

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10

Main Idea: Lord, I ask that you have mercy on me and forgive my sins by your great love, compassion and kindness and wash them clean away. I know what I did was wrong; I hurt innocent people and brought shame mainly to you as well as to myself and nation. I have done evil before you when I knew better. I feel guilty, and I go humbly before you. I have disobeyed you, and it is only fair that you punish me. I plead on your pity; I have nothing to stand on but your mercy. I have done wrong all of my days and need you to cleanse me right. Teach me what is right, so I can learn and do what is right. You desire faithfulness while I failed upon you. Only you can wash me clean. Then I will be made right filled with happiness and joy. Please turn away from my sin and create in me a heart that is pure and help me be faithful to you again. Please do not push me away from your company or take your Holy Spirit away. Help me be as happy as when I was saved by you. Make me want to obey you and be faithful. Restore me as no sin has touched me. I will teach others about your ways and be the best example. Take this guilt of taking an innocent life away from me. Keep me away from sin and keep sin out of my heart and mind. I will always be grateful to you and praise you wholeheartedly. I give my broken spirit to you; my humbleness is complete. I feel deep sorrow within me, and I know that is what you want over the rhetoric of a canned worship service. May I please you and use me to prosper your Kingdom.

Contexts and Background:

This is one of the seven penitential Psalms, which gives us a picture of the depths of sin and the need for repentance (Psalm 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). This is a prayer of Restoration to God with honesty and humbles to seek penitence. This also has elements of a lament. The backdrop is David's affair with Bathsheba and having her husband Uriah killed so he can have her. A total abuse of power and not a representation of a man after God's heart or an anointed king. After their son dies, David realized the full magnitude of his sin and cry's out to God seeking forgiveness and restoration, while pleading for mercy by his authentic confession (2 Sam. 11-12). It is a paramount function of a godly person to let God know of our wrongdoings and then stop it. It is the event of responding to the God's Truth and the Gospel's message, so we give up sin (Psalm 51; Amos 5:4-6; Romans 5:1-11; James 4: 7-10; 5:16; 1 Peter 2:22-24; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Mercy / gracious.* God forgives sinners because He is merciful. All those who sin deserves death, Yet, He gives grace. Knowing God's righteousness and a conviction concerning His character, an appeal is made for God to listen to his pain and give clemency. This is also a hope in His favor and a trust in one's conviction that God is there (Psalm 6:3; 42:11; John 12: 20-50; 14:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21).
- *Unfailing / steadfast love / lovingkindness.* David knows God's mercy and kindness and seeks to make his appeal there. Means how God is deeply bound and devoted to His love and care for us as His children, as a covenant. This points us to what Christ has done for us, God's special and unfailing favor being poured out to us. This favor is His love, kindness, and mercy as promised in the OT and fulfilled here in the NT. (Duet. 7:9, 12; 2 Sam. 7:15; Isa. 55:3; Psalm 6:4; 89:24, 28, 33; Matt. 8:28-34).
- *Great compassion.* One's confession is the first step to reconciliation with God and others.
- *Blot out.* Like cleaning off a clay tablet to be reused. In ancient times breaking a tablet of an agreement or a leger obligating one to pay cancels that debt. Meaning to overlook the transgression, even though it is justified, and the punishment merited. This is what the ritual of the sacrifices made under the Law, they covered the sin, so God could look upon the person. This was called atonement. David probably did all that the law required, now he goes directly to God and pleads mercy. One can ask God, but God is not required or obligated to remove sin, that is by His grace alone (Gen. 15:6; Ex. 32:32; Lev. 1:3-4; 4:13-32; Num. 5:23; Psalm 32:2, 10; Rom. 4:6-8).

