messengers of David “took her” suggesting she was compelled to come to the king. Certainly all of the characteristics of an abused woman are present. David was in a position of power over Bathsheba. David was able to hurt or help Bathsheba. David was in total control of the situation. But then the text says “*and she came in unto him*”, suggesting that while Bathsheba may have been coerced into the presence of the king, she was not compelled by force to go into his bedchamber. “*She came in unto him*”, suggests that Bathsheba was not innocent nor was she a victim of royal rape. Bathsheba was willing to participate in despising the commandment of God.

Four Steps to Consummating Sin

- A careless look
- An unbridled act of lust
- A persistent longing
- A conscious decision to lay down in sin

Lasting Consequences of Sinful Behavior

5 And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

Uriah the Hittite: A Loyal Soldier of Honor

6 And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

7 And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.

11:7. And when Uriah was come. David demanded of Uriah a full report on the progress of the local war. David wanted Uriah to tell him how the commanding officer, Joab, was doing, how the people were doing, and how the war was progressing. After Uriah had given his field report, David instructed him to go down to his house, clean up and enjoy food and fellowship with his wife. In all of this David was scheming how to cover up his sin.

**Cover Up Scheme 1
Let Uriah Believe He is the Father of the Child**

8 And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

Foiling a Royal Cover-up

9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.

10 And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? Why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

A Resolute Man of Honor

11 And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.

Cover Up Scheme 2

**Get Uriah Inebriated in Order to Lower his Principled Inhibitions
and Raise his Sexual Proclivities**

12 And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.

13 And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

Cover Up Scheme 3 Writing a Letter of Death

14 And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

11:14. sent it by the hand of Uriah. The hardness of the human heart is reflected in part by the cynical sending the letter of death to Joab by Uriah. It must have been a dramatic moment when Joab unfurled the letter, read in amazement what he was instructed to do, looked into the eyes of Uriah, and realized that this good and decent man, this honorable soldier was being sent to his own death.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.

Death with Honor

16 And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.

11:16. a place where he knew valiant men were. Uriah the Hittite is a tragic figure in the Bible. Deceived by his wife, betrayed by his king, abandoned by his commander-in-chief, left to die on the field of battle, Uriah gave his life for an unworthy monarch.

Special Note.

Question. "Why must good people die for sinful rulers?"

Question. "Does a soldier have a moral obligation to protest an immoral order?"

Question. "Is it wrong to question military decisions?"

Question. "What should be done if the military is found to be an instrument of murder of the innocent?"

17 And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

Conveying the Cold Message of Murder in Code

18 Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

19 And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

Knowing the Enemy

20 And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? Knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

Remembering the Past

21 Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? Why went ye nigh the wall? Then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

11:21. Who smote Abimelech...? The historical narrative of this particular event is found in Judges 9.

Special Note.

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (George Santayana [1863 1952], an Italian philosopher, essayist, poet and novelist).

22 So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for.

23 And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

24 And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.

Calming the Conscience of a Co-Conspirator

25 Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him.

26 And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

The Marriage of David and Bathsheba

27 And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

11:27. she became his wife. While reigning as king for 7 ½ years in Hebron, David had several wives. He married Bathsheba after he moved the capital to Jerusalem.

Special Note.

David had a son from each of his first wives, with the exception of Michal. Bathsheba bore him four sons. In addition, 1 Chronicles 3 lists nine other children of David: “*Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, 7 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 8 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet.*” There were still more sons by concubines but these are not named (1 Chronicles 3:9).

The Eight Wives of David

Wife before Hebron	Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michal 	None (2 Samuel 6:23)
Wives in Hebron David Reigned for 7 ½ Years	Child(ren)
2 Samuel 3	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahinoam • Abigail, former wife of Nabal of Jezreel • Maacha, daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur • Haggith • Abital • Eglah 	Chileab (Daniel) Absalom, Tamar Adonijah Shephatiah Ithream
Wife in Jerusalem David Reigned for 33 Years	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathsheba 	Eldest son (died), Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon

2 SAMUEL 12

The Parable of One Little Ewe Lamb

And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

12:1. And the Lord sent Nathan. In the matter of salvation and in sanctification the Lord must take the initiative to halt the madness of sinful behavior. It was the Lord who sent Nathan to David in matchless grace. The Word of God, was sent with the Power of God, by the Prophet of God, to speak to the heart of the Man of God, to redeem him from himself. The Spirit of God has the ability to effectively wield a spiritual “sword”, which is the Word of God, to penetrate to the heart.

- *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Special Note.

Unless the Holy Spirit brings conviction and repentance to the heart, every person would persist in doing that which is right in their own eyes. Repentance may be painful, but it brings a wonderful reward, and that is freedom from the pollution and power from the bondage of sin.

