

GOSPEL PRESENTATION - In just a few minutes I'm going to preach from God's Word about how a believer can receive the forgiveness of God when they sin. The Bible says that we all sin, even after we are saved. But we have a Savior who has covered our sin in his death on the Cross. But some of you here today will not be able to start at that point. For sins to be forgiven we have to have a Savior. And if you have never put your trust in Christ, received Him and accepted the gift of eternal life, it isn't possible for your sins to be forgiven.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Would you like to receive this gift today? We're talking about a new life that lasts for eternity. And it includes forgiveness of your sins. If you are ready to receive Christ today allow me to lead you in this prayer.

Text: Psalm 51:1-19 (Pew Bible pg.562)

Title: "Faith Sings ... When I Need Forgiveness"

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles with me to Psalm 51. When I first became a believer as a young teenager, someone gave me a Bible, and in the front of that Bible there was a list of helpful places in God's Word. One said, "When you need wisdom, turn to this passage." Another said, "When you need comfort, turn to this passage." One of the first confusing things about being a new Christian was that I found that, though I was saved, I still sinned. This created a lot of confusion and guilt for me. So you can imagine how glad I was to see that in that list of helpful places there was one that said, "When you sin and need forgiveness turn to Psalm 51." This passage before us today was probably the first passage of Scripture that I learned to cling to as a young Christian. To get us started today I'll just read the first verse.

Psalm 51:1 (NIV) - For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

In 14 of the psalms we are told the exact circumstances that inspired the writer to compose the psalm. In this case we see the inscription:

Psalm 51:1 (NIV) - For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

So David has composed a song out of an experience in his life. Remember that the Psalms are "Faith Songs." He wants the director of music to use it in leading God's people in worship. David is writing about something that plunged him into what may well have been the darkest chapter in his life ... an experience that flooded his soul with enormous regrets and guilt until he dealt with God about it. It says, "When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba."

For us to fully understand the power of this psalm we need to be reminded of the events that led to this cleansing encounter that David had with the Lord. It's recorded in II Samuel 11.

Read II Samuel 11:2-5 (Pew Bible pg.305).

David is stunned by the news, and he tried to cover his sinful actions by calling Bathsheba's husband Uriah home from the battlefield. David thinks that Uriah will have relations with his wife, and then believe that the baby was his. But Uriah declined the privilege of sleeping with his wife while his fellow soldiers were in battle. So David had to enact another plan. David had Uriah killed so that he could immediately marry Bathsheba and cover up the sin in that way.

Read II Samuel 11:26-27a.

In David's mind, everything is settled. He's managed his sin; he's arranged the cover up. But David had not yet faced God.

2 Samuel 11:27b (NIV) - But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

About a year goes by and David sits on the throne of Israel thinking he's covered everything up, and managed the situation rather shrewdly. But remember what David did displeased the Lord. And the Lord sends the prophet Nathan to David, and Nathan confronts David about his sin, and David is crushed ... and he finally confesses:

2 Samuel 12:13a (NIV) - Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

This is what God is after. This is what conviction is supposed to do ... to bring us to a place where we are honest about our sin. Now notice what Nathan immediately says to David...

2 Samuel 12:13b (NIV) - Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."

Nathan says, "Your relationship with the Lord is restored. You are forgiven. God is not going to destroy you for your sin."

2 Samuel 12:14 (NIV) - But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die."

David's sin is forgiven, but there will be consequences for his sin that will touch the life of an innocent child. And David will have to live with that.

And out of this experience David shows us what to do when we are absolutely overwhelmed with regrets and guilt over something we have done ... when we are faced with the reality of our sinfulness ... our falling short of the glory of God?

In order for us to be able to overcome the powerful regrets and guilt over our sin we need to know certain things. We need to know...

1. WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT GOD

Psalm 51:1 (NIV) - Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

The prayer, “Have mercy,” is a prayer for God to act according to His nature.

What is true about God?

- **HIS MERCY** = free, unmerited favor. David knew he didn’t deserve forgiveness. He needed God’s mercy.
- **HIS UNFAILING LOVE** = unchanging love based on solemn commitment. This is one of the most important words in all the Old Testament. It’s right up there with the holiness of God ... God’s unfailing love ... His *hesed*. It is faithful, steadfast love that is rooted in a relationship.

This is important for us to know about God because we can easily think that God changes his feeling toward us when we sin.

- **HIS GREAT COMPASSION** = surging, passionate love. This is another word for God’s mercy. But it is qualified with the word “great.” This is God’s “much” compassion ... God’s abundant compassion.

As we struggle to regain our faith song, we need to know what is true about God. But we also need to know...

2. WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT SIN

In this Psalm David uses all three basic Hebrew words for sin.

- **IT IS TRANSGRESSION THAT NEEDS TO BE BLOTTED OUT.**

Psalm 51:1c (NIV) - Blot out my transgressions.

“transgression” (v.1) = deliberate rebellion against the will of God.

