

Hope Church June 14th 2026

Nothing Hidden #3

Psalm 51

PSALM 51 comes out of one of the darkest moments in David's life. This isn't David at his best. This isn't the shepherd boy standing before Goliath. This isn't the king leading a nation. This isn't the poet writing songs.

- This is David **after adultery**.
- After **deception**.
- After **arranging the death** of Batsheba's husband to **cover his tracks**.

And for a while, it worked. Months went by. *Life carried on*. David wore the crown. He sat on the throne. He acted as if nothing had happened. Then Nathan the prophet showed up.

Using a **simple story about a stolen lamb**, he EXPOSED David's lies and deception and sin.

BUSTED! In that moment, the *excuses stopped*. The hiding was over. Everything was exposed.

And what David does next is remarkable. **He prays**. **PSALM 51** is that prayer.

Let's read together.

#1 Being honest about my sin.

Verses 1-5:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 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.

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

One of the most striking things about **PSALM 51** is how honest David is.

- He doesn't **make excuses**.
- He doesn't blame Bathsheba.
- He doesn't **blame stress**.
- He doesn't explain away what happened.

He simply owns it: **my transgressions and my sin and my iniquity**. David isn't

minimizing his sin. *He is calling it what it is*. HE IS calling a spade a spade.

REPENTANCE always begins with honesty.

David uses three different Hebrew words for SIN.

- The first word is PESHA / פֶּשַׁע – transgression. PESHA is rebellion. **Intentionally crossing a line.** David knew God's design for marriage. He knew God's standards for a king. He knew what was right. Yet he chose his own desires over God's will. Sin is not always a stumble. **Sometimes sin is open rebellion against God.**
- The second word is AVON / אֲוֹן – iniquity. AVON describes something that has become warped or bent out of shape. A piece of wood that was meant to be straight slowly twists over time. That's what sin does. It doesn't just produce bad actions. **It distorts desires. It bends our thinking. It reshapes our character.** Little by little we drift from the people God created us to be.
- The third word is CHATTAT / חַטָּאת – to miss the mark. CHATTAT comes from archery. You draw the bow. You take aim. You release the arrow. And it falls short. *This is the gap between who God created us to be and who we actually are.* We were made to REFLECT God's character and God's goodness and God's truth and God's love. **Yet again and again we miss the target.** Not because we're worthless. **Because we're broken.**

Sin is rebellion. Sin is distortion. Sin is falling short.

David is not looking for softer language. He's telling the truth. Which is why he can say:

Against you, you only, have I sinned.

David is not denying the DAMAGE he caused. He knows that he *sinned against Bathsheba*. That he *sinned against Uriah*. That he *sinned against his family*. That he *sinned against the nation*.

But David understood that every sin against another person is **ultimately a sin against God**.

- Bathsheba wasn't just an object for David's pleasure. She was a woman made in the image of God.
- Uriah wasn't just an obstacle to remove. He was a man made in the image of God.

When David sinned against them, **he sinned against the God** *in whose image they were made*.

The challenge for us is that we live in a culture that is **increasingly uncomfortable with the language of sin**. We don't want others to feel judged. We don't want to offend anyone. We soften our sin by calling it mistakes or failures or weaknesses or poor decisions.

- According to BARNAS RESEARCH, **only 14% of Christians** hold a biblical understanding of sin. Many followers of Jesus have lost sight of what the Bible actually says about what's wrong and broken with us.
- We're more concerned about feeling bad than by **the sin that caused it**. We want to stop feeling guilty MORE than we want to **deal with the sin itself**.

But David takes the opposite approach. He doesn't **soften it**. He doesn't **rename it**. He doesn't **manage the optics**.

He tells the truth.

Because he understands that his biggest problem is not merely what he did. **His biggest problem is what is broken inside him**. The DESIRE to put himself at the center of his life. His WAY. His COMFORT. His PREFERENCES. His DESIRES.

But **PSALM 51** challenges us that God isn't looking for performance. As long as we **hide and excuse and minimize and justify our sin**, *healing remains out of reach*.

But when we step into the light. When I'm honest about how I talk about others. How I exclude others. My online habits. The way that I eat. **God's grace meets us there.**

- Because *healing begins* where hiding ends.
- The OPPOSITE of repentance isn't failure. **It's pretending.**

An honest look at myself is always **uncomfortable**. But God doesn't tell us the truth about our sin to push us away. *To shame us*. He tells us the truth so that **we will run toward His grace.**

As **TIM KELLER** wrote:

We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.

David reminds us that we will never appreciate the depth of God's mercy until *we are honest* about the **depth of our need**.

Grace becomes amazing **when we stop pretending** we don't need it.

#2 Being confident in God's grace.

Verses 6-12:

Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me
hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and
blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within
me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy
of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

David doesn't begin **PSALM 51** with his sin. He begins with God's character.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.

David knows the ONLY REASON he can come back to God is because God is gracious. He
knows that he is in trouble if his hope is *rooted in the quality of his repentance*. How bad
he feels about his sin. **David's hope is rooted in who God is**. The Hebrew words he uses
are beautiful.

- **טוֹן** (chesed) – it speaks of **God's covenant love**. His faithful love. His steadfast
love. The kind of love that doesn't walk away. Doesn't give up. Doesn't let go.

- רַחֲמִים (rachamim) – it speaks of **deep compassion and tenderness**. The kind of love that moves toward people in their weakness. The kind of love a mother has for her child.

And that's where REPENTANCE begins. Not with what we've done. **But with who God is.**

REPENTANCE is not driven mainly by guilt. It is driven by grace.

