

FAITH IN GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS AND MERCIES

Psalm 51

A Prayer of Repentance

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise.

Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

Psalm 51 is possibly a favorite Psalm of more people, than any other Psalm, excluding perhaps Psalm 23. It is notated to be what King David had written to the Lord, after he had sinned against God, by taking Bathsheba, and then having her husband killed in battle. This Psalm has likely now blessed millions of people over the last 3000

years or so. David sought after the lovingkindness and mercies of God, to be restored back into a right relationship with God, which blesses God because, after all, we are His creation and He does love us and He does want to be our Heavenly Father. The result of David seeking the lovingkindness and mercies of God not only restored his relationship with God but was also able to ultimately be a great blessing to others. David knew it was up to him to act on his faith in the goodness and mercies of God just as the Apostle declared that it is in the goodness of God that leads us to repentance that leads to a restored relationship with our Heavenly Father. That too then can be our testimony and is our testimony-to bless God and others living by faith in the lovingkindness and mercies of God.

For some reason I sometimes get the song Change My Heart, O God mixed up with **Psalm 51** from time to time. **Psalm 51** says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." The song Change My Heart, O God, is a very similar prayer and it is more a short chorus than a song, per se, since it is only comprised of 4 short sentences. It goes:

"Change my heart, O God! Make it ever true.
Change my heart, O God! May I be like you.
You are the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me, This is what I pray."

In an interview with the author of that song, Eddie Espinosa, tells the story of how he came to write that song. "The year was 1982. I had been a Christian since 1969, but I saw a lot of things in my life that needed to be discarded. I had slowly become very complacent. I acknowledged my complacency, and I prayed to the Lord, 'The only way that I can follow you is for you to change my appetite, the things that draw me away. You must change my heart!'" Eddie continued, "Shortly thereafter I was in my car on the way to my work, feeling a desire to draw near to God and with the wrestling still going on in my heart. Suddenly, a melody and some words began to flood through my mind. As I stopped at a stop sign I reached for something to write on. The first thing I found was a small piece of yellow paper, which, by the way, I still have, and began to write as rapidly as I could. It was like taking dictation. I wrote the words on the paper, and kept the melody in my mind."¹

There's nothing necessarily grand or glorious about that testimony of how he came to write that song, but it speaks to exactly what King David knew as well. It is what we have been considering throughout our summer series in focusing on the Psalms. It is revealed to us in the Word of God, and most definitely in the Psalms that God Almighty, Creator of all things, who is our Creator and Sustainer of all

¹ <https://www.staugustine.com/story/lifestyle/faith/2016/11/19/story-behind-song-change-my-heart-o-god/16294255007/>

things, meaning He is Sovereign over all of His creation, He wants us to acknowledge Him as our Lord, our God, and our Savior, and our Heavenly Father. Also, we get from God's Word that God wants us to 1. know Him (for who HE IS), 2. He wants us to trust Him (for all of His ways are perfect), 3. He wants us to honor, revere, worship, and even fear Him (most especially the fearing Him can be in regards to one not living according to the will of God), because He alone is God and IS worthy of our honor and praise and all glory.

Eddie Espinosa knew what King David knew, that we are God's workmanship, in our creation and from the beginning of our faith to the end, to when He calls us to our heavenly home. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." It is in the grace of God, His undeserved favor, the goodness of God, that He reveals to us that we are ALL sinners, that we have all sinned against God. What's the big deal with that, one may ask? If we are all sinners and have sinned against God, and we were to be such as we are, then wherein lies the problem? The problem lies in the fact that God cannot change who He is, that He is perfect, in all of His ways and in His character. For us to be in His eternal glory, in His eternal kingdom, and in His presence, He cannot allow anything less than perfect into His kingdom. That is where God is perfect in justice. We have sin that we have committed against God which keeps us from the right relationship with Him. Praise the Lord, that God is perfect in ALL of His ways. As **Deuteronomy 32:4** says, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright is He." "His work is perfect"!

