

2025 BIBLE STUDY SERIES
THEME: “HOPE IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY”

February 5, 2025

FREEDOM FOUND IN FORGIVENESS:
“Personal Forgiveness”
Psalm 51:1-10 (51:10)

Topics

- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms
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- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Exploring The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

A. What are we looking for when we examine ourselves prior to taking Communion?

B. What does it mean to repent?

IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

Rick Warren in the Purpose Driven Life stated “we are products of our Past but we don’t have to be prisoners of our Past.” This suggest that we must acknowledge and take ownership of our actions, our mistakes, and our errors.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that prisoner was you. ~Lewis B. Smedes~

If we are going to engage personal forgiveness, we must examine ourselves internally. Psalm 139:23-24. Search me, O God , and know my heart... This combats the phrase of avoiding responsibility when individuals say negligently “God knows my heart”. He surely does know our heart. 1 Samuel 16:7.

In the Psalms it is suggested by theologians that: The Psalmist finds God to be the only source of forgiveness. This reliance on God results in hymns of praise to God.

Furthermore, forgiveness is the vehicle in which God reappropriates the blessings of His gracious covenant.

What Areas should be our focus in inner forgiveness:

- Conscious- The Holy Spirit leads us John 16:13
- Innermost parts- The truth leads us Psalm 51:6
- Hidden parts- The word of God leads us. Psalm 119:11

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. ~Mahatma Gandhi~

David here needs the Forgiveness of God after committing adultery with Uriah's wife Bathsheba. David must face another Giant. The Giant he must face is larger and stronger than Goliath. This Giant is his flesh, his success, and his ego!

What does David need to exercise this forgiveness:

- God
- Grace
- Great Compassion

There are three Prominent instances in Psalm 51 that David focuses on a clean slate with God.

Blot out my transgressions- Wipe out or annihilate my crime

Wash me thoroughly- Fully clean or wash my guilt. Cleansing of the Palate of your Potential

Cleanse me from my sin- purify from rebellion or transgression

All three of these words for cleansing are imperatives. This is a petition of urgency, this is a petition of emergency, and this is a petition which is a strong request.

How desperate are you to move forward in your life and to bask in personal forgiveness?

"How unhappy is he or she who cannot forgive himself."

KEY TERMS

Blameless
Blot out
Cleanse
Communal
Depravity
Evil
Forgiveness
Gladness
God
Heart
Hyssop
Iniquities
Inward parts
Joy
Judge

Lovingkindness
Mercy
Penitential
Prayer
Purge
Rejoice
renew
Repentance
Salvation
Sin
Spirit
Steadfast
Tender mercies
Transgressions
Wisdom

Scripture Reference (Psalm 51:1-10 NKJV)

¹Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
³For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.
⁴Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.
⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
⁶Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom.
⁷Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
⁸Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
⁹Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Outline

- I. Pleading for Mercy (51:1-2)
- II. Professing Grave Sin (51:3-5)
- III. Pressing for Purity (51:6-7)
- IV. Petitioning for Renewal (51:8-10)

INTRODUCTION

We've been studying a series called "Freedom Found in Forgiveness," focusing on God's forgiveness and now on personal forgiveness. Today's lesson on Personal Forgiveness comes from Psalm 51:1-10. The focus is on verse 10.

The Psalms highlight the relationship between God's actions and people's responses. Unlike other scriptures, God doesn't speak directly in the Psalms; they reflect human perspectives on life's challenges.

Key themes include--

- 1) understanding **God's sovereignty and goodness** in the midst of **personal and communal** struggles, and
- 2) **maintaining faith** even when tempted to doubt.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Psalm 51:1-10 is a **psalm of confession** and **prayer for forgiveness** from God. The psalm begins with a request for God to remove the psalmist's sins and ends with a request for a new heart. It is also one of the most familiar **penitential Psalms**.

There are **seven penitential psalms**: Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; and 143. In each, the author acknowledges or confesses his trespass before the Lord and recognizes his need for God's favor and forgiveness. The penitential psalms make fitting prayers for the repentant sinner.

It is King David's **prayer of repentance** after the prophet Nathan confronted him with his sins (2 Samuel 11:1-12:15). David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and covered it up by having her husband, Uriah, killed.