2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds:

3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

12:3. one little ewe lamb. Nathan was a wise prophet, for he told a story that he knew would touch the heart of David. He appealed to David’s memories as a good shepherd. The king would remember how valuable, how precious, how attached the heart can get to just one lamb.

4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

Discerning Injustice in Others, but not in Self

5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

12:6. he had no pity. Thinking that Nathan was citing a true story of injustice in his kingdom, the heart of David was quick to discern that the rich man stole something of value from the poor man and he did so without pity. He was heartless. All he wanted was his own satisfaction.

Special Note.

It is part of human nature to be able to compartmentalize one's heart so that self is sheltered from accountability. As king, David was willing to exact justice when injustice was reported. As a man, David was willing to protect himself and suppress the truth about his own aberrant behavior. What is condoned in self is condemned in others.

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;

8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

12:8. I gave thee.

What God Gave to David

- God gave David to be king over Israel
- God gave David divine protection
- God gave David the house of Saul
- God gave David wives
- God gave David the throne of Israel and of Judah

The Root of Evil

9 Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

12:9. Wherefore. Perhaps the hardest question to answer in relation to sin is the question of, “Why?” “Why did Eve listen to the lying serpent?” “Why did Adam eat the forbidden fruit?” “Why did David despise the commandment of the Lord?”

Special Note.

Sin is called a “mystery” in Scripture because ultimately sin cannot be explained. Sin can be labeled, reflected in the fact that psychologists write books full of labels. But the “why” of sin remains a mystery.

- *2 Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

12:9. thou despised the commandment of the Lord. The Hebrew word for “despised” is “bazah” which means “to disesteem.” It is a word that is translated, “despise,” “contemptible”, “to think to scorn,” “vile person.” When a person deliberately sins, in that act, and in that moment they despise, or hold in contempt the commandment of the Lord.

10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

12:10. thy wife. Despite the divine prohibition against polygamy in the Law of Moses, the Lord did recognize Bathsheba to be a legal wife of David.

- *Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.*

11 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

12:12. and before the sun. More than three thousand years have passed since David’s sin, and yet the world is still talking about the king’s transgressions. Such is the penalty for some for sin.

Divine Retribution

- The sword was never to depart from the house of David.
- Evil would arise from David’s own family.
- The wives of David would be molested before his eyes.
- What was done in secret would be done in the open.

Special Note.**Nathan's Prophecies Fulfilled**

- The child delivered by Bathsheba died and a sword went through David's heart.
- Tamar, David's only daughter, was raped.
- David was betrayed by his beloved son, Absalom.
- The wives of David were openly molested.

Confessing Sin and Finding Forgiveness

13 And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

12:13. And David said...I have sinned. David did not defend his actions, he confessed and said, "I am the man." The moment David repented and confessed his sin his soul was set free.

"Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
 Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
 Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
 Jesus, I come to Thee;
 Out of my sickness, into Thy health,
 Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
 Out of my sin and into Thyself,
 Jesus, I come to Thee."

William T. Sleeper, 1887

Special Note.

God convicts individuals of sin, not to destroy them but to redeem them.

12:13. The Lord also hath put away thy sin. Before the Law of Moses, David stood guilty of two capital offenses: adultery and proxy murder. Before the Law David should have been executed for these crimes, but God had mercy, and Nathan said to David, "Thou shalt not die." Nathan did not mean David would never die, but he did mean that David would not be executed from the crime he had committed with Bathsheba, and the crime he had committed against Uriah. God tempered His justice with mercy.

14 Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

12:14. Howbeit. Though sin can be forgiven, there are consequences that accompany the transaction.

12:14. thou hast given great occasion. One effect of sin is that it gives a basis for the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme His holy name. As an ambassador represents his country and king and act in an honorable manner, so the Christian is a royal ambassador for the King of all kings and so must act in a noble manner.

Special Note.

One day a farmer took his son to a fence post on the land the family owned. The farmer brought with him a hammer and a bucket of nails. He told his son to randomly nail some nails into the fence post. Then the father told the son to pull out all the nails. When the chore was done the godly father had a lesson for the boy. "Son, sin is like driving a nail into that fence post. It is a wilful act and it can be done. Forgiveness is like removing the damage to the fence post, removing the nails. The initial action leaves scars behind, doesn't it?" The young boy looked at the nail scared post and understood the lesson. Sin has caused the death of Christ. Jesus bore our sins in His body so that by His stripes sinners can be forgiven. But the scars remain.

The Death of an Innocent Infant

15 And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

12:15. And Nathan departed unto his house. Once the work of the minister is done, he should not belabor the issue. The message God gave Nathan to deliver was communicated and so the prophet departed.

16 David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

17 And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.

Unnecessary Anxiety

18 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

19 But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead.

A Return to Worship

20 Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

21 Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread.

22 And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

The Limitations of Life

23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

The Comfort of Bathsheba

24 And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the Lord loved him.

25 And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

12:25. Jedidiah. Nathan bestowed the name Jedidiah on David's son Solomon. Jedidiah means "beloved of Jehovah."

