

Psalm 51

Confession of Sin and Prayer for Forgiveness.

“No other Psalm contains such a profound confession of Sin”

The Psalm explores the nature and pervasiveness of sin and the richness of the mercy of God who forgives and brings a new creation about.

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. – Connects the Psalm directly to David sin with Bethsheba and Uriah.

If you want to look at that story 2 Sam 11-12

The intention of the Psalm is to help those who have sinned to find forgiveness.

Can we take this Psalm as a lesson for us? Does the sin have to be a big one?

Let's have a look see!

*PS 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*

1. Have mercy = undeserved favour (Heb = chanan)
2. Steadfast love / unfailing love = Undeserved love (Heb = hesed) hesed is closely linked to forgiveness of sin.
3. Blot out – first of 3 images to describe God's action in forgiving, sin is not just a shadow but deeply ingrained in life.
4. Transgressions = rebellion against authority.

*PS 51:2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*PS 51:3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.*

1. wash away – 2nd image.= wash by treading. Eg like washing clothes
2. cleanse 3rd image.
3. Compare 3 words for sin = transgressions, iniquity, sin.
Combining the three is painting a picture.
The picture is about sin causing an issue between us and God.

*PS 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.*

1. Against God does not mean that the sin had no affect on human life but the sin is against God primarily and the Psalmist acknowledges God's involvement with other humans.
2. "So that" can also mean "with the purpose that" which would lead to a strange concept of sinning to glorify God. The sense in NIV and NRSV is that whatever judgement God gives will be just and right.

*PS 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

- i. Seems to teach us that Sinfulness is the usual condition of humanity. Not only is sin a time / space issue (We do sin) it is how we are wired as people. It comes naturally.

*PS 51:6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.*

1. Emphasis is on what God desires of men and women. (Truth and wisdom on the inside – it is a heart thing)
Note here truth and wisdom go hand in hand and lead to what?
Cleansing – Being right with God. -

*PS 51:7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

1. cleanse = to de-sin or un-sin
2. hyssop = was used at the first passover to wipe blood on the doorposts. Used also in cleansing lepers, Symbol of cleansing.
3. Snow = metaphor for whiteness and purity.

*PS 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

1. The writer is waiting to hear that God has forgiven him. Hey, this is great, this guy has done some horrible things, yet he expects God will and can forgive. The audacity yes, but the faith. There is not a sin we can not be forgiven for, except turning our back on Jesus.
Doesn't our world need to hear that?
Isn't it great we can recognise it? If it doesn't what is wrong with you?????
2. The bones are a way of speaking about the person as a whole. When the bones are broken there is no strength. Asking for a healing. Emotional and spiritual. Remember that he is not physically hurt although I do believe that emotional and spiritual pain are physically painful.

*PS 51:9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*

1. Plea for God to disregard the authors sin.
2. Suggests an obliteration of one's sin. Do we need to be using this verse as a pray this morning???

***** *Communion* *****

*PS 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

1. Create The Psalmist realises that he needs to be recreated if he is going to be able to overcome sin.
2. Clean heart is required for worship (cf Psalm 24:3-4)

PS 24:3 Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

*PS 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol
or swear by what is false.*

That is really similar to Psalm 15 from last week!!!!

3. Heart I remember my Old Testament lecturer telling me that the word translated heart refers to bowels in Hebrew. – The heart is the belly or the bowels – the center of our being. mind, understanding, reason, will. (This would change the way we sing some songs: - Change my belly o God, Belly of worship etc)
4. Yet it doesn't change us – the centre of our being – heart or bowels however we look at it. The author is saying – Create in me a new Centre – let that centre be focused on God.

*PS 51:11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

1. From your presence – (Lit- from your face) To be in God's presence means to enjoy fullness of life.
2. Phrase could also mean expulsion from worship.
3. Holy Spirit – rare mention in OT. Spirit with him indicates that the author - a king who was the only person assured of the presence of the Holy Spirit. (Cf 1 Sam 16:13-14)\

ISA 16:13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.

ISA 16:14 Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

Oh this is a tough one. Generally we believe that we can not be plucked from God's hand. Most of us would agree. But here is an example of someone who is scared it would happen, David, and someone who had it happen, Saul. Does it happen in the New Testament???

Perhaps.

1TI 1:18 Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, ¹⁹ holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. ²⁰ Among them are

Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Some have been shipwrecked in their faith. Hey, there are other verses too. And really It's a tough one. But I have seen too many people go from amazing faith in Jesus to no faith. No matter what you believe about this issue. Do not be arrogant and say it won't happen to you – take notice of Paul's message to Timothy hold onto the faith. Actually look at this next verse – Hold on and ask to be restored!

PS 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

1. Salvation means deliverance from sin and its consequences.
2. Willing spirit = a new and right attitude. A recognition that we need God to even have a willing spirit or a willingness to come to Him.

PS 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

1. Teach others right but no offering suggested.(as is usual in OT)
Like Psalm 22:22

PS 22:22 I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you.

He wants to tell people of God's forgiveness.- Hey that is logical. When we have something good happen, we want people to know. Forgiveness of sins is a really good thing – we should let people know it has happened.

PS 51:14 Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

1. Blood guilt/ bloodshed = profound guilt. Eye for eye concept.

This section takes us from forgiveness to usefulness. Look at where the author goes!

*PS 51:15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

1. open my lips = remove the thing that stops me speaking.

*PS 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

God doesn't want an artificial show of Christianity. He wants you. All of you, the whole lot of each one of us. Total obedience.

The author compounds the concept.

*PS 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.*

True worship = broken spirit and contrite heart are synonymous with a life of humility and openness to God. As I said- God wants the you bit of you, not just what others see.

*PS 51:18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper;
build up the walls of Jerusalem.*

*PS 51:19 Then there will be righteous sacrifices,
whole burnt offerings to delight you;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

1. Bulls = costly sacrifices. The most expensive sacrifice. We are not into the cost of being a Christian anymore. We explain it away. If you truly are in a state of thankful obedience, we will worship. But we will worship even if it costs us something.

Here is where I want to finish - **Restoration always leads to ministry.** The worshipper makes a commitment to tell others and point the right way to other sinners. When we understand God forgiveness, we stop being concerned about the insignificant and start doing the ministry. I believe it. God forgiveness has changed my life, and I am trying to the best of my ability to put this into practise. I don't get it right all the time, but boy I am trying. I am forgiven and it makes a difference.