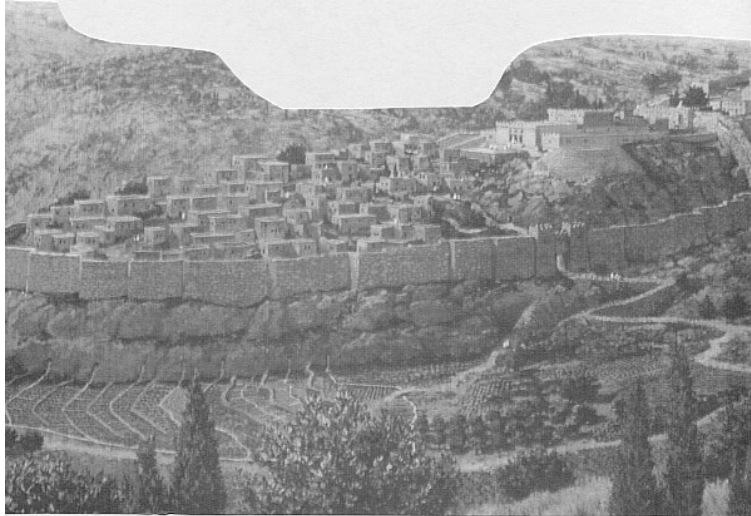


A CRY FOR MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

(Psalm 51)

INTRODUCTION



Jerusalem In King David's Day

This portion of Scripture is written by a desperate man. Desperate because he is hurting, and hurting because he has rebelled against the LORD GOD! The author is David, King of Israel, and this Psalm is written in response to the LORD (through the prophet Nathan), confronting him concerning his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and eventual murder of her husband Uriah. [Note: We studied this account in detail with the teaching, "THE PROGRESSION AND CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (IN THE LIFE OF KING DAVID)", II Samuel 11-18.]

Yet this is a portion of Scripture that each one of us can identify with, because each one of us has rebelled against the LORD GOD as well. It is because of this rebellion that each one of us needs the gracious and abundant mercy of our loving GOD! As we study this great Psalm, may we like King David both learn and apply these great truths to our hearts, so they can be in turn manifested in our lives . . . everyday!

I. The Cry For Mercy (vv.1-2)

"Have mercy upon me, O GOD, according to THY lovingkindness, according unto the multitude of THY tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

David has committed those terrible sins of adultery and murder. He now realizes the awfulness of these acts . . . so he cries out to the LORD for "mercy"!

"mercy" = kindness, tender affection, favour, pity

We can all identify with David here can't we? We too have sinned, including being guilty of adultery and murder (see Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28)! We all can be very grateful that the LORD has a "*multitude of . . . tender mercies*", because we all have a multitude of sins!

As David realizes his sin before the LORD by calling out for "*mercy*", he also realizes his need for cleansing from that sin. He cries out for this in verse two . . .



David Crying Out For Mercy

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

II. The Confession OF Sin (vv. 3-6)

"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 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. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, THOU desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part THOU shalt make me to know wisdom."

For David thousands of years ago, and for us as CHRISTians today, the only prerequisite to receive GOD's "*mercy*" and cleansing, is for us to "*acknowledge*" that we have sinned against GOD and HIS Word. This is what David does in verse three . . .

"For I acknowledge my transgressions . . ."

"acknowledge" = to know, to agree, to confess, to admit

As GOD's HOLY SPIRIT works in David's life, revealing David's sins to him, this compels David "to agree" with GOD that he has sinned, and thus "confess" these sins as well.



John The Apostle

I John 1:9 is a New Testament passage that supports this principle . . .

“If we confess our sins, (GOD) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

When we sin, our fellowship and communion with GOD is damaged, but all we have to do to restore that sweet fellowship is *“confess”* that sin . . . “admit” that we have sinned.

There is another aspect of confession that Scripture teaches, that being “repentance”.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

True confession of sin is accompanied by a repentance, that is, a turning from and *“forsaking”* of that sin. As David did this, he could exclaim to the LORD in verse six . . .



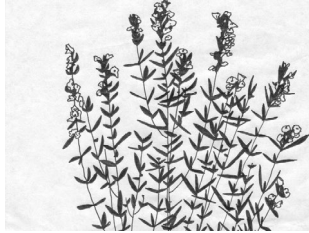
Confession And Repentance Go Together

“Behold, THOU desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part THOU shalt make me to know wisdom.”

III. The Cleansing From Sin (vv.7-9)

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which THOU hast broken may rejoice. Hide THY face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.”

So again, David pleads for GOD to cleanse him . . . to “wash” him . . . to make him “whiter than snow”.



