**"THE BOOK OF PSALMS"**

**Book II (42-72)**

**Psalm 51: A Prayer of Repentance**

**February 10, 2021**

**Objectives of the study:**

1) To learn by example and emulate “how to confess our sins" from the example of David confessing his sins

2) To consider whether one can rightly argue for "total hereditary depravity" based upon the figurative language in verse 5

**SUMMARY:** This psalm was written by David when Nathan had come to him after committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband Uriah (cf.**2 Sa 11:1- 12:15**). It is an outstanding example of a "penitential psalm" (cf. also **Ps 6, 38, 130**) in which David confesses his sin and prays for forgiveness. This **penitential** psalm should be studied along with **Psalm 32 (Dec 16),** in which David describes the blessedness and joy of one who has received the forgiveness prayed for in this psalm. We do well to learn from it "the art of confessing our sins" to help us when we have sins to confess to God (cf.

**1Jn 1:9**).

David begins with **his plea** for God to forgive him, appealing to His loving kindness and tender mercy. Note that he does not ask God to forgive him based upon any good he may have done in the past. He acknowledges his sin against God (in very figurative terms), and how it is contrary to God's desire for him. He prays not only for God to

cleanse him, but also to renew and restore to him the joy of salvation (**1-12**).

David's plea is followed by **his promise** to teach other sinners, that they too might be converted to God. He promises also to sing aloud of God's righteousness, for he knows that God delights in such when it comes from a broken and contrite spirit (**13-17**).

The psalm ends with **his prayer** for God to do good for Zion and Jerusalem, that He might be pleased by the burnt offerings offered on the altar. Note that David has not forgotten to pray for God's interest, while praying for his own (**18-19**).

**OUTLINE**

**I. DAVID'S PLEA (51:1-12)**

**A. HIS APPEAL TO GOD'S LOVE AND MERCY (1-2)**

1. He pleads mercy according to God's loving kindness

2. He implores forgiveness according to God's tender mercies

3. He begs washing and cleansing from his sin

**B. HIS CONFESSION OF SINFUL CONDUCT (3-4)**

1. He admits his sin which is ever before him

2. He confesses that he has sinned against God, and done evil in His sight

3. God is just and blameless in judging him

**C. HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S DESIRE (5-6)**

1. His expression of sinfulness

a. He was brought forth in iniquity

b. In sin his mother conceived him

2. His awareness of what God's desire

a. God wants truth in the inward parts

b. God wills to make him know wisdom in the hidden part

**D. HIS PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION (7-12)**

1. He prays for forgiveness, for God to...

a. Purge him with hyssop, that he might be clean

b. Wash him, that he might be whiter than snow

c. Hide His face from his sins

d. Blot out all his iniquities

2. He prays for restoration, for God to...

a. Make him hear joy and gladness

b. Make his broken bones rejoice

c. Create in him a clean heart

d. Renew a steadfast spirit in him

e. Not cast him away from His presence

f. Not take His Holy Spirit from him

g. Restore to him the joy of His salvation

h. Uphold him with His generous Spirit

**II. DAVID'S PROMISE (51:13-17)**

**A. TO TEACH OTHERS (13)**

1. He will teach transgressors the ways of God

2. Sinners will be converted to God

**B. TO OFFER PRAISE (14-17)**

1. If the God of his salvation will deliver him from

Blood guiltiness and open his lips...

a. He will sing aloud of God's righteousness

b. His mouth will show forth His praise

2. For he knows in what God delights

a. Not sacrifice or burnt offering, or he would have offered it

b. But a broken spirit and a contrite heart, God will not despise

**III. DAVID'S PRAYER (51:18-19)**

**A. FOR ZION AND JERUSALEM (18)**

1. That God do His good pleasure to Zion

2. That God build the walls of Jerusalem

**B. THEN GOD WILL BE PLEASED (19)**

1. With the sacrifices of righteousness

2. With burnt offering and whole burnt offering

-- Then they shall offer bulls on His altar

**REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PSALM 51**

**1) What are the main points of this psalm?**

- David's plea (1-12)

- David's promise (13-17)

- David's prayer (18-19)

**2) What is David praying for in this psalm? (1-2)**

- For God to have mercy upon him

- For God to blot out his transgressions

- For God to wash and cleanse him from his sin

**3) Upon what does David base his appeal for God's forgiveness? (1-2)**

- According to His loving kindness

- According to the multitude of His tender mercies

**4) How does David describe the extent of his guilt? (3-4)**

- His sin is ever before him

- Against God alone has he sinned (figuratively speaking, for David sinned against his wife, Uriah, and many others)

**5) How does David further describe the extent of his sinfulness? (5)**

- He was brought forth in iniquity, in sin his mother conceived him (figuratively speaking, in contrast to what God desires of him as expressed in verse 6)

**6) What does God desire of David? (6)**

- Truth in the inward parts

- Wisdom in the hidden part

**7) In praying for forgiveness, what does David ask God to do? (7-12)**

- Purge him with hyssop, that he might be clean (note the figurative language again)

- Wash him, that he might be whiter than snow

- Hide His face from his sins

- Blot out all his iniquities

**8) In praying for restoration, what does he ask God to do? (7-12)**

- Make him hear joy and gladness

- Make his broken bones rejoice

- Create in him a clean heart

- Renew a steadfast spirit in him

- Not cast him away from His presence

- Not take His Holy Spirit from him

- Restore to him the joy of His salvation

- Uphold him with His generous Spirit

**9) What two things does David promise to do when forgiven? (13-15)**

- Teach transgressors the ways of God

- Sing aloud the righteousness of God

**10) What does God desire more than burnt offering? (16-17)**

- A broken and contrite heart

**11) For what does David pray as he concludes this psalm? (18-19)**

- For God's good pleasure regarding Zion and Jerusalem, and the sacrifices of righteousness