PSALM 51

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

51:1. Have mercy. David does not appeal to the justice of God, for then who could stand before Him? Every penitent sinner needs mercy. Two men went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee exalted himself while the despised publican, or tax collector, humbled himself. The one who went home justified was the publican (Luke 18:11-14). David did not feign false humility, nor did he engage in rationalization, or self-justification. He asked for mercy.

51:1. Have mercy. The Psalmist begins by pleading for God's mercy by an act of prayer. He is moved to prayer because he has changed his mind about his behavior, and that is the essence of repentance.

Special Note.

Repentance is the central theme of redemption in the New Testament. John the Baptist began his public ministry by calling individuals to repentance, and so did Jesus. In the apostolic ministry the call to salvation always involved faith and repentance.

- John the Baptist preached repentance. *Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- Jesus preached repentance. *Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
- The apostolic call to salvation. *Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Special Note.

In the modern age the concept of repentance has all but been removed from evangelical teaching and preaching reflected in part by Karl Menninger's book, "What Ever Became of Sin?" One reason for the neglect of the doctrine of repentance is a desire to win people to Christ. We stand and tell people of the goodness and grace of God, we speak of all the benefits of salvation, but we neglect to call them to biblical repentance.

51:1. O God. The psalmist prayed to God. He had faith in God. The sweet singer of Israel knew that forgiveness can only be granted by God.

Special Note.

In Christian theology, a distinction is made between faith and repentance. While there is an important distinction between faith and repentance, the concepts are not to be divorced. True faith always involves repentance, and true repentance always involves faith. By divorcing repentance from faith, erroneous teaching has emerged in the church, reflected in the doctrine of the carnal Christian, which advocates that a believer can be truly born again but living like an unbeliever, living in a fleshly or carnal manner.

Misleading Methodologies in Modern Evangelism

- All you have to do to be saved is to raise your hand.
- All you have to do to be saved is come forward to the altar.
- All you have to do is to say the sinner's prayer.
- All you have to do is to ask Jesus into your heart.

People will respond to the technique, and do what is prescribed, and then walk away thinking they are converted when they have never repented of their sin, having never been saved. False methodology may flatter the evangelist, who counts how many souls were saved by how many professions of faith were recorded, but it is misleading.

A Word of Warning

A Warning to Professors by Jonathan Edwards, is a warning to those who have made a profession of faith. There is a difference between making a profession of faith and possessing genuine salvation. The evidence is that their lives remain unchanged.

The Danger of an Unchanged Life

- *Matthew 7: 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

51:1. according to. David asks to be judged according to a standard. He knows that God could judge him according to divine justice. David could be judged according to the Law of Moses. But David pleads for God to judge him according to the standard of divine loving-kindness.

51:1. loving-kindness. The Hebrew word is “checed” and refers to God’s piety. It is a word that speaks of God’s steadfast love and graciousness towards the undeserving. Though individuals become covenant breakers, God remains true. His love is steadfast. His love is consistent. God’s love is uncompromising.

Special Note.

It is the will of God that His people manifest the same mercy that He shows. Those who have received mercy should show mercy.

- *Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

51:1. tender mercies. In God’s grace there is a tenderness that attaches itself to His love. *Psalms 103:13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.*

Special Note.

Sometimes a person can forgive someone, but there is harshness to it. David pleads for God’s tender mercies. *Psalms 130:3 If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Once God forgives a sin, He blots out the transgression and does not remember it anymore. Without God’s forgiveness the sinner is like Lady Macbeth crying over the stain of sin.

“Out, damned spot! Out, I say!”

Macbeth
Act V. Scene I.

When sin is unforgiven, the stain remains. *Revelation 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

When sin is forgiven, the stain, even if it is like scarlet, is removed. *Isaiah 1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

51:2. Wash me throughly.

Special Note.

Psalm 51 is an example of repentance under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. That is significant because David’s repentance was authentic, and establishes the principles that pleases God.

Special Note.

Psalm 51: 2 forms a synonymous parallel where the second line repeats the thought of the first line.

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,”
and cleanse me from my sin.

The metaphor of washing for cleansing is used throughout the Bible.

- *Isaiah 1:18* Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
- *1 John 1:9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God’s forgiveness brings cleansing from the power and pollution of sin.

“Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want Thee forever to live in my soul.
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Whiter than snow, yes, whiter than snow.
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Lord Jesus, let nothing unholy remain,
Apply Thine own blood and extract every stain;
To get this blest cleansing, I all things forego—
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

James L. Nicholson, 1872

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

51:1. For I acknowledge my transgression. When the Holy Spirit works His sanctifying grace, He will not allow sin to be suppressed or forgotten. When a person really repents they acknowledge the reality of their transgression.