The Hyssop Plant

“hyssop” = the little shrub with which the blood and water of sacrificial purification were applied (see Leviticus 14:1-7; Numbers 19:1-19).

There was no Jewish sin-offering for adultery or murder. The penalty in GOD’s Law for these two sins was death (see Leviticus 20:10; 24:17)! If David was to live, he needed the LORD’s forgiving mercy. Scripture tells us that GOD was merciful. This is why GOD, through the prophet Nathan said, *“The LORD also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”* II Samuel 12:13b

We all deserve death and eternal damnation in hell because of our sins. However, GOD’s mercy and forgiveness is ours as well as we sincerely cry out to HIM for them!

As David cries out to GOD for mercy and forgiveness, he also pleads for the return of HIS *“joy and gladness”*, and *“... the bones which (GOD) hast broken (to) rejoice.”* (see also v. 12a)



The Death Of Absalom

Scripture declares that sin has its “pleasures”, but only “for a season” (i.e. - a short time), Hebrews 11:25b. David experienced this firsthand. He may have received some “pleasure” from his sin with Bathsheba, but it quickly turned into intense sorrow with the death of their child (II Samuel 12:19); Amnon raping Tamar (II Samuel 13:14); Absalom killing Amnon (II Samuel 13:30); Absalom stealing his father David’s throne (II Samuel 15:1-17); and Joab killing Absalom (II Samuel 18:14-15)!

This is why the Scriptures go on to exclaim . . .

"... the wages (i.e. - payment) of sin is death..."
Romans 6:23a

How tragic it is, that many times we exchange a few moments of pleasure, for hours, days, and sometimes many years of sorrow!

David ends this section as he began, crying out for Divine cleansing.

"Hide THY face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities." (v.9)

David knew the cleansing power of GOD's forgiveness. For he later wrote . . .

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath HE removed our transgressions from us." Psalm 103:12



When we truly confess our sins and repent from them, we too can be confident that the LORD will not only forgive us of those sins, but will also forget them as well!

IV. The Restoration From Forgiveness (vv. 10-12)

"Create in me a clean heart, O GOD, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from THY presence, and take not THY HOLY SPIRIT from me. Restore unto me the joy of THY salvation, and uphold me with THY free SPIRIT."

As David has experienced the cleansing power of GOD's mercy and forgiveness, he also now receives the blessings of complete restoration too.



King David

David's sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband Uriah brought separation between him and HIS LORD. That sweet fellowship that David enjoyed with his GOD had been destroyed. However, after true confession and repentance, that relationship is restored once again.

David again has "... a clean heart..." and "... a right (i.e. - upright) spirit..." (v.10). He again enjoys that sweet fellowship with the LORD, and the presence of HIS "HOLY SPIRIT" working within his life (v.11). He again knows what it is like to have "... the joy of (of the LORD's) salvation..." and the power of HIS SPIRIT giving him strength (v.12).

The Scriptures are clear in proclaiming the tragic results of sins committed. However, we can be very grateful for the cleansing power of GOD's forgiveness, and the full restoration that comes to our relationship with the LORD because of this!

V. The Witness From Restoration (vv. 13-15)

"Then will I teach transgressors THY ways, and sinners shall be converted unto THEE. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O GOD, THOU GOD of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of THY righteousness. O LORD, open THOU my lips, and my mouth shall show forth THY praise."

Not only has David been completely restored as to his relationship with the LORD, but he can also now enjoy a new power in his witness to his fellow man.

Notice in verse 13, that David's relationship with others takes on a teaching and evangelistic role. He now is able to, "... teach transgressors (GOD's) ways, and (lead) sinners (to) be converted unto (HIM)."

In verses 14-15, David cannot remain silent concerning GOD's goodness in forgiving and cleansing him. So his tongue, "... *sing(s) aloud of (GOD's) righteousness.*" HIS mouth, "... *show(s) forth (HIS) praise.*"

Just as our sins adversely affect our relationship with the LORD, so too our relationship with others. However, as our relationship with the LORD is restored, so too our relationship with others, even to the point where we can effectively minister to them, and bring praise to the LORD's Name for HIS forgiving and cleansing power!

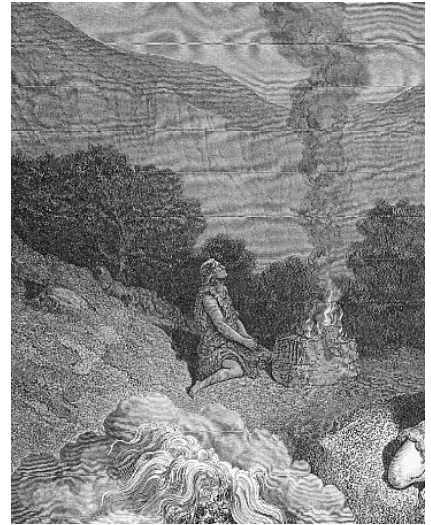
VI. The Worship Of The Righteous (vv.16-17)

"For THOU desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it, THOU delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of GOD are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart O GOD, THOU wilt not despise. Do good in THY good pleasure unto Zion, build THOU the walls of Jerusalem. 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."