The words of Psalm 51 pour forth from David's darkest moment of self-awareness. He acknowledges the depth of his sin and guilt and pleads for God's mercy. Then, gripped with confidence in God's faithfulness, David believes his plea will be heard and answered. Besides serving as a personal prayer of confession, contrition, and restoration, Psalm 51 also gives voice to the nation of Israel in its plea for repentance and salvation.

EXPLORING THE TEXT

I. **Pleading for Mercy (51:1-2)**

*¹Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.*

Have mercy upon me, O God. The psalmist, feeling deep guilt and overwhelmed by wrongdoing, seeks God's mercy without excuses or justifications. He acknowledges his sin and sincerely asks for forgiveness, relying on God's loving-kindness and God's multitude [abundant] of mercies, which are renewed every morning (**Lamentations 3:22-23**)!

His sin was so great, his offence was so aggravated, that he could have no hope but in a Being of infinite compassion, and he felt that the need of mercy in his case could be measured and covered "only" by that infinite compassion.

The phrase "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity" suggests repeated or intense washing to remove a stain, indicating thoroughness. "And cleanse me from my sin" means to completely remove sin and make one pure.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING (Introduction, Background/Context, Psalm 51:1-2)

1. What are some key themes in Psalm 51:1-10? (Introduction)

2. What type of Psalm is Psalm 51? (Background and Context)

3. What does Psalm 51:1-2 reveal about God's mercy and love? (51:1-2)

EXPLORING THE TEXT**II. Professing Grave Sin (51:3-5)**

³ For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.

⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

For I acknowledge my transgressions - King David admits to being a sinner and is open about it, acknowledging this before God. (See **Psalm 32:5**.) This acknowledgment is not seen as a merit but as a necessary mindset for forgiveness.

And my sin is ever before me - That is, it is now constantly before King David's mind. It had not been so until Nathan brought it vividly to his recollection (**2 Samuel 12:1-12**); but after that it was continually in his view. He could not turn his mind from it.

The memory of his guilt followed him; it pressed upon him; it haunted him. It was no wonder that this was so, which suggests that people can commit serious sins without realizing their wrongdoing. However, once they become aware of their guilt, they cannot find peace.

Everything reminds the soul of it; and nothing will drive away its recollection. In such a state the sinner has no refuge—no hope of permanent **peace**—but, or except, in the **mercy** of God.

Against You, You only, have I sinned - That is, the sin, considered as an offence against God, now appeared to King David so enormous and so aggravated, that, for the moment, he lost sight of it considered in any other of its bearings. It "was" a sin, as all other sins are, primarily and mainly against God; it derived its vastness from that fact.

We are not to suppose that David did not believe and notice that he had done wrong to people, or that he had offended against human laws, and against the well-being of society. His crime

against Uriah and his family was of the deepest and most aggravated character, but still the offence derived its chief atrociousness from the fact that it was a violation of the law of God.

That You might be justified when You speak - King David admitted his guilt, acknowledging that God was right in His laws and judgments, without making excuses for his actions. The sin was so severe that any punishment God decided would be justified and deserved.

And blameless when You judge - Be regarded as right, holy, pure, in the judgment which You may appoint.

Behold, I was shaped in iniquity - David deeply felt his own depravity, believing it was not just a momentary lapse or external act, but a fundamental corruption of his nature from the start of his existence—from conception.

The idea is that he could not have committed this offence unless he had been thoroughly corrupt, and always corrupt. The sin was as heinous and aggravated “as if” in his very conception and birth there had been nothing but depravity.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING (51:3-5)

4. How does David express his guilt and responsibility for his actions (51:3-5)?

5. How does David’s acceptance of God’s justice reflect his humility? (51:4)

EXPLORING THE TEXT

III. Pressing for Purity (51:6-7)

⁶ *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*

⁷ *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts - God desires truth and purity in the soul, which aligns with His nature. David, aware of his own corruption, realized that only a pure heart could please God. He understood that such purity could only come from God, leading him to turn from confession to prayer.

And in the hidden part - In the secret part; the heart; the depths of the soul. The cleansing was to begin in that which was hidden from the eye of man; in the soul itself. Wisdom, heavenly, saving wisdom, was to have its seat there; the cleansing needed was not any mere outward purification, it was the purification of the soul itself.

