

Pure Heart
Psalm 51
The Laurel Center
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Main Idea: Sin destroys the pure heart seeking God's heart.

Introduction

The greatest struggle for many in the Christian faith is how to overcome sin. Throughout our lives we will sin more often than not. How we respond to it is the most important part of our walk with God. Will we deal with our sin or will we hide it? King David was a man after God's own heart. The Scriptures tell us this not because King David never sinned or was perfect in his life but because he knew exactly how to get back on track when he sinned.

It is said that King David never did anything halfway. When he lived for God in worship God, he was on fire for God. But when he sinned, he sinned big time. The Scriptures record how David lusted after Bathsheba, committed adultery with her, and even had her husband killed to cover up her pregnancy. So when David sinned, he really sinned. He took advantage of his leadership position as king and could have done whatever he wanted and took Bathsheba. He killed one of his greatest warriors by sending them into the thicket of battle.

Many Christians have found solace in learning how to confess sin and get right with God from David. It is said that he wrote the 51st Psalm and the title tells us that it was right after he lost his child with Bathsheba after all of this sin and Nathan the prophet dealt with him. David was a man after God's own heart because he did not try to get away from his sin or hide it but exposed it and confessed it before God, asking God for renewal in a new heart. We can learn a lot from looking through David's 51st Psalm.

Text – Psalm 51:10–12

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. **12** Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

I. Sin affects the relationship with God (vv. 1 – 6).

A God has mercy based on his steadfast love.

- 1 There are two approaches to interpreting Psalm 51. The first is to follow the inscription in the title telling us the historical situation of the Psalm. This would mean we interpret the Psalm as David's confession of sin adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah.

- 2 The other approach is to see the Psalm as a universal confessional Psalm for the nation of Israel. Some of the reasons for this interpretation live in the facts that David is not specific about his sin in the Psalm and it includes the last two verses about the walls of Jerusalem.
- 3 Proponents of the first interpretive method suggests that the last two verses were added later. David was not of been specific about his sin because the Psalm is a template of how to deal with sin.
- 4 We will be using the first method of interpretation for the Psalm. David begins the Psalm with petitions from mercy and cleansing from his sin. He calls for government to have mercy on him based on his abundant steadfast love.
- 5 The steadfast love of the Lord, or his covenantal love for Israel, is a special word in the Old Testament for God's particular love for his people.
- 6 We can see similar ideas in each line. David Furst says to wash him from sin and then he says to cleanse him from sin. The language of blotting out transgression is seen in verse one and later on in another section.
- 7 David asks for God's abundant mercy in steadfast love. He appeals to God's kindness rather than his judgment. Sin separates us from God and yet his mercy and love are the only ways that God would forgive sin.

B Sinning against the Lord is our fault.

- 1 In the next verse of the song, David places the blame for his sin on himself. What a terrible condition to bear one's own sin and have it always in front of them.
- 2 David tells the Lord that he knows that he is send in that is ever before him. He is not left alone about his sin and it is always nagging on him. Sin does not allow us to get a reprieve.
- 3 Next, David points out that his sin has separated him from God. The Psalm only mentioned sin against God, although sin also separates human beings. Rarely is there a send that only separates God and us. Usually other humans are involved in our sin.
- 4 For this reason, some scholars have suggested that this Psalm is not specific to the historical data given in the title. David should've also talked about his sin with Bathsheba and against Uriah. But it is most likely that David keeps the Psalm less specific so that other believers can use it as well.
- 5 David acknowledges that God alone deserves to judge him for his sin. Because his sin is canceled Lord the Lord reserves the right to do as he wills with David.

- 6 When David talks about being born in iniquity and his mother blaming him for then send, he is not making the case for Original Sin. He is simply speaking of the environment of sin that taught them how to sin against God so easily and well.
- 7 David then points out that God expects a higher standard. God can see into our innermost being and he expects us to be holy before him. We can send inside without sinning on the outside. Only God can tell that we are sinning against him in the innermost parts.
- 8 God teaches wisdom in secret heart or in the innermost person. Wisdom teaches us God's ways instead of our own. It teaches us the ways in which we could live without sinning against him.

II. Sin destroys our righteousness and joy (vv. 7 – 12).

A Only God can restore our righteousness.

- 1 Next, David moves from the realization of the effects of sin into a time of asking God for forgiveness and renewal. He starts with the same types of words such as purging wash and blotting out.
- 2 He incorporates to ideas, that of being washed and made clean with the ideas of receiving joy once again. Sin steals her joy so that you have no way to be happy without living in sin free life.
- 3 David seems to have a restored relationship with God most of all. If God did not have the look on his sin, the relationship with not be one of separation. And Julie would be returned. God will not have the discipline him for his sin by "breaking his bones."
- 4 Once again David asks for God to blot out his iniquity and sin. The clearest part of the Psalm is to see how much sin affects relationships with God and other human beings.
- 5 One of the most often quoted parts of the Psalm come next. Vs. 10-12 on the part of the Psalm that produces the petition for God to restore David and every center he was prayed these prayers.
- 6 The word create is only used of what God does. Humans can build and make based on the materials God created. But only God creates and only God can do that kind of work in our hearts.
- 7 Creating requires a new framework. When it is used throughout the Bible, it is only used of God and it refers to new works that he must do. As we already know from Paul in the New Testament, creating a clean heart refers to the new creation that God makes in salvation.
- 8 Creating refers to making a new creature with a different heart that now has the option to choose sin rather than to commit it without caring. David also calls for renewal of the spirit.