So we arrive at this point in David's "journey" back to a righteous relationship with his LORD. HIS cry for mercy and forgiveness has been answered by GOD. Because of true confession and repentance of his sins, he has been cleansed and fully restored to a right standing with GOD. Even the power to testify to others has returned. Now his ability to draw near to the LORD in sanctified worship is restored as well.

In verse 16-19, David describes the worship that pleases GOD and the worship HE rejects.

First in verse 16, David proclaims the LORD's dissatisfaction with "*sacrifice*" and "*burnt-offering*". It is not that GOD is advocating the doing-away of this part of Jewish life. Indeed, GOD HIMSELF instituted the animal sacrifices as an integral part of HIS people's worship (see Leviticus chapters 1-7). What the LORD is trying to communicate to us here is that worship without a pure and righteous heart is just vain, "religious" exercise.



GOD Desires Righteous Worship

In verse 17, David explains the worship that GOD does accept. Notice it begins with "*... a broken spirit ...*" and "*... a broken and a contrite heart ...*"



GOD Loves A "Broken Spirit"

"*broken spirit*" = a shattered mind, will and emotions

"*contrite heart*" = a bruised or crushed inner-self

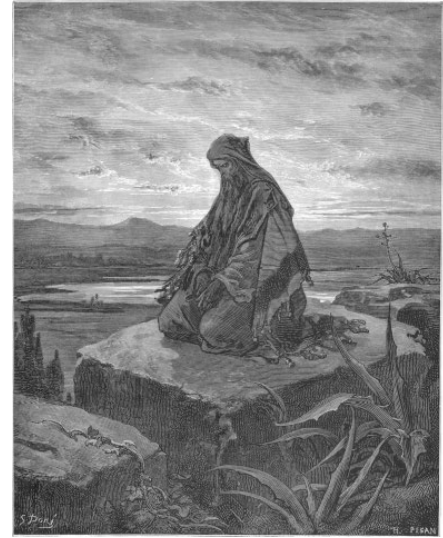
The principle being taught here is a very important one for us to learn. The principle of "brokenness". This is the principle that teaches us that before we can experience a truly intimate relationship and worship with the LORD, we must first have our "*spirit*" and our "*heart*" shattered and crushed. In other words, we must "come to the end of ourselves". That place where we are completely dead to what we want and totally alive to what the LORD wants!

Following are several other Scriptures that reinforce this important principle . . .

"The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalm 34:18

“For thus saith the HIGH and lofty ONE that inhabiteth eternity, WHOSE Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Isaiah 51:15

For David, this “brokenness” came through his immorality with Bathsheba, and the many tragic and painful consequences he experienced because of this. GOD used this terrible incident in David’s life to bring about a whole new intimacy with HIM! Now David knows that his worship to the LORD will be pleasing to HIM, because this worship is from a cleansed and pure heart. They are now, *“... the sacrifices of righteousness ...”* (v.19) .



David In His “Brokenness”

CONCLUSION

David knew from first-hand experience the awfulness of rebellion against a holy GOD. He learned the hard way of the terrible consequences that accompany this rebellion. However, he also knew the complete and full forgiveness that was his as he truly confessed and repented of this rebellion. He experienced the abundant and never-ending mercies of his LORD WHO was so ready and willing to bestow those mercies upon him.

Like David, each one of us rebels against the LORD as well. Each one of us experiences the terrible consequences that accompanies this rebellion too. But as we cry out to GOD for HIS mercy and forgiveness, we too receive these wonderful gifts from HIM. O, how we can praise GOD for HIS eternal love for us!

MY LIFE COMMITMENT

"Heavenly FATHER, I once again have been reminded that rebellion and disobedience towards YOU and YOUR Word brings me many destructive consequences. But I am also very grateful for YOUR abundant mercy and forgiveness that can be mine as I cry out to YOU in repentance. I humbly ask YOU LORD, to help me to keep from taking advantage of YOUR mercy and forgiveness by continuing on in a sinful lifestyle. I now purpose, through YOUR grace and the power of YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, to seek to live more of a holy and obedient life for YOU and YOUR glory. I pray this in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST and for HIS glory, Amen."