51:1. For I acknowledge my transgression. Repentance is not merely changing one’s mind about Jesus and sin. It is much more when used in Scripture. It is more than the shifting of an opinion because something that happens in the core of one’s personality and the heart is fundamentally and forever different. There can be no conversion unless there is a real fleeing from one’s former lifestyle.

- *Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*

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.

51:4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. The language is at first surprising, for David obviously sinned against Uriah the Hittite, his mourning parents, if they were still alive, Bathsheba, and the people of Israel. By involving Joab in the cover up, David sinned against, and with the military. Sin is never private, and it is never limited to the people in transgression. So the question arises, “What did David mean by saying he had sinned only against the Lord?”

“Was David trying to minimize his sin with these words by forgetting those whom he had hurt?” That is often what we do. We try to pretend that our transgression is limited in scope and hurts only ourselves. The heart loves to say about sin, “It is no big deal.”

President Richard Nixon stood before America and said, “I made a mistake, but I am not a crook.” But Mr. Nixon was worse than a crook. He lied to the American people having violated their trust in the Watergate Affair. President Bill Clinton looked into the camera and lied to America and the world. Later, Mr. Clinton was impeached on December 19, 1998 for lying to a federal grand jury, “perjury”, and obstruction of justice during a sexual harassment legal suit brought against him by Paula Jones. Though President Clinton was guilty as charged, he was not convicted and so was not removed from office. Humans try to minimize the severity of their guilt. “Is David trying to minimize sin?”

The answer has to be, “No,” because this psalm was not written only by David in the flesh, it was written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so it is an authentic repentance, and not a false repentance. Because the psalm is written under inspiration, the thoughts of David are not only horizontal, but vertical.

David understood the biblical principle that where there is no law, there can be no transgression (Romans 4:15; 5:13). The definition of sin is the transgression of the law. When David thinks about his sin he recognizes that ultimately his sin is vertical and is ultimately against God.

51:4. that thou mightest be justified. When David confesses his guilt, all doubt is removed that God is justified, God is righteous in passing whatever sentence He decides to pass. But even if David had not confessed his sin, God would still be justified in passing judgment.

Special Note.

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 3 when speaking of God's justification of sinners. God never compromises His righteousness. The forgiveness of God of sinners is based upon the fact that Jesus did pay the penalty for sin. The wrath of God was unleashed on Christ who was the perfect and righteous Lamb of sacrifice. In the justice of God there is mercy, for God does not punish the sinner, but the Savior.

“He paid a debt He did not owe,
I owe a debt I could not pay
I needed someone to wash my sins away.

And now I sing a brand new song
Amazing grace all day long
Christ Jesus paid a debt that I could never pay.”

- *Romans 3:26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

As David declared the righteousness and justice of God, he appeals for mercy. David's mouth is shut, His tongue is silenced.

- *Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

51:4. be clear. be blameless.

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

51. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity. The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity is established in Scripture. The fruit is corrupt because the root is corrupt.

- *Romans 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:*

“In Adam's Fall,
we sinned all.”

The New England Primer, 1777

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

51:6. thou desirest truth in the inward parts. There is an intellectual truth whereby the mind concedes certain empirical data, or affirms certain theological constructs. There is also a heart truth that touches the inward man. Because most repentance takes place as an intellectual exercise, there is no truth in the inward part, deep down in the soul.

Special Note.

Here is a Christian's prayer as a sinner. "Oh Lord, I know you desire truth to touch my inward parts. I confess, my repentance has not gone that deep. My repentance remains a formula due to a ritualistic claiming of the promise of 1 John 1:9. Father, I confess that my repentance remains intellectual and not emotional. As a result I engage in repetitive confession, if I think about acknowledging sin at all. I engage in repetitive unholy behavior conceding that I am an addict to a besetting practice. But Father, I confess now the real problem is that I am not deeply repentant. Father, forgive. Oh Lord, have mercy on me. Work a deep work of sorrow in my soul. Let truth reach my inward parts. Be of sin a double cure.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure."

Jesus taught His disciples that God desires truth in the inward part, the heart of a person, for it is easy to be a Pharisee and look righteous on the outside.

- *Matthew 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. 15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

51:6. in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. There are truths that can be held in the intellect of the mind, but they never penetrate the soul to become a ruling principle. Sin comes from the depths of the soul because it is not an incidental event. Righteousness also comes from the depth of the soul.

- *Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: ...*

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

51:7. hyssop. The hyssop refers to a rugged, aromatic shrub with low, bushy stalks, used for sprinkling in some of the Jewish sacrifices and rituals of purification. This cleansing agent was found in association with leprosy.

- *Leviticus 14:1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2 This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: 3 And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; 4 Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: 5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: 6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: 7 And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.*

Every Vestige of Sin was to be Thoroughly Removed

8 And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. 9 But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.

Special Note.

David was saying, “Oh God, in thy sight I am a leper and I need cleansing like a leper needs to be clean. Purge me with hyssop.”

