

Bible Study: Part 3 - Psalm 51

A New Heart

Opening Question

Have you ever tried to explain away something you knew was wrong? What is the difference between asking God to excuse us and asking God to forgive us?

Read Psalm 51

Before beginning the questions, read the whole psalm aloud together. If time allows, also read 2 Samuel 11–12:15 for the background of David’s sin and Nathan’s confrontation.

1. **David’s Silence and God’s Mercy - Read Psalm 51:1–2**

David begins with, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love.” What does this opening tell us about where David places his hope? Why is it important that he appeals to God’s character rather than his own explanation?

2. **No More Excuses - Read Psalm 51:1–4**

The sermon emphasized the difference between **excusing** sin and **forgiving** sin. Where do you see David refusing to make excuses in these verses? What kinds of excuses are we tempted to bring before God when we have sinned?

3. **Naming Sin Honestly - Read Psalm 51:1–3**

David uses several words for sin: “transgressions,” “iniquity,” and “sin.” What do these different words help us understand about the seriousness and depth of what he has done?

4. **“Against You, You Only” - Read Psalm 51:4**

David sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah, his household, and the nation, yet he says, “Against you, you only, have I sinned.” What does this mean? How does seeing sin first as an offense against God deepen repentance rather than minimize the harm done to others?

5. **A Deeper Problem Than One Bad Choice - Read Psalm 51:5–6**

The sermon pointed out that David’s sin did not begin on the rooftop; the rooftop revealed what was already in his heart. What does this teach us about the nature of sin? How does this challenge the idea that we only need better behavior or more self-control?

6. **Cleansed by Blood - Read Psalm 51:7–9**

David asks to be purged with hyssop and washed whiter than snow. In the sermon, hyssop was connected to blood, cleansing, Passover, and ultimately the sacrifice of Christ. Why does forgiveness require more than simply forgetting or overlooking sin? How does Jesus fulfill what David is asking for here?

7. **More Than a Clean Record - Read Psalm 51:10–12**

David does not stop with forgiveness; he asks God to create in him a clean heart. Why is a clean record not the same thing as a clean heart? What does it mean that only God can “create” this kind of heart in us?

8. **The Fruit of a Renewed Heart - Read Psalm 51:13–17**

According to these verses, what begins to happen when God restores David? Look for words about teaching, singing, praise, and sacrifice. How does true forgiveness move a person from silence and shame into witness and worship?

9. **Personal Renewal and Community Renewal - Read Psalm 51:18–19**

Psalm 51 ends with a prayer for Jerusalem. Why does David’s personal repentance lead to prayer for the whole community? What does this teach us about the way our sin and our renewal affect others?

10. **Close in Prayer.**