

# David's Prayer of Repentance

**Text:** Psalm 51:1-19

## **Introduction:**

1. Superscription – reveals both the author and the occasion of the Psalm. Refer 2 Samuel 11-12
2. This Psalm records David's godly sorrow and brokenness after Nathan's stinging rebuke – "thou art the man."
3. We will study this prayer of David's under 4 headings:

## **I. A Prayer for Compassion (Vs. 1-2)**

### **A. Available Mercy (Vs. 1a)**

1. 'loving kindness' = the grace of God.
2. Mercy is an attribute of God and forms the only basis for forgiveness.
3. Ezekiel 33:11 *"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"*
4. Psalm 103:8-11 *"The LORD is **merciful** and **gracious**, slow to anger, and **plenteous in mercy**. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."*

### **B. Abundant Mercy (Vs. 1b)**

1. 'multitude' = speaks of abundance. God's merciful love is measureless.
2. 'mercies' = plural in number
  - a. Rom. 5:20 *"...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."*
  - b. 1 Tim. 1:14 *"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant..."*
3. "tender mercies" = comes from Hebrew word for 'womb', picturing God's tender mercy is like a mother who has tender love and affection for her unborn child.

### **C. Absolving Mercy (Vs. 1c-2)**

1. "blot out" = desire for his sins to be erased before God
2. "wash me thoroughly" = 'thoroughly' is an old English word that means 'completely', 'totally'. The modern equivalent is "thoroughly"
3. "cleans me" = David desires that his sins be cleansed
4. 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."*

## II. A Prayer of Confession (Vs. 3-6)

### A. Acknowledgment of Sin (Vs. 3)

1. Sin's perversity – David didn't sugar coat or minimise his sin. He confesses it in crystal clear terms.
  - a. Butler: "David does not pass his guilt off on others; he takes the sole blame for his sin. This is the attitude of one who is truly repentant. Any effort to diminish the guilt either by watering down the sin or by passing it off on someone else reveals the lack of sincerity in a professed repentance."
  - b. **'iniquity'** = crookedness, perversity, lawlessness
  - c. **'transgressions'** = rebellion, disobedience. Plural in number. Like a bunch of bitter grapes from a wild vine, sin often comes in clusters. David broke the 10<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> commandments in that order. In fact, he practically broke all the commandments in his slide into sin.
  - d. **'sin'** = to err or miss the mark
  - e. **'evil'** = badness, corruption, blackness
  - f. **'bloodguiltiness'** (Vs. 14) = murder, bloodshed
2. Sin's presence – David was conscious of the presence of sin in his life and did not try to ignore it (3b)

### B. Accountability for Sin (Vs. 4a)

1. True repentance is God-centred. David had sinned against his fellow man (e.g. Bathseba and Uriah). But ultimately, his sin was against His God. "...I have sinned against the LORD..." (2 Sam. 12:13)
2. Acts 20:21 *"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*

### C. Acceptance of Judgment (Vs. 4b)

1. David acknowledges God as the Supreme Judge and expresses a willingness to receive his Divine sentence. He accepts God's judgment of him.
2. 'clear' = "Saying God is 'clear' when He judges says that you got what you deserved and that God was justified in the punishment He gave you." (Butler)

### D. Admission of Depravity (Vs. 5-6)

1. David acknowledges the root cause of his sin – he has a sinful nature (Vs. 5) (Rom. 5:12). We are sinners "by nature and practice". David's sins simply revealed who he was in Adam.
2. Despite our depravity, God desires inward purity, effected by the truth (Vs. 6)

## III. A Prayer for Restoration (Vs. 7-12)

### A. Restoration of Holiness (Vs. 7, 9)

1. "purge me with hyssop" = The hyssop bush grew commonly in Palestine, often sprouting out of walls (1 Kings 4:33). It is a shrub used a number of times in the Scriptures connected with cleansing:
  - a. Passover night upon the lintel and two side posts (Ex. 12:22)
  - b. The cleansing of lepers (Lev. 14:4-7). David feels as dirty as a leper on account of his sin. His sin has defiled and stained his life.

