

Challenging Chapters of the Bible

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**Tell me what you know about
Psalm 51.**

The Background of Psalm 51

- This is one of just a few psalms that we know exactly why it was written.
- It is the broken hearted cries of a child of God and cannot be fully understood by anyone who is not a Christian.
- David will pour out his heart over his sin and God's merciful response to it.

2nd Samuel 11:2-5

2 Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. **3** He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, “She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” **4** Then David sent messengers to get her; and when she came to the palace, he slept with her. She had just completed the purification rites after having her menstrual period. Then she returned home. **5** Later, when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she sent David a message, saying, “I’m pregnant.”

2nd Samuel 12:1-7

So the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. 2 The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. 3 The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. 4 One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”

5 David was furious. “As surely as the Lord lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! 6 He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.”

7 Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man!”

So here is what we have heading into Psalm 51

- **Rape, Murder, Deceit, and the Death of an innocent child.**
- **And what is God's response to all of this?**
- **2nd Samuel 12:13 Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "Yes, but the Lord has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin."**
- **It's not that there would not be consequences, but the BIG ONE, forgiveness has been extended to him.**

How can this be!!

- **On every charge David is guilty, yet God has forgiven him! That is an outrage to our normal sense of justice.**
- **But, this is the heart and soul of the gospel.**
- **Rom 3:25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he declares sinners to be right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.**

Perspective

- **If we fail to grasp the outrageousness of the Son of God dying in our place, then we will also fail to grasp how it is that God can forgive every sin.**
- **Murderers, rapists, child molesters, homosexuals, drug dealers, thugs, etc, etc ...**
- **Because of the outrageous sacrifice of Christ, God is able to forgive EVERY sin.**

David was forgiven by grace through faith.

- There are debates in some circles about whether a Christian must ask for forgiveness for sins committed after salvation.
- Bear in mind that in the text, God forgave David based upon his faith before he ever asked to be forgiven.
- So I really don't know if we have to ask, but I do know that I always want to, perhaps even must!

The Big Mystery

- I must admit that of what we learn from this Psalm, it is hard to identify with this godly man in this respect – he does see crushed until Nathan confronts him.
- Given that I have extensive experience with sin, I find it odd that he was not instantly confessing and repenting.
- Does that bother any of you like it does me and what do you make of it?

Psalm 51

- Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. 3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. 5 For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. 6 But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. 8 Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me— now let me rejoice. 9 Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. 11 Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me.

Psalm 51

- **Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. 13 Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. 14 Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. 15 Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. 16 You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. 17 The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. 18 Look with favor on Zion and help her; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then you will be pleased with sacrifices offered in the right spirit—with burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.**

Have Mercy on Me

- **He wants mercy – withhold what I am due.**
- **Based on what? – Not because he is worthy, but based on God’s unfailing love. (and that love made a sacrifice and a promise)**
- **Outside of Christ, we have no defense for our sin and its consequences.**

David Begs for Cleansing

- **Blot out the stain, wash me, purify me – he cries out to be clean once again before God.**
- **In Verse #7 he comes back with similar language. “Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”**
- **Feeling dirty is an apt description of how a believer feels when we sin.**

David Confesses His Sin

- **Psalm 51:3 For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.**
- **This is in perfect harmony with 1st John 1:9.**
- **This is the unadulterated cry of a believer's heart that has been crushed.**

David Confesses His Sin

- We know from the account in Psalm 51 that others were involved in David's sin and they were directly sinned against.
- So why would it be that David says, "against you only have I sinned"?
- Luke 14:26 If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

David Pleads for Renewal

- The phrases - “give me back my joy”, “let me rejoice”, tell us that he senses the estrangement between he and God.
- Sin breaks our fellowship with God – it does not break our relationship with Him.
- Like us when we sin, he is keenly aware that something has changed between himself and God.

Keep Me!

- **In verse #11 “Do not banish me from your presence, and don’t take your Holy Spirit from me.”**
- **There is centuries old debate about whether or not we can lose our salvation – from David’s words, he sounds very Arminian.**
- **What do you think?**

Fix Me!

- **In verse #12 “Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.”**
- **This is how I often pray – “make me willing”.**
- **“Change me, help me, fill me, forgive me, and use me” make up a huge portion of my prayers.**

Questions