ILLUSTRATION – The other day we were driving in Nan’s car and she pointed out to me that there was a warning light on the dash that said that a brake light was out. I told her I would fix it. But then I forgot. One night this week Nan called me and I could tell by the tone of her voice that something was not right. She had just been pulled over by a police officer because the brake light was out. I went into my self-defense mode: “Of all the things that a police officer would have to do, you would think they wouldn’t bother you for something like that.” Nan replied, “Well it *is* the law.” Yes it was, and I had transgressed it.

And David prays, “Lord, blot out my transgressions...”

“blot out” = wipe the stain clean. This word was used to describe records that were erased.

- **IT IS INIQUITY THAT NEEDS TO BE WASHED AWAY.**

Psalm 51:2a (NIV) - Wash away all my iniquity...

“iniquity” (v.2) = the inner crookedness of our fallen nature, and the guilt that goes with it.

And it needs to be washed away. “Wash away” = reach into the fibers of a life to wash out the ingrained filth. This compares forgiveness with washing clothing.

There’s a personal element here in the original text: “wash *me*.”

- **IT IS WRONG THAT NEEDS TO BE CLEANSED.**

Psalm 51:2b (NIV) - Cleanse me from my sin.

“sin” (v.2) = specific wrong or an offense.

And this wrong needs to be cleansed. Cleansing removes sin as a barrier to fellowship with God.

Later David speaks of the same thing:

Psalm 51:7 (NIV) - Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

In temple worship, when the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the altar he used a branch of the hyssop plant.

But there is more we need to see about our sin:

- **WE CANNOT ESCAPE THE REALIZATION OF IT (v.3).**

Psalm 51:3 (NIV) - For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

Remember, it was about a year before David dealt with the sin before God. And every day he must have loathed himself for what he did.

- **IT IS AN OFFENSE AGAINST GOD (v.4).**

Psalm 51:4 (NIV) - 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.

Others were hurt by David's sin ... Bathsheba, her husband Uriah, the baby that was the result of the adultery, the people who looked to David for leadership.

But the great tragedy was that what David did was an offense against God. Sin is an attack on God.

- **IT IS ENGRAINED IN US (v.5).**

Psalm 51:5 (NIV) - Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Here we have the OT description of the doctrine of original sin. Adam and Eve sinned, and passed on to us the sin disease. We are all born bent out of God's intended shape, so that we fall short of God's design for us. But that is not an excuse for sin. Ultimately we choose to sin.

In order to be able to overcome our regrets and our guilt over sin we need to know what is true about God, what is true about sin, and...

3. WHAT IS TRUE ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is just a plea away ... just a prayer away. David prayed, "Lord, have mercy." And the Lord granted David forgiveness to him.

ILLUSTRATION – There's a line in the great hymn, "To God be the Glory."

"O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood
To every believer, the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives."

But we must know that there is much more to forgiveness than just being on speaking terms with God again. The forgiveness of the Lord is intended to go much deeper than that, and David knew it. Something was lost that needed to be restored through forgiveness.

- **THERE'S RESTORED JOY (vv.8,12)**

Psalm 51:8 (NIV) - Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Conviction in David's life had been a crushing thing for him. He had lost his joy. Only God could restore it.

Psalm 51:12 (NIV) - Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- **THERE'S RESTORED PURITY (v.10a)**

Psalm 51:10a (NIV) - Create in me a pure heart, O God...

Only God can go to the deepest stain and purify us.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

- **THERE'S RESTORED STABILITY (v.10b)**

Psalm 51:10 (NIV) - Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

A “steadfast spirit” here is an established, firm, unwavering spirit. David wants no more of the instability that he has gone through.

- **THERE'S RESTORED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (v.11)**

Psalm 51:11 (NIV) - Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

You see, David vividly remembered that God had removed His Spirit's presence from King Saul because of his sin. David doesn't want the same thing to happen to him.

Now we need to remember that for a NT believer it isn't possible for God's Spirit to be removed. His presence in us is the seal of our salvation. But sin can disrupt our fellowship with God, and full experience of forgiveness restores our fellowship with God.

- **THERE'S RESTORED MINISTRY (v.13)**

Psalm 51:13 (NIV) - Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

David is not content to be forgiven and clean. He wants to be able to return to service to God. He can help others turn back to God because of what he has experienced.

- **THERE'S RESTORED WORSHIP (vv.14-15)**

He needs God to restore his “Faith Song.”

Psalm 51:14 (NIV) - Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

Psalm 51:15 (NIV) - O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

Forgiveness becomes real when we can once again let our praises flow to God from a clean, restored heart.

CONCLUSION

As David looked back on this dark chapter in his life, he would never forget that a baby died as a result of it. A man died as a result of it. There was the disgrace of everyone knowing what he had done. There was the inner storm that he endured for a whole year before he came clean. I want to tell you that God's grace is sufficient for that as well.

But the memory of all that happened was overshadowed by the full experience of forgiveness.

Only God can accomplish that. You may be wondering, "Is this possible for me? What I did was so terrible." It's possible because of what God did for us on the Cross.

And it all starts with a prayer: "Have mercy on me, O God."