- *Transgressions.* Meaning to rebel against God, by breaking a rule and knowingly to do so. In the ancient world, one was at the mercy of petty gods and their puppeteers who were contradictory and there was no set of rules of order. God is not contradictory or hides His Law and the Israelites knew the law and there was no excuse. **In addition, this is about how one must seek the Lord, even in one's transgressions and mistakes so to seek God's forgiveness (2 Sam. 12; Psalm 34:14).**
- *Iniquity.* This refers to one being crooked and intentionally doing wrong and not caring about truth.
- *Cleanse / wash me.* Meaning to wash clothes, as sin needs to be cleaned out. Only God's gracious act can remove sin and guilt from a person who committed wrong.
- *For I know.* Meaning penitent. David knew his predicament was self-inflicted. He sinned against God and his loyal friend by an affair with Bathsheba. Thus, he reaped the consequences; he brought upon himself and yet, still cried out to God—and, our God of grace listened and gave forgiveness and then restoration (2 Sam. 11-12).
- *Against you, you only, have I sinned.* The root of sin's victim is God. Obviously, David realized he sinned against Uriah and others too; however, only God has the power and right to cast judgment upon David as king. This may also be uncovering David's culpability legally from blood vengeance, as it was the right of a family member to go after someone who wronged someone in their family, unless they fled to a city of refuge for a trial.
- *Justified when you judge.* God's anger against sin is right, our rebellion is wrong. God's rules are to protect and when we sin, we hurt God's people whom He loves (Rom. 3:4).
- *Sinful at birth.* The contrast between the Holiness Purity and Strength of God and the sinful nature and weakness of humankind (Job 4:17; 15:14; Psalm 130:3; Jer. 17:9; Isa. 6:5).
- *Even in the womb.* The wording suggests that even in the womb, we are capable of learning and knowing sin. This also points to Original Sin and the sanctity of a preborn life (1 Kings 8:46; Job 38:36; Matt. 12:30-37; Rom. 1:18-3:23; 7:18).
- *Cleanse me ... wash me.* A payer of restoration, perhaps a ritual cleansing too. Water is a symbol for purity, why it is used in baptism and other purification ceremonies (Num. 19:19; Isa. 1:18).
- *Hyssop.* A small bush that grows wild in Palestine, that has bunches of small white, blue or reddish flowers with an aromatic fragrance. It was used for medicine and as a symbol in rituals for purification for making a person clean from sin (Ex. 12:22; Lev. 14:4-7; Num. 19:6).
- *Joy.* Meaning "contentment," not mere happiness, so to have authentic happiness from harmony with God and others. Our fullness and contentment are in God as LORD, so we are satisfied in Him. Because of God's faithfulness and mercies, the proper response is full praise with all of our being. God turns our heartache into joy (Isa. 38:20; Psalm 17:15; 104:33; James 1).
- *Hide your face.* A proverbial expression as a feeling of chastisement, not a fact, as God will not leave His people destitute of His presence. David pleads mercy and is seeking a restoration with his intimate relationship and fellowship with God. He knows that if we can seek Him and he will reveal Himself. This is the essence of intimacy and true worship, to behold God and inquire of Him (Job 13:24; Psalm 27:9; 94:14).
- *Create in me a pure heart.* Create means to redirect, here desires, to a new and better direction. The heart is the seat of intellect in Hebrew tradition. David is asking for God's mercy, after being humble and confessing, to cleanse his mind and transform his thinking so to make better decisions. God seeks those who are loyal with an upright heart and judges the wicked (Psalm 5:4-6; 7:8; 17:15; 135:14; Isa. 50:8; Jer. 51:10; Ezek. 36:26; Acts 26:20).

