

THE SINNER'S GUIDE AND THE BELIEVER'S COMFORT

PSALM 51: 1-10 • TV091B

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By

HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Baptist Church

6088 Zebulon Highway

Pikeville, KY 41501

PH: 606-631-9053

Psalm 51:1-10

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt 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 to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

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I want you to open your Bible today to the **Book of Psalms**. Now, I know that many of you are familiar with the **Book of Psalms**. Some of them you can recite from memory. But I'm telling you; if you don't know anything about the **Psalm** from which I'm going to speak this morning; you've missed the brightest gem, the brightest jewel of the entire book.

You turn to **Psalm 51**. This is the brightest gem of the whole **Book of Psalms** and I call this message: "**THE SINNER'S GUIDE AND THE BELIEVER'S COMFORT.**"

So, I really have a message for everybody today, don't I? I have a message for unbelieving sinners and believing sinners, lost sinners, and saved sinners, sinners who have faith in Christ and sinners who do not have faith in Christ.

I want you to find this Scripture (**Psalm 51**). We are going to read about half of it; that's all we'll have time to deal with, about half of this Psalm. But, this is the sinner's guide and the believer's comfort.

It is so beautiful, Martin Luther said; "it's so beautiful that the tongues of angels could not do it justice, the tongues of angels could not express its full beauty." There's no Psalm that is more often sung or prayed in the ancient church than **Psalm 51**.

It was the favorite of almost all the people. And you will find it to be just exactly what I say as we read it in a few moments. You will find it to be the sinner's guide and you will find it to be the believer's comfort.

And one, great, old, minister of the Gospel, said this about **Psalm 51**; he said: "This is the most deeply affecting of all the Psalms and it is the one that's most applicable to me personally, more than Psalm 1 or Psalm 23, or Psalm 100 or Psalm 121.

When the divine message from the prophet Nathan was sent by God to David it awakened his dormant conscience and he repented before God and he wrote the Psalm to which I refer, **Psalm 51**.

When Nathan came to him with that message straight from the throne "*David thou art the man;*" his idle, dormant, conscience, was awakened and he was grief stricken over the greatness of his sin and the greatness of God's mercy.

And David sat down and wrote **Psalm 51**. That's where it was born. It was born out of a broken heart, a penitent heart, and a grieving heart. That's when he wrote this Psalm.

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I say to you this morning, if you are a guilty sinner in search of mercy you couldn't find a better guide than **Psalm 51**. It's the sinner's guide to mercy. It's a sufficient guide. You will see that in a moment.

You say, "Well, I think men ought to go to **John 3:16**." Wait a minute now! You will see it if you stay with me through this message.

And then, if you are a believing sinner in need of assurance, in need of comfort, and in need of consolation, then you will find it in this Psalm. I'm going to divide the Psalm up in about four or five parts and help you to remember and help you to understand what David is writing here.

And the first part of the **Psalm** is **verses 1 and 2**. And here David refers to the mercy of God. Read it; he says, "*Have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies; blot out my transgressions.*" Not according to my merit, not according to what I deserve. Don't deal with me on the basis of what I deserve; I don't want that: I don't want justice; I want mercy. I don't want pity; I want mercy. I want pardon. I want you to deal with me O God on the basis of your mercy, not justice.

People say: "I want what's coming to me." No you don't either, no, by no means. God forbid you don't want what's coming to you, the wrath and judgment of God. You want mercy.

And this is what David pleads, "*O God have mercy upon me.*" "*Thank God there is mercy with the Lord,*" David wrote in another place: "*Let Israel hope in the Lord for with the Lord there's mercy.*" Thank God there's mercy with the Lord!

He says in another place: "*God is plenteous in mercy.*" And listen to this, this Scripture: "*God delights to show mercy.*" And when Moses over there in **Exodus chapter 33**; Moses made those three requests, you remember? He said, "*Lord show me your way.*" Then he said: "*Lord, if you don't go with me just don't let me go.*" And then the third request; he says, "*Show me your glory.*" And the Lord said, "*I'll cause all my goodness to pass before thee. I will declare the name of the Lord before thee. I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful.*"

God's goodness is His mercy. God's mercy is His glory. That's what Moses asked to see and that's what God showed him. When God showed him His glory and He showed him His mercy.

I'm interested in the greatness of God and I know you are. I'm interested in the holiness of God. I'm interested in the wisdom of God and I'm interested in the justice of God. But all of these work against me if I'm not a recipient of the mercy of God. That's right!