9 This is correction as much as it is the new creature. Many times after being made new in salvation will find ourselves sinning against God. This requires a refilling of his Holy Spirit and a desire to not sin against the Lord.

B Only God can restore our joy.

- 1 David once again talks about joy in the sense of being cast out of God's presence. Often in the Old Testament the presence of God and his Holy Spirit are synonymous.
- 2 To be in God's presence once again, from which sin removes us, is to once again have the joy of the Lord within us. We cannot have joy when we are separated from God in our relationship with him.
- 3 The joy of the Lord is synonymous with being in his presence and open to his Holy Spirit's leading in our lives. When we sin against God, we lose the joy of his presence.
- 4 The idea of God taking his Holy Spirit away from us could include the idea of losing our salvation but it is more likely in this poetic Psalm that David is making the point that being separated from God means that we are not listening to his Holy Spirit's leading in our lives.
- 5 The idea of God upholding us with the right spirit or a willing spirit is to restore us not only from our sin but also into the willingness to live righteous life and listen to God's leading.

III. Sin distracts from our worship of God (vv. 13 – 19).

A Our actions show our allegiances.

- 1 The Psalm now turns to the changed heart and different actions and words. And refers to the way in which we turn to worship of the Lord once we are restored in his presence.
- 2 This change in the relationship between David and God results in worship. Worship is hindered by sin because our relationship with God is hindered. Here we see David and anyone who is free from sin able to once again enter in to God's presence.
- 3 Worship considers the whole of life. It is not just about singing songs about what we do as well. Worship is what we do and say in service to the King of Kings.
- 4 When David is renewed in his spirit and in his relationship with God, he turns to teaching unbelievers and centers God's ways. Hearing of the freedom that is in God, sinners will return to God through the preaching and teaching of his ways.
- 5 This is the power not only of the word of God and of the ways of God but also of the changed life and renewed spirit. When one is renewed in the

relationship with God, the powerful personal testimony of the person is coupled with the power of God's word.

- 6 God takes us away from guilt. When our sins are forgiven we no longer feel guilty about what we have done because God has washed away our sins. Now we are free to worship God with our voices.
- 7 David speaks of the happiness and joy that returned when sin is washed away by God. He speaks of the desire to single out to God. We are able to easily proclaim God's righteousness and goodness to us when our sins have been washed away and the burden is lifted from our souls.

B Our speech shows our heart.

- 1 We no longer can hold back when God has done such a great thing as setting us free from sin. David says that God will open our lips that we can declare his praises.
- 2 Not only have returned to actively engaging in doing the ways of God in the works of God but now we are open to speaking and declaring his goodness to us.
- 3 David turns to the cultic ritual in worship of offering sacrifices unto the Lord. Interestingly, he says that he would offer sacrifices to the Lord but the Lord will not accept them.
- 4 Even David understood that sacrifices were not what God truly wants. Sacrifices and offerings are not the end to God's desires. God desires our obedience in the first place and sin violates that.
- 5 Even in the times of the sacrificial system, Israelites understood that God was more interested in obedience and cleanliness. He was interested in people living holy lives instead of asking for forgiveness and offering sacrifices in place of themselves.
- 6 David now mentions the things that are true sacrifices that God does accept: a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart. These words are interesting in the Psalm.
- 7 Many other places a broken heart is mentioned. In one Psalm, the psalmist speaks of God being near to the brokenhearted. God seems to be drawn to the one whose heart is pure toward him and broken before him.
- 8 This does not mean that we must be broken and torn apart as individuals but that we realize coming to God in humility is what he desires. Surely God can fix the brokenhearted and mend their heart together. But the broken heart speaks more about humility and openness in his presence.
- 9 The broken spirit reformers more to what Jesus will call poor in spirit. This is an understanding that when we come to God we are nothing

compared to him. He is very open toward the human being that realizes he is nothing without God.

- 10 The last two verses, vs. 18-19 have to deal with what many believe to be added to the text. These talk about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Some suggest that these were added after the exile when Israel returned to Jerusalem and the Temple and rebuilt them.
- 11 Others who have the other review of interpretation say that this was part of the congregational worship hymn. This would have fit especially with a postexilic writing of the Psalm.
- 12 It is believed that these two verses were added because of the context of sacrifices and burnt offerings being mentioned by David. They seem to not fit even the context as David just said that God does not delight in these things as much as in the offerings of a broken spirit and broken heart.
- 13 It is most likely they were added because of the mentioning of cultic worship in the Temple. It is unclear when they would have been added or if they would have been adapted for congregational worship after David had written this personal Psalm.

Conclusion

The New Testament sheds light on some of the parts of the Psalm. Those who trust in Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior know that he has become their ultimate sacrifice, according to the writer of Hebrews. But God is still very much open to the contrite and humble worshipper. For centuries this Psalm has been effective in helping believers connect with God when they need his salvation and his forgiveness from their sins. The letters of John help us to understand that Jesus is our advocate whenever we sin against God. John tells us that if we confess our sins to God he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But this Psalm exposes the template for coming to God in humility and asking for his forgiveness, confessing our sins before him with a genuine desire to be renewed by his power. While the New Testament affirms that we have access to the Father and covers our sins with his sacrifice, this Psalm delights the type of prayer that God expects from us when we stumble in our walk with him.