

## EXPOSITION OF PSALM 51:1-6

The fact is we have all sinned against God and broken the law of God and God has an airtight case against each one of us. Since we have all sinned against God, there is only one Person who has the power to close the case against us. There is only one Person who is in a position to grant us a pardon from our transgressions and that one Person is God.

Psalm 51 is a Psalm for all of us because all of us have sinned and all of us need the grace, the mercy, the forgiveness, and the pardon of God.

King David fell big. He coveted, lied, stole, committed adultery, and murder. He committed evil against Uriah who wasn't even an Israelite, but a Hittite. It was an airtight case against David. But in these verses David did something very right; he went to God and prayed and asked God to forgive him, cleanse him, and actually bless him. David was confronted by Nathan the prophet with the Word of God and that broke him.

The lesson we learn here is this:

**WHEN A FAITHFUL BELIEVER SINS AGAINST GOD, IT IS RIGHT FOR HIM TO GO TO GOD IN PRAYER AND ASK FOR HIS CLEANSING AND FORGIVENESS.**

Psalm 51 is a blueprint masterpiece of what we need to do when we sin against God. In fact, the only thing we can do is go to God and admit the sin and confess it and ask for His merciful cleansing.

**THOUGHT #1** – David specifically asks God to completely take away his sin. **51:1-2**

This is a very important and intriguing text and we do not want to overlook anything. This passage is inspired by God and it is very deep.

**Observation #1** - David makes specific requests to God. **51:1-2**

It is obvious from these requests that he realizes the full level and weight and measure of his sin:

**(Request #1)** - David asks God to be gracious to him. **51:1a**

Now think about this for a moment. If it is possible for God to grant David His grace in view of the horrific evil David committed, then it is certainly possible for God to grant us His same grace.

The particular word “gracious” is one that means David is asking God to see him in his hopeless and helpless condition and to make him the object of his pity, compassion, favor and grace (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 292).

**(Request #2)** - David asks God to blot out his transgressions. **51:1b**

The verb “blot out” means to completely remove, wipe out, and take away. David wants his sin gone before God, so he is asking the only One who can do something about it to take it away.

**(Request #3)** - David asks God to wash him. **51:2a**

The word “wash” refers to not only washing something on the outside, such as when taking a bath, but thoroughly washing both inside and outside.

This word was used to describe washing dirty clothes. Some clothes were cleaned by putting them in a stream and letting water pass over them, but others were cleaned by actually taking a flat rock and pounding out the dirt (Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, p. 17). One way of washing is more gentle and another way is more harsh.

David is asking God to do whatever He needs to do to wash him thoroughly. David wants the filth gone from his life.

In the N.T. we know that God washes us and the Church by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Sometimes when God’s Word is presented, it brings us under gentle conviction and other times it is harsh. But we may be certain of one thing - God’s Word will always clean up the church.

Also, when clothes are dirty, they cannot clean themselves - someone else must clean them. So it is with our sin against God. We cannot clean ourselves; God must wash us, and that is exactly why David asked God to wash him.

**(Request #4)** - David asks God to cleanse him. **51:2b**

Sin makes us dirty before God and we need His cleansing. The word “cleanse” is one that means to clean something to the point that it is so pure that it shines bright.

Collectively these words represent an incredible request, because David is asking God to cleanse him and so wipe away his sin that he can once again be used and shine bright for the glory of God.

**Observation #2** - David honestly classifies what he has done. **51:1-2**

David does not call his sin a mistake or couch it in some metaphorical or excusatory language - he calls it straight.

**(Classification #1)** - David classified his actions as transgressions . **51:1**

David saw his sin as being a defection, a rebellion, and a turning away from God and His Word. This was a blatant revolt against God, and the plural noun indicates he realized all of the ways he had defected from God in his sin with Bathsheba.

**(Classification #2)** - David classified his actions as iniquity. **51:2a**

The word “iniquity” means David is admitting that what he did was depraved and perverse.

**(Classification #3)** - David classified his actions as sin. **51:2b**

The word “sin” indicates that he is admitting that he had completely missed the mark that God expected and wanted him to hit.

What David is doing is very important - he is appealing to God for His forgiveness and, in doing so, he calls his sin straight up and straight out.

**Now carefully notice the pronouns David uses: “MY transgressions”, “MY iniquity”, “MY sin.”** David is not like Eve or Adam or so many who want to blame someone else for their own sin. **David blames himself.**

**Observation #3** - David states the basis for his prayer. **51:1-2**

David makes this prayer based on two appeals to the character of God:

**(Appeal #1)** - David appeals to God’s lovingkindness. **51:1a**

These words mean that David believed that God had such a kind and gracious and benevolent love for him that He would actually desire to fellowship with David again.

**(Appeal #2)** - David appeals to God’s compassion. **51:1b**

The word “compassion” speaks of the tender compassions and affections that God has for one helpless.

David appeals to the character of God, specifically His gracious and merciful side, to forgive his sin.

**THOUGHT #2** – David gives specific reasons why he asks God to take away his sin. **51:3-6**

Notice the conjunction “for” which begins **verse 3**; it gives reasons why David believed he could pray and believe that God would consider forgiving him, cleansing him, and using him again:

**Reason #1** - Because David had knowledge of his sin. **51:3a**

We will never seriously ask God to forgive us until we have a real sense that we are ashamed of our sin and even afraid of what we have done. The word “know” means David had precise knowledge of his sin and he admitted it.

**Reason #2** - Because David had memory of his sin. **51:3b**

John Calvin said David had a constant “anguish of mind” about his sin. David’s sin was always before him and he couldn’t shake the guilt.

**Reason #3** - Because David admitted his sin was against God. **51:4a**

Until we see our sin as sin against God, we will get nowhere in our relationship with Him. The fact is, we all know that we have committed sins against God, but having a sense about this is critical. God has seen all of our sin; and even though the whole world may not know about it and may forget it, there is still the matter of the judgment of God. David realized he hadn’t just sinned against Uriah, but he felt the weight of his sin against God.

**Reason #4** - Because David admitted he had done evil in God’s sight. **51:4b**

Three important realities here: 1) God sees every sin in speech, thought, or deed; 2) One who refuses to deal with sin before God will discover God will reveal it even if it takes a year; 3) The wise thing to do is go straight to God and confess it and resolve it.

Notice the “so that” in **verse 4**, because it presents the reason why God must see all evil - so that when He judges, His judgments will be just and blameless.

**Reason #5** - Because David was born with a sin problem. **51:5**

David is not making excuses here, but he is admitting a theological point that false theologians and false religions hate - man is not born good; he is born with a sin nature he got from his parents which we could call “genetic depravity.” We are born “dead in trespasses and sins.” We have a nature that loves to sin, and David is admitting to God that nature got the best of him.

**Reason #6** - Because God desires truth in the inner parts. **51:6a**

Only God can clean up the inside of a person, so David asks God to do his cleansing work.

**Reason #7** - Because God can make one wise in the inward part. **51:6b**

God can make a person wise who has sinned if he will deal with it.

It is possible for a believer who has sinned against God to experience wonderful blessing and joy. **That is the teaching of Psalm 51.**