You will make me to know wisdom – You only can enable me to understand what is truly wise. This wisdom, this cleansing, this knowledge of the way in which a guilty man can be

restored to favor, can be conveyed only by You; and “You will do it.” There is here, therefore, at the same time a recognition of the truth that this “must” come from God, and an act of faith, or a strong assurance that he “would” convey this.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean - On the word *hyssop*, see The plant or herb was use much by the Hebrews in their sacred purifications and sprinklings: **Leviticus 14:4, 6, 49, 51; 1 Kings 4:33; Hebrews 9:19**. Under this name the Hebrews seem to have comprised not only the common “hyssop” of the shops, but also other aromatic plants, as mint, wild marjoram, etc.”

The psalmist **seeks an internal change**, symbolized by the sprinkling with *hyssop*, rather than relying on the ritual itself for cleansing.

Wash me - That is, cleanse me. Sin is represented as “defiling,” and the idea of “washing” it away is often employed in the Scriptures. (**Isaiah 1:16.**)

And I shall be whiter than snow - **Isaiah 1:18**. The prayer is, that he might be made “entirely” clean; that there might be no remaining pollution in his soul.

IV. **Petitioning for Renewal (51:8-10)**

⁸ Make me hear joy and gladness,
That the bones You have broken may rejoice.
⁹ Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Make me hear joy and gladness – King David desires to hear God's forgiving voice, bringing joy and relief from guilt and condemnation. This forgiveness would replace his anguish and sorrow with peace and happiness.

That the bones You have broken may rejoice - That is, which have been crushed or broken by the weight of sin. (**Psalm 32:3; Psalm 6:2**) The word “rejoice” here means, be free from suffering; the prayer is that the burden which had crushed him might be removed.

And blot out all my iniquities - Take them entirely away. Let the account be erased, cancelled, destroyed.

Hide thy face from my sins That is, Do not look on them; avert thy face from them; do not regard them. Compare and contrast God’s actions in **Psalm 51:9** and **Psalm 13:1; Isaiah 59:2:**

In **Psalm 51:9** Blotting Out Iniquity
"Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity."

In **Psalm 13:1** Perceived Absence (Abandonment by God?)
"How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"

In **Isaiah 59:2** Separation Due to Sin

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Create in me a clean heart, O God – This phrase refers to the act of creation similar to how God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1. It expresses a desire for God to purify the heart, acknowledging that only divine power can **transform** the human heart to be pure and right. This concept is consistent with teachings in both the Old and New Testaments.

And renew a right spirit within me - King David prays for a strong, virtuous heart that resists temptation and remains dedicated to serving God. The term "renew" means to make new or restore, like rebuilding a city. David seeks to regain the righteous spirit he once had before falling into sin.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

7. What did David mean when he asked God “make me hear joy and gladness?” (51:8)

8. What is the difference between God’s actions in Psalm 51:9; Psalm 13:1, and Isaiah 59:2?

In **Psalm 51:9** Blotting Out Iniquity
"Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity."

In **Psalm 13:1** Perceived Absence (Abandonment by God?)
"How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"

In **Isaiah 59:2** Separation Due to Sin
"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."

Forgiveness vs. Separation: In Psalm 51:9, God’s action is focused on forgiveness and cleansing, in response to sincere repentance. In contrast, Isaiah 59:2 depicts God’s action as one of separation and withholding due to ongoing sin.

These verses together illustrate the dynamics of the relationship between humans and God, emphasizing themes of mercy, justice, repentance, and the impact of sin on divine fellowship.

9. How did King David ask God to transform his heart and his spirit? (51:9-10)

LIFE APPLICATION

Think about it—

- How can you cultivate a pure heart and a renewed spirit in your daily walk with God?

- How can you incorporate the lessons from these verses into your daily life and spiritual practices?

RESOURCES

Adult Questions for LESSONMaker, LOGOS Bible Software.

Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament.

Bell, James Stuart, ed. 2019. *Ancient Faith Study Bible*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bibles.

Jamieson-Faust Brown Bible Commentary. A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.

The Moody Handbook of Theology