

The Book of PSALMS
Psalm 51
“Lord, Forgive Me! A Psalm of Penitence”

Introduction: Psalm 51 is a Psalm of *penitence*, which is admitting one's guilt for sinful and rebellious ways against a Holy and Righteous God. The process of sincere *repentance* comes through (1) the *recognition* of sin; (2) the *repentance* of sin; (3) the *reconciliation* from sin; (4) the *restoration* from sin; (5) the *resolve* to stop practicing sin and to do what is right. The history of **Psalm 51** is found in **2 Samuel 11:1-12:25**.

(v1-2) PETITION- A request made known to God. David's petition to God was according to who God is. God is *merciful*; God is *loving*; God is *kind*. God is the One Who can blot out our transgressions (rebellion). God washes us from our iniquity (perversity) and cleanses us from our sin (offence).

(v3-4) CONFESSION- The radical meaning is "acknowledgment," "avowal," with the implication of a change of conviction or of course of conduct on the part of the subject.

> **Confessions of sins are also of various classes:**

#1 - Personal to God alone - Wherever there is true repentance for sin, the penitent freely confesses his guilt to Him, against whom he has sinned. This is described in **Psalm 32:3-6**; compare **1 John 1:9**; **Proverbs 28:13**. Such confession may be made either silently, or, as in Daniel 9:19, orally; it may be general, as in Psalm 51, or particular, as when some special sin is recognized; it may even extend to what has not been discovered, but which is believed to exist because of recognized inner depravity (Psalm 19:12), and thus include the state as well as the acts of sin (Romans 7:18).

#2 - To one's neighbor, when he has been wronged (Luke 17:4): *"If he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."* It is to this form that James 5:16 says, *"Confess your sins one to another"*; also Matthew 5:23 -24 - *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

#3 - To a minister of the word, such as David to Nathan (2 Sam 12:13), of the multitudes to John in the wilderness (Matt 3:6), of the Ephesians to Paul (Acts 19:18). This is a general acknowledgment of sinfulness, and enters into an enumeration of details only when the conscience is particularly burdened.

#4 - To the entire church, where some crime has created public scandal. As "secret sins are to be rebuked secretly, and public sins publicly," in the apostolic age, where there was genuine penitence for a notorious offence, the acknowledgment was as public as the deed itself. An illustration of this is found in the well-known case at Corinth (compare 1 Cor 5:3; ff with 2 Cor 2:6). (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia)

(v5-6) RECOGNITION- To identify honestly and completely one's sinful state. **Rom 3:10-** *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; Rom 3:22-24- For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*

To know wisdom- Prov 9:10- *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."* **Turn to 1 John 1:5-2:1.**

(v7-9) RECONCILIATION- The process by which God and man are brought together again. The Bible teaches that God and man are alienated from one another because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness. Although God loves the sinner (Rom 5:8), it is impossible for Him not to

judge sin (Heb 10:27). Therefore, in biblical reconciliation, both parties are affected. Through the sacrifice of Christ, man's sin is atoned and God's wrath is appeased. Thus, a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship. (from Nelson's Bible Dictionary)

> **Hyssop** is the little shrub with which the blood and water of purification were applied (Lev. 14:1-7; Num. 19:1-19). Cleansing in Scripture is twofold: (1) of a sinner from the guilt of sin—the blood (hyssop) aspect; and (2) of a saint from the defilement of sin—the water (wash) aspect. Under grace the sinner is purged by blood when he believes (Mt. 26:28; Heb. 1:3; 9:12; 10:14). Both aspects of cleansing, by blood and by water, are brought out in Jn. 13:10; Eph. 5:25-26: “*He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet*”; “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her [redemption by blood] that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word*”: answering to the “wash me” of v. 7. (C.I. Scofield)

(v10-13) RESTORATION- To bring back to a former condition or original state. Five key points:

(1) Create in me a clean heart; (2) Renew a steadfast spirit; (3) Jesus will never leave us, nor forsake us; (3) Restore to me the joy of Your salvation; (4) Uphold me with You generous (magnanimous) Spirit; (5) I will disciple others and be a soul winner!

(v14-17) JUBILATION- Rejoicing, exaltation! **Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God** - David could not, indeed, recall Uriah from the grave, and repair the evil which he had done to "him," but he might save others from such a crime, and thus preserve many a useful life from the effects of unrestrained guilty passions. We cannot, indeed, by penitence recall those whom we have murdered; we cannot restore purity to those whom we have seduced; we cannot restore faith to the young man whom we may have made a skeptic; but we may do much to restrain others from sin, and much to benefit the world even when we have been guilty of wrongs that cannot be repaired. (from Barnes Notes)

> **Sing of God's righteousness** to a world that is destroying itself by following songs of unrighteousness, seduction, sex, drugs and violence. We **sing praises to our God** when we discover he has forgiven us!

> **A broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart** is to be crushed by the guilt of sin, whereas, never to desire to do it again. It also speaks of surrender to God, thus He will fashion you according to His will, for His Glory!

(v18-19) RESOLUTION- To make a firm decision; to find a solution. *God is pleased with a sacrifice of righteousness* - **Completely offering your life to Him in righteousness, trusting in His sacrifice for your sins through His Son Jesus Christ, and living in the power of His Holy Spirit. It is pure humble worship of God consumed by the holiness of God.**

Romans 12:1-2 - *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*