- *Renew... restore.* After acknowledging his sinful condition, David seeks regeneration and redirection.
- *Steadfast / right spirit.* Meaning a steady mindset that never waivers in following the Lord's path. In so doing being confident and appreciative, as a right spirit creates right relationships.
- *Cast me from.* David is asking not to have the Holy Spirit has taken away, which would mean he is excluded and can no longer commune with God. At this time the Holy Spirit was not permanent until Pentecost, Acts 2. As a king and leader of a nation, it would mean his lineage is cut off from the kingship as Saul's was. Also, this would bring disaster for Israel and perhaps the destruction of the people (1 Sam. 16:14; 28:6; Isa. 63:10-14; Jer. 23:39; Hos. 1:9).
- *Joy of your salvation.* Perhaps David became lazy with his relationship with God and thus suffered from spiritual decay that led to sin. When one is growing in Christ and is content (joyful) in Christ, then one is less likely to sin (Matt. 26:41).
- *Sustain me.* Here David received strength from God (Isa. 55:5).
- *Deliver me.* A cry of anguish to God for deliverance of one's situation (1 Sam. 23:28; 24:14; 25:29; 26:18; Psalm 7:2).
- *Rescue.* God promises us He will come to our rescue, but it will not always be when and what we hoped for. His plan is best, even when we do not see it. Yet, we are to allow His rescue, receive His salvation and work in us (Psalm 18; 25:4-5; 31:2; Isa. 45:13; Jer. 23:6).
- *God my Savior.* God for the deliverance of one's situation. God promises us He will come to our rescue, but it will not always be when and what we hoped for (1 Sam. 23:28; 24: 14; 25:29; 26:18; Psalm 18:46; 25:5).
- *Righteousness.* This means the seeking of God's presence, compassion, and understanding. Because of the relationship of grace, we have, and that David had with God, we can go into His presence. It is the Lord's presence that guides us in our healthy relationship with Him. The more we know of Him and His principles, the better decisions and discernment we will make and have (Psalm 4:1; 5:8-12; 31:1; 1 Cor. 1:30).
- *Delight in sacrifice / not pleased with burnt offerings.* Meaning an ethical system must back up the ritual system. God desires pious and devout worshipers not those who merely perform ceremonial procedures. At this time, animal sacrifices were mandated (as a tool to help God's people understand sacrifice so to look to Him). The real goal was genuine faith, obedience, gratitude, and reverence. However, worship without a heart after God is meaningless as is a corrupt religious system that holds to ritual over authentic gratitude and praise (1 Sam. 15:22; Psalm 27:6; 40:6-8; Isa. 1:16; Jer. 6:20; 7:4-9; 31:31-35; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8).
- *Broken / crushed spirit / broken heart / contrite heart.* Meaning broken down; because of the oppression of sin or overwhelmed with one's situation. A Repentant heart is genuinely remorseful, with humility, tenderness, and with no hint of pride (Num. 44:8; Psalm 34:18; 44:19).
- *Zion.* When a good king is blessed so are the people. David was not only concerned for himself, but for the whole nation, and this points to the promised Redeemer (Leviticus 26:9; Psalm 19:4; 26:11; 31:5; 34:22; 86:16; Isa. 35:10).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

A true Christian must have the willingness to repent and not cover up sin and wrongdoing or rationalize it. Only God can and has the authority to forgive our sins and He does, if we are willing to repent and give them over to Him. Therefore, our reply must be gratitude and praise. In contrast, a counterfeit Christian is not grateful; rather, they will refuse to change, have no remorse, repeat their sins and even justify them. Then they will bond

with others who are likeminded and blame those they hurt as hurting them and then demand that their sin be a right.

Being willing to ask for forgiveness and repent of one's sins is paramount for our growth. David sought it; Saul did not.

Christian Life Principle:

Spiritual darkness and most of life's problems come at us when we refuse to trust and obey our Lord. When we do not see Christ as our Master will miss out on opportunities to destroying our lives and those around us too. Yet, we are blessed in what matters, in our relationship with God and others when new place Chris first.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What gets in the way of acknowledging our sin?
2. What excuses do we have for not seeing the need for repentance?
3. When have you needed God's mercy?
4. What happens when God forgives us and washes our sins clean away? How does this display His great love, compassion and kindness?
5. How have you asked God to teach you what is right? How did that help you learn and do what is right?
6. How does one desire faithfulness?
7. What happens when we seek God to teach us what is right? How does this help us learn and do what is right?
8. A principal function of a godly person to let God know of our wrongdoings and then stop it. What happens when we do not?
9. How does this psalm show us a picture of that Christ has done for us, God's special and unfailing favor being poured out to us?
10. Why would a Christian knowingly seek to sin and cover it up? How does this unlock consequences?
11. How has God turned your heartache into joy?
12. How can your church make sure it's a place and beacon of gratitude when you praise God wholeheartedly? How does the rhetoric of a "canned" worship service get in the way?