Every Christian should desire two gifts of Divine grace. First, the Christian should desire to be covered by the blood of Christ, as Adam and Eve were covered after their sin. Every Christian longs to be covered with the righteousness of Christ. In the Old Testament economy the Day of Atonement was a covering act.

Second, as every Christian desires to be covered, so the believer should long to be cleansed. “Wash me!” is the cry of the heart. “Lord, remove the filth of my sin. Cleanse me!” That is the cry of the heart.

Isaiah sensed that he was unclean. David sensed he was unclean, much like a leper, and he wanted to be clean in the sight of God.

51:7. I shall be clean. When God forgives sin, it is blotted out. “A boy ran in to his mother one day after he had read that promise, *“I will blot out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions.”* And he said: *“Mother, what does God mean when He says He will blot out my sins? What is He going to do with them? I can’t see how God can really blot them out and put them away. What does it mean — blot out?”* The mother, who is always the best theologian for a child, said to the boy, *“Didn’t I see, you yesterday writing on your slate?”* “Yes,” he said. *“Well, show it to me.”* He brought his slate to his mother, who, holding it out in front of him, said, *“Where is what you wrote?”* “Oh,” he said, *“I rubbed it out.”* “Well, where is it?” “Why, mother, I don’t know.” *“But how could you put it away if it was really there?”* “Oh, mother, I don’t know. I know it was there, and it is gone.” “Well,” she said, *“that is what God meant when He said, ‘I will blot out thy transgressions’”* (Campbell Morgan, D. D.).

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

51:8. Make me to hear joy and gladness. Not only does the heart try to protect itself from the magnitude of sin, it tries to protect itself from the guilt of sin, because a sense of guilt brings emotional pain. More than one person has been surprised that they did not feel more guilty, or any sorrow, or remorse, after a grievous transgression. As a result, freedom was found to sin again, and again, because there was no emotional penalty experienced. Sin robs the soul of joy and gladness.

Special Note.

The heart of a Christian may not feel any remorse for a transgression committed, which means that the voice of the Holy Spirit has been quenched. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, the word “quench” means “to drown”, much like a campfire is downed with water in order to destroy any flickering embers. Sin can drown out the voice of conscience. Sin can silence the convicting ministry of God the Holy Spirit. When that happens the soul finds freedom to sin again, and continues to pursue illicit passions.

Self-degradation will continue until God, in matchless grace, breaks the bones, or strength, of sin. In grace God must cause sin to become so repulsive the heart cries out, “Make me to hear joy and grandness.” If David had mortified the sins of the flesh himself, he would not have fallen into so many grievous sins, nor would he have needed to be broken and judged of God so severely.

- *Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*
- *Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:’*

51:8. the bones which thou hast broken. There is an expression in the Christian vocabulary that can be traced to the twentieth German theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer spoke of “cheap grace.” In an effort to win people to Christ, it is not uncommon to tell people indiscriminately that God loves them unconditionally no matter what they do or say. As a result, there is no need for individuals to repent. The grace of God is not only free, it is cheap. The modern gospel presentation conceals the gospel requirements in order to make Christ seem more attractive. In order to facilitate a person coming to Christ, the unpleasant and painful presentation of sin is neglected. The results are predictable: dried eyed conversions and heartless decisions. David speaks of repentance in terms of his bones being broken. It was the hand of God that broke his bones. Broken bones do not enhance joy and gladness.

Special Note.

There is a difference between the conviction of sin, and the accusation of our Adversary the Devil. Discernment is needed to see the distinction. Satan loves to slander the saints. It was Satan who came to the high priest in the Old Testament and called attention to his dirty clothes. God rebuked Satan and reminded him that Joshua was a brand snatched from the fire.

- *Zechariah 3:2 And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*

Any brand snatched from the fire will be dirty. Of course Christians are dirty. They are but brands snatched from the fire. But what is God doing? He is sanctifying those whom He has saved.

- *1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:*

The Wisdom of Discernment

It is at this point that the issue of conviction over sin becomes complicated. Satan will accuse Christians of sins they are not guilty of, but he will also accuse Christians of sins they are guilty of. So, there is conviction produced on Satan’s accusation and there is conviction based on the sanctifying ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

So, how can the heart tell the difference between the accusation of Satan and the conviction of the Holy Spirit when both focus attention on the same behavior? Wisdom recognizes that there is a difference between the two. Satan’s goal is to drive the believer to despair, to fear God, and to have no hope of forgiveness or heaven, or eternal life. God’s goal is to elicit confession leading to restoration of fellowship and hope for tomorrow. The Holy Spirit brings sweetness to the purging process. The love of God is experienced in the chastening process. In contrast, Satan uses conviction to drive a greater wedge between the soul and the Savior in order to make the heart to fear God as a terrible Judge and fail to see Him as the loving Father that He is.

