

A Study of Psalm 51

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Introduction

- In Psalm 51, we find David's plea for forgiveness surrounding his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12).
- When analyzing the nature of David's prayer, we can gain insight as to how we should confess sin when we fall.
- Let us examine a few features in David's prayer that we should model when we repent and confess sin.

Recognition of God's Willingness to Forgive

- In verses 1-2, David says, ***“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”***
- By recognizing God's lovingkindness and tender mercies, we understand that God will forgive us of our sins if we simply repent and confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:9).
- Peter concludes, ***“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”*** (2 Peter 3:9).
- If we do repent and confess our sins to Him, God, in his longsuffering and tender mercy, will remove our sins and transgressions from us ***“as far as the east is from the west”*** (Psalm 103:12).

Acknowledgement of Wrongdoing

- After recognizing God's desire to forgive, David acknowledged his mistakes. He explains, ***"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me"*** (v.3).
- Without acknowledging our mistakes, it is impossible for God to forgive us. We cannot try to hide our sins from God, for he knows all things (Job 28:11).
- It is important to note that since God looks at our heart, merely stating with our mouths won't do. We confess with our mouth what we are convinced and convicted of in our heart. We have a similar requirement today when meeting the initial conditions of salvation:
 - ***"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"*** (Rom. 10:9-10).

Guilt and Remorse

- Consider David's pleas for God to "***renew a steadfast spirit within***" him and deliver him "***from the guilt of bloodshed***" (v.10, 14).
- Simply acknowledging our sins with our mouths will not help us receive God's forgiveness. David's spirit was damaged by his wrongdoings and he felt guilty because of his fall into temptation.
- David described his heart, or his spirit, as being "***broken***" and "***contrite***" (v.17).
- Consider Paul's admonition in 2 Cor. 7:10 – "***For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted.***"
- Godly regret is the regret of a God-saturated heart, not a world-saturated heart, leading us to right our wrongs (both with God and whomever we offend) and is the type of remorse we should feel when confessing and repenting of our sins.

Recognizing the Direct Impact of Our Sin

- David recognized his sins reflected poorly upon God and, as result, non-believers could lay blame to God and claim He is not “**just**” (v.4).
 - We should never allow our sins to impact other’s perception of God.
 - The Bible tells us we can “**be sure your sin will find you out**” (Num. 32:23).
- David also recognized the consequences of his sins by requesting for God to not cast him away from His presence (v.11).
- Paul proclaims, “**The wages of sin is death**” (Rom. 6:23).
- This statement follows the pattern laid down from the Creation. Everything created has a seed from which it propagates itself after its kind (Gen. 1:11, 21, 25).
- We cannot “plant” sin — even in private — and not expect to reap a harvest of consequences.

Attempting to Be Stronger

- David's attitude of keeping his sins "***ever before***" him exemplifies his desire to learn and grow from his mistakes, thus hopefully preventing himself from falling to temptation again.
- He also told God he would "***teach transgressors [God's] ways***" (v.13).
- After praying for forgiveness and receiving God's mercy through that forgiveness, we should be like David and tell others, especially non-believers, about God's love and mercy by explaining God's love and the need for repentance.
 - David vowed to do just that. He told God, "***My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness . . . and my mouth shall show forth Your praise***" (v.14-15).
- We too should strive to be stronger, more faithful servants of God, praising God for forgiving us of our sins and being willing to spread God's gospel of mercy and forgiveness.

Taking Ownership of Sin

- In the NKJV, the words “I,” “Me,” and “My” are used 29 times in the span of 16 verses, highlighting David’s willingness to take ownership of his sins.
- Considering his earthly power, David could have easily put the blame on Bathsheba for her part in the affair or blame his servants for going after her at his request.
- Instead, David took full and total ownership of his sins: ***“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me”*** (v.1-3).
- It’s easy to blame others when we sin, but we must be like David, exhibiting the same heart and spirit, taking full ownership of our sins and ***“acknowledge [our] sins”*** before Him (v.2).

Conclusion

- David exemplified an attitude in confessing sin that all Christians should model.
- He recognized God's desire to forgive, acknowledged his sins before God, felt Godly sorrow for his mistakes, recognized the far-reaching impact of his sins, vowed to make improvements in the future, and took total responsibility for his transgressions.
- Considering "***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***" (Rom. 3:23), when we confess sin, do we share a similar attitude as David in Psalm 51?