

Psalm 51 — a Sinner's Prayer

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness, according to Your great compassion — blot out my transgressions"
- B. There is something known as "the sinner's prayer"
 - 1. Not biblical; found nowhere in the NT as the means of salvation
 - 2. But popularly taught not just in denominational churches but on TV commercials these day, nonetheless — more about this later...
- C. However there is a "A sinner's prayer" found in Psalm 51
 - 1. Probably written by David
 - a) who was already part of God's covenant people
 - b) seeking God's forgiveness after Bathsheba
 - (1) committed adultery
 - (2) attempted to cover it up with deception and murder
 - (3) Nathan the prophet confronted David
 - (4) David was cut to the heart
 - 2. A wonderful teaching for NT Christians about forgiveness
- D. Let's read it...
- E. What does it teach?

II. **IT TEACHES THAT GOD** CAN AND IS WILLING TO FORGIVE WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE

- A. Have you ever wondered whether God could forgive you?
 - 1. Whether because of the nature of the sin
 - 2. Or because you do it so often
 - 3. Psalm 51 has some good news...
- B. **Did you know** that Hebrew word for sin is found in this psalm?
 - 1. Words like...
 - a) transgressions (rebellions)
 - b) iniquity (wrong-doing)
 - c) sin
 - d) done what is evil (bad) in Your sight
 - e) blood guiltiness (guilt of bloodshed)
 - f) misses of the mark
 - g) crookedness
 - h) blood-guiltiness
 - 2. Which address the kinds of sins from which the writer wants forgiveness

3. And the many times of offending God

- C. **And did you also know** that every Hebrew word for forgiveness is found here, too
1. God **can** purify
 - a) make us whiter than snow
 - b) turn face away from transgression
 - c) blot out
 - d) wash me
 - e) cleanse me
 - f) purify me
 - g) I shall be clean
 - h) renew a steadfast spirit
 - i) restore
 - j) sustain me
 - k) deliver me
 - l) Create (a word only used of God's abilities) in me a clean heart of God, and renew a right spirit in me
- D. **YES! God will forgive!** — Isn't that good news?!

III. **BUT...IT ALSO TEACHES THAT TRUE PENITENCE NECESSARY**

- A. **Notice:** there's no blame-shifting -
1. David owns the sin
 2. owns his awful choices
 3. While he knows all those he has sinned against and harmed, he also acknowledges the most profound offense — against You, You only, have I sinned
- B. **Confession** of offense to God --
1. I know my transgressions, my sins are ever before me
 2. You desire truth in the innermost part, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom
- C. **"A broken and contrite heart you will not despise" (v. 16)**
1. Notice that God isn't looking for some good deed (in this case, like a sacrifice)
 - a) Sometimes people want to "pay off" their sins with church attendance, charity work, or some form of "penance"
 - b) It is worthless
 2. Rather it is a broken hearted response
 - a) that issues into a **changed life**
 - b) stops the rebellion, humbles itself to loving obedience to the Lord
 - c) **CRAVES**
 - (1) (v. 2) to be washed
 - (2) "cleansed"
 - (3) (v. 7) purified

- (4) (v. 9) to know that his sins aren't staring God in the face like a ledger sheet
- (5) (v. 10) a clean heart
- (6) " a steadfast spirit
- (7) (v. 12) a willing spirit
- (8) (v. 14) delivered from guilt
- (9) craves *FORGIVENESS*

D. Forgiveness its always founded on true repentance

IV. **MOREOVER, THIS PASSAGES TEACHES THAT THERE IS A PROPER RESPONSE TO FORGIVENESS FROM GOD**

A. Sharing of what God had done (v. 13)

- 1. "Teach transgressors Your ways,"
 - a) Isn't talking about telling them how sinful they are
 - b) rather it is telling them what God is willing to do for them
- 2. Why the result that sinners will be converted to God
- 3. The truth is that there is no more zealous or persuasive evangelist
 - a) than one who has felt the burden of sin
 - b) and then felt the relief of forgiveness

B. **Declaration of praise (vv. 14,15)**

- 1. Praise is reserved northings of great value or done very well
- 2. I know what I have been forgiven of; you know what you have been forgiven of...
- 3. Is not God's grace and forgiveness (let alone His other great attributes) worthy of praise?

C. **Thanks**

- 1. Sacrifices (v. 19)
- 2. In the Christian's case, the living sacrifice of our lives (Romans 12:1,2)
- 3. A life gratefully lived

VII. **CONCLUSION**

A. These truths about forgiveness are applicable to both Christians and those who have not placed their faith and commitment in Jesus

B. **But if you have not been baptized** into Christ (Acts 2:38), know that real repentance WANTS to humbly obey the Lord — including baptism

- 1. This forgiveness that we've talked about is not available without baptism and becoming part of God's covenant people
- 2. Despite what many religious groups and preachers want to preach
- 3. But when you've submitted to the Master...
 - a) Any sin is forgivable

- b) Because of what Jesus has done on the cross (2 Cor 5:14ff)
 - (1) Not what you can do — there aren't enough good deeds to erase your sins
 - (2) Not because of what some psychologist or philosopher said
 - c) You must believe in Jesus — Jn 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except by Me."
 - d) You must repent really repent from the heart, like Psalm 51 talked about (see Ac. 2:38)
 - e) This faith must be strong enough to willingly confess Jesus
 - f) This faith must be strong enough to prompt one to obedience in baptism (Mt. 28:18-20 / Mk. 16:15,16 / Acts 2:38 et al)
- C. **Make this prayer yours!**