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

51:9. Hide thy face. Usually, when a person stands in the holy presence of God they hide their face. David wanted God to hide His face from David's sins. "Oh Lord, do not look upon my sin any longer. Do not remember it. Turn your holy eyes away and let my sin be gone from your sight."

Special Note.

It is not uncommon to see on the news a person who has been arrested covering up their face. As humans, we do not like to have our sins exposed to public scrutiny. As Adam and Eve fled from the face of God, so individuals continue to flee from the exposure of their transgressions. One reason why it is so difficult to get a conviction in the court of law is because individuals are tenacious in covering up whatever crime they have committed.

51:9. blot out. This is the second time David has asked God that the record of his sin be expunged.

Special Note.

There is a judgmental gaze of God as He looks upon the heart to see what is there (1 Samuel 16:7). The judgmental gaze of God fell upon David, and it fell upon Simon Peter.

- *Luke 22:61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.*

But there is also a benevolent gaze of God. *Psalm 119:132 Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as you did unto those who love your name.* David has a deep desire for God to notice him and draw him into divine fellowship. *Psalms 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:* When a person has a clean heart and a clear conscience they will want to worship the Lord and praise Him who is aware of every person.

- *Luke 1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.*

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

51:10. create. The Hebrew word is “bara” and means to create something out of nothing. David is not asking for God to convert him, but to create a controlling principle in his heart that will guide him in paths of righteousness. Regeneration is a prerequisite for this type of repentance. This type of repentance does not come out of a heart of flesh or a heart of stone.

51:10. renew a right spirit. renew a steadfast spirit. The love of God is steadfast towards the Christian. The believer’s love for God must also be consistent and steadfast.

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

51:11. Cast me not away. David knows that he is worthy of judgment, but he longs for mercy. God would be justified in removing Himself from David, but David asks Him not to go away.

Special Note.

The greatest concern in the heart of the Christian should be the presence of God.

Numbers 6:24-26

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

To experience the blessing of God, to be brought into His presence, to look into His holy face, is the highest Christian hope. That which was denied Adam after the Fall, that which was denied Moses, shall be experienced by the Christian.

“Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story—Saved by grace.

Some day my earthly house will fall.
I cannot tell how soon ’twill be;
But this I know—my All in All
Has now a place in Heav’n for me.

Some day, when fades the golden sun
 Beneath the rosy tinted west,
 My blessèd Lord will say, "Well done!"
 And I shall enter into rest.

Some day: till then I'll watch and wait,
 My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,
 That when my Savior opens the gate,
 My soul to Him may take its flight."

Fanny Crosby, 1891

Blessing was measured in the wilderness journey by how close a person was to the Tabernacle, how close they were to God. Lack of blessing was measured by how far away a person was from the Tabernacle, and if they were sent outside the camp. There is a redemptive presence of God, and there is a real presence when the Lord draws closer and closer to His people.

51:11. take not thy holy spirit from me. God does not take the Holy Spirit away once the soul is converted. But David's experience places fear in the heart of what might be possible. When a person is in sin, and in the period of repentance, there is a natural concern whether or not a person is converted.

Special Spirit Anointings

But there is another way in which David would have understood the Holy Spirit, and that is his own special anointing as king of Israel. David had seen the Spirit of the Lord withdraw from Saul, and reject him as king. Saul lost his spiritual anointing. David did not want the Spirit to withdraw his own anointing.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon prophets so the prophet could be an agent of revelation. The Spirit of the Lord came upon the judges such as Samson, Gideon, and Deborah, so they could deliver Israel.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon the artisans so they could fashion the Tabernacle.
 The Spirit of the Lord came upon individuals to rule over the people of God.

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

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

51:13. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways. Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar how to find the Bread of Life. Evangelism is the natural response of the believer to God's redeeming grace.

14 Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

51:14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness. Deliver me from the guilt of shedding blood. As David confessed the sin of adultery, so he was compelled to confess the sin of bloodshed and murder.

People in the Bible who Committed Murder

	Victim	Story Found
• Cain	Able	Genesis 4
• Ehud	Eglon	Judges 3
• Jael	Sisera	Judges 4
• Moses	An unknown Egyptian	Exodus 2
• Rechab and Baanah	Ishbosheth	2 Samuel 4
• Abner	Asahel	2 Samuel 2, 3
• David	Uriah the Hittite	2 Samuel 11, 12
• Athaliah	Members of the royal family	2 Kings 11
• Saul of Tarsus	Stephen and other Christians	Acts 7, 9

51:14. blood-guiltiness prohibited. Murder is condemned by the Word of God.

- Exodus 20:13
- Numbers 35:13
- Job 24:14
- Matthew 5:21,22
- Matthew 15:19
- Romans 13:9
- James 4:2
- Revelation 21:8
- 1 John 3:14-15

51:14. *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. When God forgives a sin, even the sins of adultery and murder, He is righteousness. David promises that if God will forgive him, his tongue shall be used to sing of God's righteousness. The same tongue that was used to send a good and innocent man to his death, will be used in praising God. Only redemption can make that possible.

