

# Psalm 51:10

by Earle Maxwell

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a pure heart and the power of God's forgiveness, encouraging listeners to seek a clean heart and a right spirit through faith and repentance.*

**Duration:** 32:16

**Scripture:** 2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 32:5, Psalm 51:1, Psalm 51:3, Psalm 51:13, Psalm 51:17, Psalm 103:8

**Topics:** "Pure Heart", "Accountability"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a pure heart in order to see visions of God. He shares a story about a lady who arranged a special meeting where 500 new Christian followers were enrolled. The speaker also mentions a song written by a young man who died at a young age, and how his brother found the incomplete lyrics after his death. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God is aware of our actions and words, and that we will be held accountable for them. The speaker references the story of Moses in Exodus as an example.

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## Transcript

It's already been mentioned by my dear wife that it's a privilege for us to be here with you this morning, and indeed a privilege to open the Word of God. I want to commence by asking you to just think for a moment, that if you were just to offer one prayer at this moment, what would you ask of God? I go back into the Bible, and in the Old Testament, the book of Kings, you find that Solomon had the opportunity to offer a special prayer, and he asked that God might give him an understanding heart, and God gave him the gift of wisdom. In the same book, the book of Kings, you meet with a king whose name was Hezekiah, and Isaiah the prophet had to come and tell him that he had a terminal illness, and he was going to die.

And Hezekiah was so overcome by this moment that he pleaded with God in prayer, and if you read in the scriptures, three days later he was healed, and he had an extension of life that lasted 15 years. Prayer. Or if you come into the New Testament, and you go to Calvary, and you tune into the conversation that was taking place between the thief and his redeemer.

The penitent thief prayed, Lord remember me. He only prayed for a place in Christ's memory. But what did Jesus say? Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.

God is so gracious and generous to us more than we deserve. But now, what's your prayer? I'll tell you mine this morning. Create in me a pure heart of God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me, or as the

older version, the King James says, create in me a clean heart of God, and renew a right spirit within me.

And you say, why does that prayer obsess you this morning, and take priority? Simply because in Psalm 24, it says, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that has clean hands and a pure heart. And then if you go into the New Testament, and you listen to the words of Jesus, the Beatitudes, what did he say in his sermon on the mount? He said, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And if you want a sermon in a sentence this morning, let's have it in a sentence.

Visions of God are seen through the lens of a pure heart. Visions of God are seen through the lens of a pure heart. And Albert Osborne, a song that he penned so many years ago, he included the line which says, it's out of pure hearts that pure service flows.

Now the interesting thing is, that's a magnificent prayer, a great prayer. It's one that I pray repeatedly for my own life. But the background to that prayer, if we just pause and study it for a moment this morning, you know of course that David the psalmist was inspired to write these words.

You'll know that David, the background to this psalm, this great tragedy that gave birth to this prayer. David the king had everything at his command and in a moment, in an unguarded moment, he sinned, he committed adultery. The bible in the book of Samuel said that he thought that he had committed this act secretly.

You know, sometimes we're slow to learn the truth that God isn't blind. Too many people, it's so easy for us to find ourselves in situations and we rationalise our circumstances because we think no one knows. But God is not blind and God is not deaf because even Jesus said every idle word that we say, we'll have to give an account of.

In fact, if you go back into the book of Exodus in the early part of the Old Testament, you'll find that Moses, he knew that one of his own countrymen had suffered an indignity from an Egyptian. And the next day, as Moses was strolling along, he saw the very Egyptian who had caused this incident to arise and the bible says, listen to this, Moses looked this way and Moses looked that way and when he saw no man, he slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. But God knew and David's, the great tragedy of David's experience and you say to me, but hold on commissioner, this is someone who's committed a serious sin of the flesh and I have never been infected with that sort of experience.

Praise God if you haven't, but there are sins of the spirit which can be just as damaging and can be just as perilous to the soul. But I'm so glad that this is on record this morning, this incident. I like the words of Augustine who said, David's fall should put on guard all those who have not fallen and should save from despair those who have.

Is it any wonder then that when David takes his inspired pen and in chapter 51 starts off with that magnificent confession. He starts with a confession and says, have mercy upon me oh God according to thy loving kind. The mercy of God.

If you go back into Samuel and you'll read the incident and you'll know that Nathan the prophet challenged David and with that story and when David heard the incident so graphically displayed and yet so simply presented and David said, whoever did that should die and the prophet said, you're the man. And at that very moment David said and it's there in the book of Samuel, I have sinned. And the interesting thing is the prompt, the prophet promptly responded and said, God has put away your sin.

If you've ever wondered about the instantaneous forgiveness of God, what a marvellous illustration is here in the Old Testament. That's why I remember the song we used to sing it years ago Major, those sins of years rise mountains high and would my hopes destroy. The Saviour's blood can wash away my sins, thy sins and bring thee joy, there's mercy still for thee.

