

Psalm 51

Moral Evil and Its Consequences

1 <<To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.>> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

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

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

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

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

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

I. Superscription

- A. The chief Musician - song leader or choir director
- B. Psalm is *mizmor*.
- C. Background -David's prayer after being confronted by his sin regarding Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 11ff.

II. Literary Features

- A. Prayer for mercy - Psalm 51:1
- B. Prayer for cleansing - Psalm 51:2-7
- C. Prayer for joy - Psalm 51:8-12
- D. Prayer for service - Psalm 51:13-19

III. Exegetical Features

- A. Mercy and lovingkindness
 - 1. Mercy - means to bend or incline towards - David feels guilty
 - 2. Lovingkindness - *chesed* - a love marked by strength

- B. Blot out transgressions
 - 1. Blot - erase or remove sin
 - 2. Transgression - inward defiance against God
- C. Wash iniquity
 - 1. Iniquity - that which is morally crooked
 - 2. Wash - wash thoroughly and completely
- D. Cleanse sin
 - 1. Sin - means to miss the mark
 - 2. Cleanse - pronounce clean as in leprosy
- E. Create and Restore
 - 1. Create - *bara* - that which only God can do
 - 2. Restore - causative idea - cause to return and also emphatic imperative - "please restore"

IV. Religious Ideas and Applications

- A. Although David's sin was against Uriah, all sin is first and foremost against God.
- B. There are consequences to moral evil including a loss of God's presence and a loss of joy.
- C. The basis of all forgiveness is God's grace and mercy.
- D. Before one can pray for service, one needs to pray for forgiveness and restoration. God cannot use a dirty vessel.
- E. Only God can restore a pure conscience.