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I don't want to know anything about the greatness of God or the justice of God apart from mercy. I don't want to know anything about the holiness of God apart from mercy because these all work against me unless God deals with me in mercy.

David knows his guilt. He knows his sin and he seizes upon this attribute of God. He doesn't seize upon the justice of God, the holiness of God, the power of God, or the wisdom of God. He seizes upon one attribute; *"have mercy upon me."*

That's where you'd better come in. That's where I'd better come in, not pity, mercy, not justice, mercy. He bases his whole plea on the mercy of God, his whole prayer. He says: *"God; have mercy on me according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies."*

This is what the publican in the temple prayed. The Pharisee boasted of his works, of his deeds, of his religious accomplishments. *"And the publican would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven (because of the shame of his sins) but smote upon his breast and cried, (the Scripture says), O God be merciful to me the sinner."*

So, in search of mercy, that's what David introduces us to right here in the opening verse of this Psalm which is the sinner's guide; it's look to God for mercy.

All right, notice the next two verses, **verses 3 and 4**. There follows a confession of sin. He said in **verse 3**: *"I acknowledge my transgression."* Now, we know what we want; we want the mercy of God. That's what David says, "I want mercy. I'm not asking for justice; I'm not asking for you to deal with me on the basis of my merit; deal with me O God in mercy."

Now, the first step in obtaining that mercy of God is to confess our sins. If we cover our sin we shall not prosper. If we confess our sins *"he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

So, David comes and he says: "Lord; have mercy on me, I acknowledge my transgressions. I acknowledge my iniquities. I confess them. They are mine. I've committed them and the source of the evil is right here in me. It's nobody else's fault. I don't put the blame on anyone else; they are my sins and my iniquities and my transgressions. I own them, I acknowledge them, I admit them, and I confess them."

And then he says: *"My sin is ever before me."* This is not merely a confession of the lips. This is not merely a recitation of some religious creed: "And we know that we are all sinners and God will forgive our sins."

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It's not some religious creed cited by an indifferent, insincere person. This is so real to David. His sin is so hateful and so wretched and so real that he says: "My guilt is ever in my thoughts; it's ever before me. My sin is constantly in my mind, the seriousness of it, the evil of it, and the guilt of it. My sin lays heavily upon my heart. I confess it and O God it's ever before me."

But now, watch this next point; he says: "*Against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight.*" David says, "Lord; I've offended you." God is the offended over our sin. "*Against thee have I sinned.*"

Sin is against God. Yes sir; sin is rebellion against God. It is treason against the government of God. The spiritual government of God; sin is treason against that government. It's an attack upon the throne of God; "*against thee have I sinned.*"

And we've got to get this thing of sin in proper proportion and proper respect and understanding. We've got to see against whom we have sinned and the one who sinned, "*against thee have I sinned.*" He doesn't say, "we or they;" he says, "*I have sinned.*" The offended is God and the offender is me.

And then he deals with the act. He said: "*I've done this evil in thy sight.*" He doesn't call it a mistake. He doesn't call it a white lie or a little stumbling; he says, "It's evil and I've done it, I've done it. It's evil and I've done it and I've done it in your sight."

God knows our hearts. God knows our thoughts. Why do we seek to justify ourselves before men when God looks on the heart and God knows what's going on down here? Why will men and women pretend to be religious?

Why will they pretend to be pious and pretend to be holy when God does not look on the outward countenance? Men do; you may deceive men and you may fool men, but not God; he looks on your heart.

And David said, "Lord; I have offended you. I've done it. I've done evil and I've done it in thy sight, clearly in thy sight." God sees and God knows.

Then, I want you to watch this next point of this confession. Now, he's looking for mercy and he's looking for it in an honest fashion. He says: "*I acknowledge my sin. I confess it. And Lord I have sinned against you.*"

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Then he said: “You are justified; that you might be justified when you speak and clear when you judge. I confess my sins; they are ever before me. They are against you and Lord if you condemn me and damn me and send me to hell you’ll be just.”

Every true believer justifies God in his condemnation of sin. Yes he does; he justifies God. He’s not like Adam who said, “Why Lord; it’s really your fault that we failed. You see; it’s the woman’s fault that you made. If you hadn’t of made this woman this wouldn’t have happened.”