Hallelujah. Psalm 136 only has 26 verses but every verse says, his mercy endureth forever. Hallelujah.

I'm here this morning by the mercy and the grace of God, nothing more, nothing less and so let's look just for a moment at this confession. He cries out and says, have mercy upon me O God and then in verse 3 he says, for I acknowledge my transgressions. He has found out that the way of the transgressor is hard and we meet people today through the course of the ministry of the Salvation Army as part of the Church of God and who amongst us haven't met people who've said that's true, the way of the transgressor is hard.

But he makes his confession and in his confession he realises that God, it is God to whom his sin has been addressed and he says in this verse here, against thee in verse 4, against thee and thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. We perhaps don't use the word sin very much today but sin is primarily against God. All Bathsheba was affected and so was Uriah her husband.

But if you go into the story of the prodigal son, what happened when the boy said, I'm going home and he said, I will say, father I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. Sin is primarily against God but oh how wonderful is the mercy of God and that's why the psalmist said not only in verse 1, he said according to thy loving kindness and he went on to say, but because of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions, never to be remembered anymore. A salvationist in New Zealand was giving his testimony, he'd only been converted a year, great case of conversion and he made that reference.

God has placed my record of sinfulness into the sea of his forgetfulness, never to be remembered against me anymore and he's put a sign up which says, no fishing allowed here, hallelujah. Blot out my transgressions, never to be remembered anymore, hallelujah. And in this confession he not only discovers that sin is against God but he also discovered that all his actions were within the viewings.

God had seen what had happened and so what's the next step after we make a confession? David then turned and said, I'm going to make a claim, I'm going to put in my claim, he said that you might not only pardon me but that you might give me purity as well. And this is why in the Salvation Army, as part of our worship on a Sunday morning, it's often referred to as a holiness meeting because your need and my need is not only for pardon for what I've done or what you've done and it's caused us to ask God's forgiveness but you and I also need inward purity. There are two factors involved, sin is not only a fact but the fact is then expressed in an act and very often we're so upset and anxious about the act and say God forgive me that we forget that God also is able to do more than that and he's able to deal with the fact of sin and that's why the psalmist cried out and said create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me.

Is there one of us this morning who comes before God and says God I'm going to put in my claim, I confess I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy but your mercy endures forever and I put in my claim this morning that you might not only pardon me but that you might purify me within. We use the word sanctify me. Now what happens, the psalmist then goes a little step further and he says God when you give me this blessing, my worship experience, I'm going to celebrate, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation he says in verse 12 and suddenly he realized with that with the blessing of a clean heart as psalm 16 11 says in thy

presence is fullness of joy.

What a wonderful thing it is to come into God's house and to celebrate that God is doing great things in your life and mine and this morning this Sunday morning we can all rise and say praise my soul the king of heaven. But he goes a little step further and he says not only will I celebrate in worship the God out of the blessing of a clean heart, I'm going to have the opportunity to be a faithful witness and then he said listen to this then I will teach transgressors thy ways. Now remember at the start of the psalm he had conceded the point in these words blot out my transgressions in verse 3 I acknowledge my transgressions but now he says I'm getting to serve you by being a witness to teach transgressors.

In other words what I have been where I have been because you have sanctified my life I can tell those same people who've had those experiences that the blood of can cleanse us from all sin. There's a song in our songbook and I'll just refer to the lines just for a moment it's 426 Ensign George Jackson was a Salvation Army officer in New Zealand. He was a gifted musician, he had written a lot of music and he was concerned for his brother that he might become a Christian.

His brother was not interested in the Christian faith and George Jackson repeatedly spoke to his brother about the Lord but he never responded while George was alive. George died at 27 years of age and his brother had to go through his personal effects and just a few days later his brother was going through his personal effects and found this song verse one and two completed and the first two lines of three which says I want dear Lord a soul on fire for thee a soul baptized with heavenly energy and the Ensign hadn't finished the words before he died and God the Holy Spirit took those words and spoke to his brother's heart and he knelt down and gave his life to the Lord and later on he took up his pen and he wrote the last three lines which says a willing mind a ready hand to do whatever I know to spread thy light wherever I may go. How wonderful to be a faithful witness and as Major read from the Psalms this morning, Psalm 103, I realised that in that very Psalm you get something of what David would tell in his teaching ministry, Psalm 103 verse 8. I'm sure this is what David would tell people when he was teaching transgressors.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities for as the heaven is high above the earth so great is his mercy towards them that fear him.