- c. The purification of one who had touched a dead body (the red heifer) (Num. 19:6, 18)
- d. We find hyssop at the cross of our Lord when they offer him vinegar (John 19:29)
- e. David is clearly asking for cleansing by the blood! (Col. 1:14; 1. John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 7:14)
- 2. “whiter than snow” = imagine the whiteness of freshly fallen snow. There is nothing so white in this world as snow. Yet the cleansed soul of a repentant sinner, is purer and whiter and the whitest snow! (Isaiah 1:18)

**B. Restoration of Happiness (Vs. 8)**

- 1. Sin offers a temporary, superficial happiness which quickly turns into sorrow, misery and pain.
- 2. David desires the inner healing joy brings, recognising that his sin has left breakage and ruin.

**C. Restoration of the Heart (Vs. 10)**

- 1. ‘create’ – a new heart can only be given by God
- 2. ‘renew’ – David desires that his spirit be revived. There is still life there but it has been shrivelled up by his sin.

**D. Restoration of the Holy Spirit’s ministry (Vs. 11-12)**

- 1. The Spirit’s presence (Vs. 11)
  - a. The Holy Spirit does not leave the believer in the N.T. dispensation as he did at times in the Old Testament. So, we do not pray “take not thy Holy Spirit from me”
  - b. However, there can be a retraction of the enjoyment of his presence and ministry in the life. The Holy Spirit can be ‘grieved’ (Eph. 4:30) and ‘quenched’ (1 Thess. 5:19). This is what David primarily has in view as he does not ask for restoration of salvation but the “joy” of salvation (Vs. 12)
- 2. The Spirit’s power (Vs. 12)
  - a. David desires that the joy of his salvation would be restored. Unconfessed sin is like a parasite that drains away the inner life of the believer.
  - b. “uphold me with they free spirit” = the word ‘free’ has the sense of that which is noble and royal. David desires the strengthening ministry of the Spirit of God.

**IV. A Prayer of Anticipation (Vs. 13-19)**

Verse 13 commences the second major division in the Psalm where David anticipates the future results and blessings of pardon & forgiveness.

**A. A New Service (Vs. 13)**

- 1. The transgressor becomes a teacher to the transgressors! He will teach them of God’s “ways” not just from theory but from experience.
- 2. In essence, David anticipates being a soul-winner once more! When you take steps to deal with unconfessed sin like David, God can restore you to a place of service for Him.

**B. A New Song (Vs. 14-17)**

- 1. Sin steals our song. David anticipates being able to praise the Lord again when God delivers him from guilt and opens his lips.

2. David then gives a word of explanation concerning the character of God and His desire for a broken heart over sin. If God desired material offerings in this context, David would have gladly given them. But God cannot be pleased with material offerings when there is unconfessed, unrepented sin in our lives (Isaiah 1:11-18).
3. “broken...contrite” = language of deep repentance. ‘contrite’ means “Literally, worn or bruised. Hence, broken-hearted for sin; deeply affected with grief and sorrow for having offended God;” (Websters)

**C. A New Sacrifice (Vs. 18-19)**

1. David prays for Jerusalem. It seems that he is concerned that the people of God not be harmed nor the work of God hindered on account of His sin.
2. God will take delight in our material offerings and our acts of service after we have truly repented (Vs. 19) Note the word ‘then’.

**Conclusion:**

1. Are you saved? Have you come to Christ to be washed in His blood unto salvation?
2. Is there hidden, unconfessed sin in our lives obstructing our service for the Lord and grieving the Holy Spirit? I.E. Immorality, bitterness, lying & hypocrisy.
3. Challenge: Will you like David, humble yourself in true repentance before God for his cleansing?