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

51:14, 15. my tongue...my lips...my mouth. David speaks of his tongue, his lips, and his mouth. So often the Bible focuses on these parts of the body, for with the tongue, the lips, and the mouth individuals will do much harm, or much good.

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

51:16. For thou desirest not sacrifice. Because he was still under the Law of Moses, David made reference to the provision of the Law for sin. But David was well aware that a ritual cleansing was not sufficient for the depths of sin in which he was involved.

Special Note.

The sacrifice that will satiate the wrath of God against sin is the sacrifice that involves substitution and satisfaction. David prophetically understood that ultimately the blood of bulls and goats in and of themselves could not atone for sin. The elaborate animal sacrifices were but a symbol of the greater Sacrifice to come, even the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- *Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*

David is not disparaging the ritual sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, but he does look beyond them as he understands that what God wants is not something physical, but spiritual, even a broken spirit and a contrite heart.

Special Note.

It is part of God's amazing grace that He allows individuals time to repent. David could have died the death of the wicked at any moment, but the Lord allowed him to live in order to repent. Oh sinner, do not linger to repent and come to Christ. And erring Christian, do not delay gospel repentance. Go before God, confess sin, be broken by His love, and be comforted by His mercy and grace.

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

51:17.

The Spirit and Heart that Pleases God

- A broken spirit.
- A broken heart.
- A contrite heart.

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

51:18, Do good in thy good pleasure. One of the pleasures of God is to forgive sin in those who repent and confess. "God's mercy ... goes before the unwilling to make him willing; it follows the willing to make his will effectual (Augustine of Hippo)

51:18. Do good...unto Zion: build the walls of Jerusalem. David was pleading for the Lord not to hurt Jerusalem because of his own transgression.

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.

51:19. Then shalt thou be pleased. God is pleased with authentic repentance, which may be identified by the distinction between attrition and contrition.

The Difference Between True Repentance and False Repentance

- Attrition. Esau is an example of repentance that is sorry for one's sins from a motive other than that of the love of God. The Bible says that Esau repented that he had given away his birthright for a pottage of food, but Esau did not love God, nor was he loved by God. A person might repent out of fear of punishment, or because of remorse at losing something valuable. But the honor and glory of God is not part of the motive. Little children are often sorry when caught with their hand in the cookie jar, and say, "I am sorry, don't spank me", but there is no sincerity of heart.

Hebrews 12:17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Romans 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

- Contrition. David is an example of repentance that is sorry for one's sins from a motive of brokenness before God.

When people are broken by God, they will repent. They are not puffed up. They bow before the Lord.

The Language of Repentance

- *Job 40:4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.*
- *Psalms 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*
- *Isaiah 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*
- *Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

“I dreamed of a city called Glory,
So bright and so fair.
As I entered the gates I cried,
“Holy!”
The angels all met me there.

They took me from mansion to mansion,
And all the sights that I saw.
But then I said,
“I want to see Jesus because
He’s the One who died for all.”

Then I bowed down and cried,
“Holy”
I cried,
“Holy. You are holy.”
I clapped my hands and said
“Glory, glory to the Son of God.”

God has never despised or rejected the person who comes to Him with a broken and contrite heart.

- *Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

THE SEQUEL TO PSALM 51

PSALM 32

A Psalm of David, Mas'-chil

The Joy of Forgiveness

Blessed *is he* whose transgression is forgiven, *whose* sin is covered.

32:1. Blessed. The Christian is blessed, not because of any intrinsic righteousness, but because the soul has been forgiven.

32:1. Blessed *is he* whose transgression is forgiven. The only cure for sin is authentic repentance. Once a person has experienced the grace and mercy of God in the forgiveness of sin, they are fundamentally and forever different. To them is given the joy of salvation.

32:1. *whose* sin is covered. Two important metaphors in Scripture are the blotting out of sin, which is the removal of transgression, and the covering of sin by the righteousness of Christ. The Christian is blessed not only because sin has been forgiven, but because it has been covered, or hidden from God, never to be remembered again. The first covering was God condescending to cover the shame and nakedness of Adam and Eve after their sin. The final covering is the blood of Christ, whereby the believing heart is clothed in the righteousness of the Lamb.

- *Revelation 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*

Special Note.

At the heart of the gospel is the concept of imputation, which refers to a legal transfer of accounts. The sins of individuals are imputed to the Christ. Christ was covered by our guilt. Then there is a reverse transfer which God imputes the righteousness of Christ to the account of the sinner.

2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there* is no guile.

32:2. Blessed *is* the man. The prophets of God used two oracles to speak to the people of God. They pronounced an oracle of doom, or they pronounced an oracle of blessing. Here is an oracle of blessing. The word “cursed be” prefaced the oracles of doom (Isaiah 6:5), while the word “blessed” prefaced the oracle of good news. Jesus used the oracle “Blessed” in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5).