And then the woman said, “Well Lord; I know it’s your fault because it’s the serpent that you made who tempted me.” Now, that’s not justifying God; that’s justifying myself. *“If I justify myself my own mouth would condemn me.”*

People say: “Well I wouldn’t have been like I was if I hadn’t been brought up like I was, so it’s really my parent’s fault. Or I wouldn’t have done this if it hadn’t been for the company I was with. I wouldn’t have done this if I hadn’t been the temptation put before me by someone else.” Hog wash! Our sins are our sins and we’re guilty and we justify God. If he condemns us then he’s doing what he ought to do. We deserve to be condemned.

That’s what the thief on the cross said. He turned to that other thief and he said: “Don’t you fear God seeing you are in the same condemnation; and we indeed justly? We receive exactly what we deserve.” Isn’t that what he said? “We receive exactly what we deserve?”

And then he turned to Christ and he said: *“Lord; remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* So, this thing of acknowledging sin is the second thing that David said.

Thirdly: Over here in **verses 5 and 6** is the root of the whole problem; David says: *“Lord; have mercy on me, not according to my merit, but according to your loving kindness I confess my sin. I acknowledge my transgression”*

Now, he says: “The cause of my sin, the root of my sin, the root of the whole problem, the cause of the whole problem is my fallen nature. My sins are caused by my sin.” Do you understand what I am saying, *“my sins are the result of my sin?”*

What I do is because of what I am. That’s right! A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he’s a thief. That’s right; he’s a thief in his heart. Every sin that a man commits with his hands, his feet, or his mouth, or his body, he planned it in his heart. He drew the blueprints there.

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That's right! A man steals because he's a thief already. He's a thief by nature. Now look at what David's saying in **Psalm 51:5**; he said: "*Behold; I was shapen in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me. Behold; thou desireth truth in the inward part, in the hidden part, thou would make me to know wisdom.*" God almighty demands truth and integrity in the heart, in the hidden part. He looks not on the outward countenance; He looks on the heart.

So my friend; it is not enough for me to confess that my water is polluted; I also confess that the fountain from which the water came is polluted. That's what David's saying; he's saying: "*My sins are ever before me, my transgression, and my iniquity.*"

And I'll tell you why that is, because I am a guilty sinner by nature. I do these things because my heart is evil, because my imagination is evil, because my soul is a fallen soul and a depraved soul.

You don't have to teach children to lie; they are born knowing how to lie. "*The wicked are estranged from their mother's womb. They go astray as soon as they are born speaking lies.*"

You don't have to teach a child to be selfish. He's selfish by nature. You don't have to teach him to be greedy. You have to teach him to love. Why is that? Why do you have to teach goodness but evil comes naturally?

Now, have you ever stopped to think about that? Why is it so much easier for you to do evil than to do good? Now answer that. Well, I'll tell you the reason. It's because of what we are by nature.

We're not good by nature. We are evil by nature. It's not enough to confess that my deeds are evil; my heart's evil; "*Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, blasphemes*" and all of these things that are so sinful in God's sight.

It's not enough to know that my works are evil; my person is evil. That is what David's saying here in **Psalm 51:5**. I confess my sins (and my sins come from my sin). My works proceed from my heart. The things I say, the things I do, are motivated by the person I am, and God that's my problem, that's my problem, the person that I am.

Fourthly: All right, now watch this in **verse 7**, the atonement!

He says, "*Lord, purge me.*" And I've said this is the sinner's guide and the believer's comfort all of it. He says, "Lord; I need mercy. I confess my sin. And I not only confess my sins but I confess what I am by nature, a fallen rebel. I need a miracle."

Now he says: *“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”* What is hyssop? *“Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow.”*

Hyssop is a plant in the Old Testament which was used to dip in the blood. When they brought the lamb, killed the lamb and put its blood in a basin, they would take the hyssop and dip it in the blood and sprinkle the book, they would sprinkle the people, sprinkle the altar, sprinkle the tabernacle, and sprinkle the priest.

Everything was purified and sanctified by the blood. When Israel put the blood on the doorpost, and the lintel, in the Old Testament **Exodus 12**; the hyssop; they dipped it in the blood and put it on the doorpost and on the side posts, on the lintel.

Now here's what David is saying with all this guilt and evil here: “Lord; if you will sprinkle me with the blood of Christ, with the atonement of the Lamb of God, I'll be clean. If you'll wash me in the blood that flowed from his veins on Calvary's cross; I'll be whiter than the snow.” That's what he's saying.