God did not create us, and allow us to stumble and fall into sin, without a plan-"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**) "His work is perfect"! Once again, going back to **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." That faith is in 1. believing on Jesus, as dying on a cross for our sins, taking our sins upon Himself, raising from the grave on the third day, conquering death, so that we too can have eternal life IN HIM! We are led by the Holy Spirit to believe on the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, shedding His blood and dying on a cross, taking our place unto death-yet as Christ Jesus IS perfect in all of His ways, death could not hold Him down! His works are perfect! As the Apostle Paul proclaimed, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption [putting on Christ], and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is

written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 **Corinthians 15:54-55**)

That then is step **number 2** that must be accomplished in order to inherit eternal life, to become a child of God, and to be reconciled to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—we are to receive the Spirit of Christ in our hearts, as Paul said, as a "deposit, guaranteeing what is to come". (2 **Corinthians 1:22**) The Apostle John summed it up saying, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**) That is what it means to be, as Jesus said, "born-again", or born of the Spirit.

To be a child of God implies a relationship with God, that we are His children and He is our Heavenly Father. That fellowship, Jesus spoke of in saying this, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (**John 14:23-24**) The doctrine that says that we are just believing on Christ as being enough, is true to the extent that if one is truly believing on Christ, and His Word, then we are being obedient to the Holy Spirit in leading us to a desire for repentance—to have a change of mind, to want to live according to God's will for our salvation and deliverance. The Apostle Peter said the same thing in **Acts 4:32**, "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who **obey** Him." One more time, going back to **Ephesians 2:8-9**, Paul says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." He then continues by saying, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**) We are His workmanship and all His work is perfect! We are just walking in His work.

On numerous occasions Paul explains the correlation and the difference in his efforts compared to the working that the Holy Spirit was doing in him. In **Colossians 1:29**, Paul says, "to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." In **1 Corinthians 15:10**, Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." One more is **Philippians 2:13** where Paul says, "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Before that, to put it in context, Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and

to do for His good pleasure." That is where our free will plays a part. We do have a choice to obey God, to where He is leading us, or not.

Saying, God "works in us to will and to do", sounds very much like asking God to change our heart, or to create in us a clean heart, right? As God's Word tells us that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. When we are seeking God and asking for more of Him, He naturally becomes us-similar to how Moses' face glowed from being in God's presence. In context to that the writer(s) of Hebrews says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (**Hebrews 11:6**) God gives us a measure of faith and we are then to begin walking in it, getting to know God, trust God, and to honor, praise, and worship our Lord, God, and Savior.

David prays, "Have **mercy** upon me, O God, according to Your **lovingkindness**; according to the multitude of Your tender **mercies**, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge." Then, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

That might remind some of us of a New Testament Scripture that speaks to that. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (**1 John 1:9**) David was acknowledging His Creator as His God, Lord, and Savior. He was saying that He wanted to know, trust, and honor His Lord, God, and Savior, that He wanted to be made like Him, that is, according to God's character, not His essence. There is and always will be but one God Almighty. But God wants us to be perfected in His character, to be like Him-ultimately to be perfect in all of our ways-in Him!

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You." Our end all isn't just to be perfected in Christ so that others can look at us and go, "wow, aren't they something!" What God is intending to accomplish right now is that He is building His eternal kingdom in Christ Jesus. He is determining who wants to be in His eternal kingdom, who will love, honor, and obey Him for who He is-the Creator of all things and as the author and finisher of our faith in

Christ, and then to want His Righteousness. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is in Paul explaining what God is presently doing and what He intends to accomplish saying in **Ephesians 4:7-16**, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift...And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a **perfect man**, to the measure of the stature of the **fullness of Christ**; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

While the saying, "it aint all about you" is true in what God is accomplishing overall, His specific attention and love that He has for you and towards you. Hopefully, you will truly know of God's great love FOR YOU; but then we also are to know that God wants to use each of us in His building of His eternal kingdom in sharing and showing the love and the gospel in Christ Jesus. We ARE encouraging one another **in the faith**-that is what this is all about!

"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise." As God is changing our heart, to be like Him, to love God wholly and completely and to love others as He does, that will at times "break your heart". God does not want us to be religious, meaning, to just be ritualistic in our faith. He wants us to love Him, with all that is in us, as He loves us, and to then love others. That is the Great Commandment and the second that is like unto it that Jesus spoke of. That is not intended to be a form of ritual that we do just to please God so that we go to heaven and not to hell. God wants us to know Him, trust Him, and honor Him for who He is and to acknowledge Him, in our relationship with Him, as our Lord, and God, and Savior.

"Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You." We are to be led by the Holy Spirit to be living our faith in God's lovingkindness and mercies. That is how we are to be God's ambassadors, His light, His representatives in sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ-for the glory of God!