- GUILT says: Run Forrest run. Hide away.
- GRACE says: Come home.

That's why David **asks God to cleanse him**.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean.

HYSSOP was used in the Passover and purification ceremonies as a **symbol of cleansing**. A thousand years later, HYSSOP *appears again at the cross* when it was used to lift sour wine to Jesus' lips. **The Hyssop points to Jesus**. He is the true Passover Lamb who doesn't simply make forgiveness possible. He makes sinners clean. At the

CROSS, we see **both truth and grace**. *Truth names our sin for what it is. Grace provides our rescue.*

As **BRENNAN MANNING** wrote:

Repentance is not what we do in order to earn forgiveness; it is what we do because we have
been forgiven.

REPENTANCE is trusting God to do what *we cannot do for ourselves*. **It's being honest about our sin and trusting that God's grace is greater.**

- Greater than murder and adultery.
- Greater than gossip and online behavior.
- Greater than unhealthy eating habits.

And if you've ever been overwhelmed by your failures and wondered *whether God could still love you*, remember this: the very fact that your sin still bothers you, **are evidence that God is still working in your life.**

A hard heart doesn't feel bad about sin. *A heart being changed by grace does.*

That's why David prays:

Create in me a pure heart, O God.

The word translated as create is the same word used in Genesis 1.

- **בָּרָא** (barra) – to **create out of nothing**.

David is not asking God to help him get his act together. He's not asking for **better habits** or **more self-discipline** or another **chance to prove himself**. He's asking for a **miracle**. David knows that he cannot be fixed by trying harder. His problem runs deeper than behavior. It reaches all the way into the heart.

David needs God to **give him new a new heart**.

As God **promised Ezekiel**:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26 NIV

Then David prays:

Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

David DOESN'T ASK God to restore his salvation. He asks God to **restore his joy**. David didn't lose God. But he had lost the JOY and FREEDOM and CLOSENESS that come from walking with Him.

And maybe that's where some people are today.

- Maybe you've been *carrying guilt for so long* that you've **forgotten what joy feels like**.
- Maybe your *faith is going through the motions* rather than enjoying a relationship with God.
- Or maybe you've **never experienced that kind of joy at all**.

Because SIN doesn't only leave us feeling guilty. It steals our joy. *It steals our freedom*. **It leaves us disconnected** from the God we were made to know personally. David isn't just asking for a clean record. He's asking for a NEW HEART.

And then we come to what may be the most revealing request in the entire psalm.

Do not cast me from your presence.

David's GREATEST FEAR is not losing his throne or his reputation or his influence.

His greatest fear is losing God. Standing in the mess of his own choices, David *discovers what matters most*.

- His REPUTATION can be rebuilt.
- His KINGDOM can recover.

But he cannot imagine life without God.

REPENTANCE is not merely turning from sin but **turning toward God**. Every confession is a step back to Christ.

PSALM 51 reminds us that **God is full of steadfast love**. That He is rich in mercy. That He is *faithful even when we are not*.

That my failure can be enormous. **But God's grace is greater.**

#3 Restored for a purpose – provides a mission.

Verses 13-19:

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Many people think forgiveness is the finish line. **PSALM 51** says it's **the starting line**.

After experiencing God's mercy, David says:

Then I will teach transgressors your ways.

Grace always leads somewhere. God doesn't just forgive people. He restores them and gives them a purpose. The ENEMY wants *our failures to become our identity*. God wants our failures to **become part of our story**.

The people who have experienced grace most deeply are often the people **God uses most powerfully**. Not because they have all the answers. Not because they have it all together. But because they know what it is to be broken and **be restored**.

And that changes a person. When you realize you **don't have to pretend** anymore. You **don't have to perform** anymore.

*Instead of carrying a résumé. **We carry a story**.* A story of a God who met us at our worst and **refused to let that moment define us**.

One of the biggest lies we believe is that failure permanently disqualifies us from being **used by God**. Scripture tells a very different story. God takes broken people. *Restores them. Uses them for His purposes.*

- Peter denied Jesus.
- Paul persecuted the church.
- David committed adultery and arranged a murder.

God restored them and used them. Not because their failures didn't matter. **But because grace had the final word**. As **N.T. WRIGHT** writes:

The church isn't supposed to be a society of people who have it all together, doing impressive things for God. It's supposed to be a community of people who know they're forgiven — people who are repaying an unpayable debt of love by serving Jesus in every way they can, precisely because they know they're unworthy of the task.

People don't need polished perfection. They need **honest stories of grace**. The restored sinner BECOMES A WITNESS. Because they've **experienced the mercy of God firsthand**.

And honestly, that's my dream for HOPE CHURCH.

- That we would be a church that tells the truth about sin without softening it.
- And a church that **tells the truth about grace** without holding it back.
- A church where people *don't have to pretend*.
- A church where people far from God feel WELCOMED and RESPECTED and INVITED to **explore who Jesus is**.

Because that's exactly what **PSALM 51** gives us.

Honesty. Grace. Transformation. Mission.

- **We face the truth about ourselves.**
- We run toward the mercy of God.
- *God does for us that we cannot do for ourselves.* He restores us!

- And then **He sends us back into the world** as people who know what grace feels like and cannot keep it to themselves.

No matter how far you've wandered. No matter what you've done. No matter how much regret you're carrying into this room today. **God's grace is greater.**

Because **PSALM 51** is not ultimately a psalm about David's sin. **It is a psalm about God's mercy.** The GOD WHO EXPOSED DAVID'S SIN is the same God **who forgave him** and **cleansed him** and **restored him** and **continued His work through him.**

PSALM 51 isn't just David's story.

It's my story.

And it's your story.