**“There's a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains,**

**The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day
There may I though vile as he
Wash my sins away,**

**Dear dying Lamb thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”**

Lord; sprinkle me with the blood of Christ and I shall be clean, clean from all of my past sins, and my present sins, and my future sins. Wash me in the blood of Christ!

What can wash away my sins? Not water, not rituals, not ceremonies, and not works.

“What can wash away my sin?

**Nothing but the blood of Jesus
What can make me whole within?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”**

That's what he's praying here, *“Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow.”* God said; *Come now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet (though they be red like crimson, double-dyed, twice-dyed, and deep-dyed); they shall be white as the snow. They will be as white as the snow.”*

Now David was a wise man taught of the Holy Spirit. He knew that what had to be done, he couldn't do. I wish preachers would learn this. I wish congregations would learn it. Here David is seeking mercy.

“Have mercy upon me O God. I acknowledge my transgressions. My sins are ever before me. Against thee and thee only have I sinned. And Lord; if you gave me condemnation you would be just and righteous. And I confess my sins. And Lord sprinkle me with the blood and I'll be whiter than snow.”

Fifthly: Verse 10, it is the need for regeneration! David realizes that something needs to be done for him that no one but God can do. He says: *“O Lord; create in me a clean heart. Renew within me, within me, a right spirit within me.”*

You see, David is talking about regeneration, in other words David is saying; “What I need is to be born again. What I need is a new heart. What I need is a right spirit. What I need is something that only God can do.”

It's not enough just to be religious. It's not enough just to make an outward profession of faith. It's not enough just to join a church and be baptized; something has got to be done in here, in the heart something has got to be done for the sinner which he cannot do for himself, which the preacher cannot do, which the church cannot do, which the evangelist cannot do, which only God can do, *“create in me a clean heart.”*

Now this is a creation, *“God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness.”* When this earth became without form and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep God said, *“Let there be light and there was light.”* And God said, *“Let the dry land appear and it appeared.”*

And then God put man on this earth. He created life. Paul in **2 Corinthians** compared salvation to this very thing, it's a recreation of man.

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When man sinned, just like the earth; we believe between **Genesis 1:1** and **Genesis 1:2** there's a time, there's some time elapsed until God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning and the earth became without form or void.

God created it perfect and Satan fell and darkness, and death, and confusion came upon this earth and then God recreated it when He said: *"Let there be light."*

"Now God created man in his own image; he created him holy and upright but man sought out many inventions." Man fell and sinned. And as a result of his fall he became like this old world did after its original creation.

You know, he told Adam and Eve to multiply and replenish the earth; that's because it had already been replenished. And so, when man fell he became without form, void, and darkness was upon him.

One day God said, *"Let there be light"* and the Holy Spirit came and gave life, gave a new heart, and a new nature. And that's what David's praying for here. He's praying for God's mercy and he's praying that God will give him a new heart, a new nature, making him a new person.

And this takes creative power. God must do it. It's not something I can do for you or you can do for me or I can do for myself. It's something only God can do. *"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."* He is a new creation, a new being, a man with a new direction, a man with new thoughts, a man with new motives, a man with new desires, and a man with a new object to glorify God.

And what's the results of all this? David says, *"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."*

And then he said in **verse 13**: *"And I shall teach others."* We are not fit to teach anyone else until we've been taught ourselves are we? But he said; "Then I'll teach others. Lord; if you will give me a right spirit and a new heart I will teach others. I will teach transgressors the errors of their way."

Sixthly: And then he said, "Lord; I will praise thee." *"O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise."*

One old Puritan wrote this hymn and I want to read it to you; he says:

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**“I’ll go to Jesus though my sin
Like mountains round me rise
I know his courts; I’ll enter in
Whoever or whatever may oppose.**

**Prostrate I’ll lie before his throne
And there my sins confess
I’ll tell him I’m a wretch undone
Without his sovereign grace.**

**I can but perish if I go
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away
I know I shall forever die.”**

Now that’s the guide, the sinner’s guide to mercy and its five-fold and I’ll give it to you and close:

First of all: It’s to see the mercy of God, not justice, the mercy of God, based on His long-suffering and loving kindness, not your merit!

Secondly: It’s to confess my sins openly and honestly before God!

Thirdly: It’s to face the root of the whole matter; it’s in here, it’s in the heart; that’s where it is!

Fourthly: It’s to look to the cross, the sprinkling of the blood!

Fifthly: It’s to cast myself on the power of God to make me a new creature!