32:2. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. When presenting the gospel to the Romans, Paul quoted this verse.

- *Romans 4:8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*

32:2. no guile. no deceit.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

32:3. my bones waxed old. my vitality was gone. When David lived with unconfessed sin, life grew dreary. The initial pleasures of sin gave way to the dark side of his soul which turned life into a burden.

32:3-5. my moisture is turned into drought. As the Puritan writers grew older, they had a deeper sense of sin and their unworthiness before God which was manifested in their writings. David's sin caused his life to become spiritually like a dry desert wadi, a valley of dry waterbed. It is normal for the soul to thirst after God.

- *Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Sin caused the spiritual springs of his soul to dry up.

32:3. and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. No one who has ever come to God and sincerely repented has been turned away and not forgiven. Oh sinner, God is more willing to forgive you of your sin than you are to sin.

“Come, every soul by sin oppressed;
There's mercy with the Lord,
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.

Only trust Him, only trust Him,
Only trust Him now;
He will save you, He will save you,
He will save you now.

For Jesus shed His precious blood
 Rich blessings to bestow;
 Plunge now into the crimson flood
 That washes white as snow.

Yes, Jesus is the truth, the way,
 That leads you into rest;
 Believe in Him without delay
 And you are fully blessed.

Come, then, and join this holy band,
 And on to glory go
 To dwell in that celestial land
 Where joys immortal flow.

O Jesus, blessèd Jesus, dear,
 I'm coming now to Thee;
 Since Thou hast made the way so clear
 And full salvation free."

John H. Stockton, 1874

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

32:6. in a time when thou mayest be found. There are special times when the Lord may be found, and there are other times when it seems the Lord has withdrawn His presence. If God is drawing close to you in this hour, call upon Him now.

- *Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Special Note.

"In 1830 George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. Mail and was sentenced to be hanged. President Andrew Jackson issued a pardon for Wilson, but he refused to accept it. The matter went to Chief Justice Marshall, who concluded that Wilson would have to be executed. "A pardon is a slip of paper," wrote Marshall, "the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged." For some, the pardon comes too late. For others, the pardon is not accepted" (*Prokope*, V. 11, #5).

32:6. surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. In the southern district of Israel there is a place of majestic beauty called Masada. The Jews were able to survive on the top of Masada and withstand Roman oppression due in part to large cisterns they had carved out to be filled by fresh rain water. At the base of the mountain were large cisterns to capture the rain water that rushed through the wadi. Workers could then hoist buckets of fresh water up to the top. The defense of the Jews, the defense of Masada was united to the cycle of draught and flood. David is saying that after a person has been forgiven by God there is refreshment and a safe hiding place.

7 Thou *art* my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

32:7. Thou *art* my hiding place. The heart of the Christian learns that God is the only real hiding place. Some people trust in their health, but it can be taken away in an instant. Some find security and shelter in their wealth, but then the economy can turn bad and inflation can destroy any profit. Some people trust in the intelligence, but that too is limited and eventually diminishes. The Lord is the believer's hiding place. Then, if the floods of life come, the Lord will preserve the soul. Selah.

32:7. songs of deliverance. Songs have always been part of creation and the worship of God.

- The Song of Moses Exodus 15:1-21; Deuteronomy 32:1-43
- The Song of Israel Numbers 21:17; Ezra 3:11
- The Song of Deborah Judges 5:2-31
- The Song of David 2 Samuel 22:2-51; Psalms
- The Song of Solomon Song of Solomon
- The Song of Isaiah Isaiah 26:1
- The Song of Mary Luke 1:46-55
- The Song of Zechariah Luke 1:68—79
- The Song of Paul and Silas Acts 16:25
- The New Song of Revelation Revelation 5:9, 10
- The Song of the 144,000 Revelation 14:3
- The Song of the Redeemed Revelation 15:3,4

Christians are encouraged to sing.

- *Ephesians 5:19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

The Lord Speaks to David

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

32:8-9. I will instruct thee...Be ye not. In these two verses the Lord speaks to David to tell Him that He will guide David. And one of the first messages to David is, "Do not be stubborn. Do not act like a brute animal." That is still wise Divine counsel for today. God does not want to have to "jerk our reigns" to bring us under control. Far better is it to come near the Lord when we need forgiveness.

10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.

32:10. mercy shall compass him. mercy shall surround him. God's mercy does not tap a person on the shoulder, but surrounds the life.

11 Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

32:11. and shout for joy. The God of salvation has restored to David the joy of his salvation.

The Three Shouts of David

- David shouted in anger at a perceived injustice. 2 Samuel 12:7
- David shouted in agony in the hour of repentance. Psalm 51:1
- David shouted for joy at the mercy of God. Psalm 32:11