

LESSON 6
October 6, 2024

Unit II: Songs of the Old Testament
Regret and Remorse

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Corinthians 7:5-11
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Psalm 51; 2 Samuel 11
PRINT PASSAGE: Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12, 15-17

KEY VERSE

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10, KJV)

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

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Interpret Psalm 51 through the lens of King David's experience of repentance and forgiveness.
- Confess personal and corporate sins that require repentance.
- Adapt David's psalm as a personal model of repentance.

*Key Terms

Contrite (verse 17)—Hebrew: *dakka'* (*dak-kaw'*): derived from a root word meaning “crushed,” it is used in the Bible to describe someone who is broken or crushed in spirit. When we are contrite, we have a deep sense of our own sinfulness and need for God's grace.

Iniquity (verse 2)—Hebrew: *avon* (*aw-vone'*): guilt; blame; in the Bible, it is a type of sin that includes a conscious decision to hurt someone else or to rebel against God's law. From an etymological perspective, scholars relate the Hebrew word (*avon*) to mean, literally, “crookedness” or “perverseness” (i.e., “evil regarded as that which is not straight or upright, moral distortion”).

Justified (verse 4)—Hebrew: *tsadeq* or *tsadoq* (*tsaw-dak'*): made to appear righteous, made someone righteous; acquitted; to be made righteous in God's sight.

Mercy (verse 1)—Hebrew: *racham* (*rakh'-am*): compassion, tenderness, forgiveness, or goodness toward others. The word *rechem/racham* derives from the Hebrew root *chânan*, which means “womb”; based on the close linguistic connection between these terms, God's “mercy” toward humanity denotes the same kind of divine protection that a baby has in its mother's womb.

Salvation (verse 12)—Hebrew: *yeshuab* (*yesh-oo'-aw*): Salvation, in the Judeo-Christian sense, is to be saved from death. It takes a person beyond death and into eternity.



The Biblical Context

The psalmist's plea to God for the forgiveness of his sins is a well-known prayer in the book of Psalms. It's believed that David wrote the prayer after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sin with Bathsheba. However, it's important to note that the psalm doesn't explicitly mention this event, indicating that it was written to commemorate that specific moment and provide a prayer guide for others who may find themselves in similar situations. This prayer is called a lament and is used when someone realizes that his/her life has been disrupted due to wrongdoing. The person then turns to God, asking for forgiveness and restoring the relationship based on repentance. Penitential psalms—including Psalms 6, 32, 38, 102, 130, and 143—are used this way. The psalm is divided into six distinct parts. In the first part, the psalmist approaches God, asking for forgiveness. In the second part, the psalmist confesses his sins. The third part is an appeal for cleansing, while the fourth part expresses a desire for inward renewal and creating a pure heart. In the fifth part, the psalmist promises to teach others the lessons about forgiveness they've learned, and the psalm concludes with a prayer for the prosperity of Zion.

Transgressions (verse 1)—Hebrew: *pesha* (peh'-shah): acts of rebellion; sins; conscious, willful violations or resistances against something.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

Repentance is a powerful tool that offers healing, redemption, and restoration. The stories of two women, Laura Barnett and Sandra Spannan, and the timeless truths in Psalm 51 illustrate this. On the street, Laura Barnett and Sandra Spannan invited passersby to unburden their souls, through confession, offering a unique encounter with vulnerability. Meanwhile, Sandra Spannan painted portraits of those who stopped to divulge their confessions. Similarly, the story of King David in 2 Samuel 12 reflects his silent confessions. David's humble plea for cleansing and renewal in Psalm 51 led to forgiveness and restoration, becoming a blueprint for healing. The lessons from Laura Barnett, Sandra Spannan, and King David teach us that healing begins with our acknowledging our secrets, sins, and brokenness. Our vulnerability becomes a canvas for transformation, and God's response to our repentance is mercy and restoration. Repentance is not weakness; it is strength, and it is the bridge from darkness to light, from guilt to grace.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Plea for Mercy (*Psalms 51:1-4*)

KJV

HAVE MERCY upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

NIV

HAVE MERCY on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

The psalmist begins by asking God for help, requesting that He show mercy and forgive his wrongdoing (**verse 1**). Although the title of the psalm refers to David's adultery with Bathsheba, the psalm is intended as a template for others to use David's prayer as their own. The psalmist based his plea on God's unfailing love and great compassion, grounded in God's covenant with Israel (**verse 2**). The psalmist metaphorically asked God to wash him clean of his sin. In **verses 3-4**, the psalmist acknowledged his wrongdoing and recognized that his sin was an offense against God. Although his historical title refers to David's sin with Bathsheba, the psalmist's statement is a hyperbolic recognition that the worst part of sin is rebelling against God. Thus, the psalm is not limited to David's event but is written for community use. The psalmist reminds us that although sin has consequences for others, the worst offense is against God.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How does David's plea for mercy resonate with your own experiences of sin and guilt?