As far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions. What a witness and so he said I'm not only going to witness faithfully but I believe God, I'm going to witness effectively then sinners shall be converted unto thee. Let me close with a little incident from South Africa, Congo Republic, Congo Broussaville, a country at the moment which is torn by civil war.

It's been a very, very trying time for salvationists there but we've got a great salvation army in the Congo there, Congo Broussaville. Some years ago a lady travelled from Delisi down to the capital Broussaville and for the first time she went to a salvation army meeting, first time ever and she came to the altar at the close of the meeting and God not only forgave her sins but gave her a blessing of the Holy Spirit that empowered her life and she went back to Delisi and witnessed to all the neighbourhood for seven years. No one from headquarters came from for seven years, that can be a blessing maybe but no one came from headquarters for seven years until this lady had a special meeting arranged and they couldn't fit everybody into the hall, they had to go out of doors and on that day when the officer came from headquarters 500 new salvationists were enrolled as Christian followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, witness fruitfully. I don't know what you all like of poetry, I'm not too good but I can generally safely stay with four lines. So, here's four lines.

When I enter that beautiful city and the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody tell me it was you who invited me. When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be. When I enter that beautiful city and the saved all around me appear, I want to hear somebody tell me it was you who invited me here.

So, perhaps now you have a better understanding of why on this Sunday morning my prayer is, creating me a clean heart of God and renew a right spirit within me. Then will I teach and then will sinners be converted unto thee. But oh God, visit my heart again with the fullness of your presence that my life might overflow to your glory.

Perhaps you feel the same prayer need yourself this morning. For some in the closing moment of the meeting this may best be helped by a little time of prayer at the altar. I don't know, that belongs to you and God.

But I say this, whatever he says to you, do it and do it now. Let's follow the leadership of Major Drake as he takes us into our quiet time of reflection, as we ask God what it means for us personally to have a clean heart. We listen to the message, we enjoy the message, the danger is we walk away from it and forget it.

And there comes always that opportunity to respond to that which we've heard. How does it affect my life? What response do I need to make to the word of God that I've heard? And some of the most simple and most beautiful words in our songbook under the Holy Spirit section, that lovely song that says, breathe on me breath of God until my heart is pure, until with thee I will one will to do and to endure. And you know I'm so grateful that that's how the Lord works, that he breathes on us.

Somebody might have written these words and said speak to me voice of God. They might have said shout at me voice of God. They might have said bring down all the thunder of heaven upon me, because certainly it's not God who's deaf but we who are deaf.

But none of those words apply. And I have always loved John Gowan's expression when he speaks of the Holy Spirit and he talks about the gentle soothing and the kindly chiding and the tender stirring. And it all fits in with the image of the Holy Spirit, breathe on me.

The Holy Spirit wants to deal with us gently, carefully, and so we can come confidently knowing how much God respects us and understands us and just wants to do that gentle recreation of new life within us, that I may love as thou dost love and do what thou must do. We're going to sing the first and the second verse and of course the altar is here and available for you to make for each of us to make our response this morning to that which we've heard and that which the Holy Spirit is in this moment prompting within us. So just use these final moments of our meeting to speak to the Lord either by action or by prayer and just let him know where you are this morning in terms of a pure heart.

Let's sing together verse one and two and then a prayer before we sing the final verses. To do and kneel and avail yourself of this place of grace, of forgiveness, of renewed light and of reinvigorated love for him and for his service. The second verse.

With the piano we'll just sing that second verse for me again. Breathe pure, just feed that prayer out while the rest of us pray for those who kneel here and for others perhaps who should come this morning. Until

this earthly part of me glows with the fire divine.

Yes we anticipate that day when we will be one with Christ but here the opportunity is to be come whole in him, whole as one in each other and until this earthly part of me and you know that's the part that I have the most trouble with, I don't know about you. I have the most trouble with this earthly part of me and I'm in good company with Paul. The things he would do that he didn't and those he wouldn't, those he did.

It's the bodily earthly part of us that needs to come under the control of God. Breathe on me breath of God till I'm wholly thine and then this glorious fourth verse that says that I shall never die but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity now, present current experience. I really pray that as you sing these words you'll affirm that experience for yourself or you'll make that response and kneel here before the altar of God, the presence of God and the purity of the person of Jesus Christ to be made whole.

Verse three and four. We thank you for its possibility that we can be holy even as you are holy, that purity of heart is a present possibility and not a future dream and so we pray that you will accept this morning every prayer offering that has been made, every sacrificial offering of life that has been made and that as we seek to walk with you day by day it will be a walk where we know that we are coming closer to you and more like you. We thank you for this great international movement of the Salvation Army and how in this very unique way we can come together in this congregation, hear your words and find a kindred spirit.

Lord just hold us in the centre of your hand, in the centre of your will for we just commit ourselves to you to be your people. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

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