

Whiter than Snow

*Studies in sin, guilt, and forgiveness from the life of David and Psalm 51
A Sunday morning message series from July 22 thru August 26*

Psalm 51

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID,
when Nathan the prophet went to him,
after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

¹Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

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

⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁶Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

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

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

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

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

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

¹⁶For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;

¹⁹then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

It all started with a sleepless night, a condition that many of us can relate to. But it explodes into a story of lust, adultery, pregnancy, deception, and murder. If the story of David and Bathsheba were a television drama, you wouldn't watch it, or a paperback, you wouldn't choose to buy it. Yet, the terrible details of this ugly story splash across the pages of that religious book you and I call the Bible. Why would God preserve such a dark story? Who is the sex and blood of this story going to help anyway?

These are good questions to ask and worthy of answers. First, the New Testament (1 Corinthians 10) tells us that these things were *written for our example and our instruction so that we would not fall into the same errors as God's people of old*. Yes, this story is in the Bible because it is meant to be instructive. The details are not there to titillate you, but to help you understand things you need to understand about yourself, God, life in a fallen world, the nature of sin, and the power of God's transforming grace. Second, the Bible tells us that the people in this story were people just like us. As you read through the Bible, you know that its history is not filled with accounts of noble people who always did the right thing. No, the characters of the Bible, even the ones that we would tend to think of as heroes, were broken and flawed people. They, like us, were all sinners and, like us, all needed to be rescued by God's grace. "Rescued from what?" you might ask. Just like us, they needed to be rescued from themselves.

Think about David, whose story of temptation and sin is the backdrop of the psalm that provides the content for these meditations. When you read about all the war between nations and bloody power struggles that surrounded David's reign, it would be tempting to think that David's biggest enemy was the warring nation around him. But what this story demonstrates is that David carried his most powerful enemy around with him. That enemy lived inside of him. That enemy lives inside us as well. That enemy is called sin.

It would also be tempting to think that the greatest victory in David's life was his victory over the Philistines with their mighty Goliath. Yet this story, and the psalm that goes with it, points us to the fact that the greatest victory in David's life was not a victory of war, but a victory of grace. It is amazing to watch this hardened adulterer and murderer brought to confession and repentance by the power of God's grace. And it is incredible

that he does not lose his throne and, in fact, becomes a man who is known as "a man after God's own heart"! The greatest victory in David's life was not a victory of David's at all, but, rather, God's victory of grace over the sin that had captivated David's heart.

You'll never get David's story or the expansive helpfulness of Psalm 51 if you stand apart from the story and say to yourself, "I am so glad that I am not like David!" To say that completely misses the point. This story is in the Bible precisely because David's story is your story. No, I don't mean that you are an adulterer and a murderer. What I mean is that like David, you are a sinner. There are times when you let yourself be ruled by your self-focused desires rather than by God's clear commands. There are times when you love something in the creation more than you love the Creator. There are times when you willingly step over God's boundaries in pursuit of what you want. There are times when your little kingdom of one means more to you than his transcendent kingdom of glory. There are times when you work hard to deny what you have done or to cover your tracks in fear of being caught.

David's story is our story, so Psalm 51 is our psalm as well. This psalm of moral failure, personal awareness, grief, confession, repentance, commitment, and hope wraps its arms around the experience of each one of us. These themes are in each of our lives. But the dominant theme of Psalm 51 is not sin. The dominant theme of Psalm 51 is grace. There would be no Psalm 51 if a God of boundless love hadn't sent Nathan to David as an instrument of rescuing mercy and restoring grace.

Psalm 51 is about how God meets us in our moments of deepest failure and transforms us by his grace. It is about how broken sinners can be brutally honest with God and yet stand before him without fear. All of the themes of sin, grace, and redemption are compacted into this powerful little psalm.

Come and look at yourself in the mirror of Psalm 51. Stop and look at the picture of your Lord that is painted by the words of this psalm. Let your ears hear the music of grace that is so beautifully played here. Take just one day a week and let yourself be transformed by the mercy that is not only the hope of this psalm but of your life and mine as well. And take time each week to celebrate the grace that is the greatest victory in your life as well.

Paul David Tripp

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July 22, 2012
Pastor David Sincock

“Psalm 51: When Nathan the prophet went to David after he had gone in to Bathsheba”

Introduction

Lessons from David's Experience
2 Samuel 11:1–12:25

Sin and Temptation _____

Sin usually has a _____

Sin _____ goes without _____

Sin always takes you _____ than you want to go.

Covering over sin _____ eliminates sin

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

We must view our personal sin _____

Sin always carries _____ and _____

God always has a _____

- Before
- Building
- During
- After

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Lessons from David's Experience
2 Samuel 11:1–12:25

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle... David remained at Jerusalem.

Sin and Temptation lurks everywhere

⁴David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her.

Sin usually has a history

Then she returned to her house. ⁵And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

Sin never goes without consequence

¹⁵In the letter he wrote, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die.”

Sin always takes you farther than you want to go.

²⁷And when the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son.

Covering over sin never eliminates sin

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

¹²²¹And the Lord sent Nathan to David... ⁵Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man... ⁷Nathan said to David, “You are the man!”

We must view our personal sin objectively

¹⁴Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.”

Sin always carries consequences and punishment

and she bore a son... And the Lord loved him

God always has a future

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Before | <input type="checkbox"/> Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> During | <input type="checkbox"/> After |