The Desire for a Clean Heart and Right Spirit (Psalm 51:10-12)

KJV

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

NIV

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

In the previous verses, the psalmist had been asking God to remove his sin and its consequences. However, in **verse 10**, he changed his request to something positive. He asked for a pure heart and a steadfast spirit, realizing that he needed this new disposition to avoid sin in the future. He acknowledged that he, being a person steeped in sin, was incapable of such a transformation of character without divine help. The psalmist used the verb "create" to express the need for divine intervention. He feared that God might abandon him because of his sin, just as Moses appealed to God not to withdraw His presence from Israel. **Verse 11** mentions the Holy Spirit, which Christians tend to interpret as a reference to the Third Person of the Trinity. However, Old Testament readers of this psalm would have thought of this as a reference to God, who is a spirit and is holy. The psalmist wanted to feel the joy of a healthy relationship with God again. He desired a steadfast and willing spirit to keep from sinning again (**verse 12**).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can we cultivate a steadfast spirit that remains faithful even in challenging circumstances?

The Sacrifice that God Desires (Psalm 51:15-17)

KJV

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

NIV

15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.

16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

The psalmist strongly believed that he relied on God for everything in his life, including giving thanks to God in front of the congregation. He considered this act a gift from God and asked Him to help him express his gratitude (**verse 15**). He recognized that everything comes from God and belongs to Him. The psalmist then highlighted the positive outcomes that arise from being forgiven. A forgiven sinner can inspire others to seek forgiveness, and they can join together in giving thanks and praise to God. It is worth noting that the psalmist mentioned a specific sin, possibly the death of Uriah, which could have motivated the composition of this prayer. **Verses 16-17** present some challenges in interpretation. At first glance, it seems that God does not want animal sacrifices. The psalmist would bring one if God desired it, but, instead, God desires a broken and contrite heart that acknowledges and is saddened by sin and willing to turn away from it. This statement appears to conflict with other parts of the Old Testament, such as Leviticus 1–7, and the final verse of this psalm. Some people interpret this psalm and similar statements as opposing priestly theology, but it is better to view it as hyperbole, emphasizing what is essential to God. The entire Bible agrees that the act of sacrificing an animal does not automatically restore one's relationship with God. Instead, it must reflect sinners' acknowledgment that they deserve the same punishment as the animal.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share an example of when you humbly approached God, seeking His forgiveness.

A Closing Thought

Psalm 51 is a prayer that asks for God's mercy and compassion to forgive sins and restore a relationship with Him. It was written as an example of repentance for worshippers and gives hope that God will indeed forgive sins. Christians still find the psalm relevant today as they also seek forgiveness and restoration from God. The prayer reminds us that restoration depends on God's grace and that He responds to genuine repentance, not just following rituals. Christians also read and use this psalm, remembering that our forgiveness is only possible because of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

Your Life

To repent, we must acknowledge our sins. We should follow David's example and evaluate our lives honestly. Confronting our shortcomings truthfully requires authenticity and openness. David's honesty about his sins encourages us to avoid self-deception and confront our shortcomings directly.

Your World!

Lead a life of humility, constantly seeking to improve yourself, and expressing gratitude through heartfelt worship. By modeling sincere devotion, you can inspire those around you to seek God's mercy and experience the transformative power of His love.

Closing Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for the truth and wisdom in Psalm 51. Help us recognize our need for Your forgiveness so that we may seek renewal and restoration in our lives. Create in us pure hearts and steadfast spirits so that we may experience the fullness of joy of Your salvation. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

What fears or challenges prevent us from taking a stand for our beliefs? Reflect on this question as you prepare for next week's class by reading and reflecting on Daniel 3:19-26.

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, October 7	"Set Free from Bondage"	(Luke 13:10-17)
TUESDAY, October 8	"Our God Is Able to Deliver"	(Daniel 3:8-18)
WEDNESDAY, October 9	"Our God Is Unstoppable"	(Daniel 3:19-27)
THURSDAY, October 10	"A Cry for Help in Distress"	(Matthew 8:5-17)
FRIDAY, October 11	"Have Mercy on Me!"	(Mark 10:46-52)
SATURDAY, October 12	"God Delivers Us from Our Distress"	(Psalm 107:23-32)
SUNDAY, October 13	"Deliver My Soul, O God!"	(Psalm 22:1-11, 19-22)

Notes
