

# (How to Understand the KJV Bible) 28 Psalm 51

by Keith Simons

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*David's prayer in Psalm 51 is a powerful expression of his guilt, desire for forgiveness, and hope for restoration, demonstrating the importance of a broken spirit and contrite heart in seeking God's mercy and forgiveness.*

**Duration:** 27:53

**Scripture:** Psalm 51:1

**Topics:** "KJV Bible", "God's Mercy", "Repentance"

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## Description

Keith Simons emphasizes King David's profound relationship with God, which is highlighted in Psalm 51 as a prayer of repentance following his grievous sins. David acknowledges his transgressions and seeks God's mercy, understanding that true repentance involves a broken spirit and a contrite heart. He recognizes that God desires inner truth and a renewed spirit rather than mere outward sacrifices. Simons illustrates how David's sincere plea for forgiveness and cleansing serves as a model for believers today, showing that turning back to God can lead to restoration and joy. Ultimately, the sermon underscores the importance of humility and the transformative power of God's grace in the life of a sinner.

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## Transcript

Welcome. King David was a very holy man. We don't say that because David did nothing wrong.

He was guilty of some very severe sins. He did some very wrong things. No, David was holy because he had a close relationship with God.

David was holy because after his sins he turned back to God and God forgave him. Today we're looking at his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. My name is Keith Symons.

I'm a Bible teacher from England and I present these talks on how to understand the King James Version of the Bible. So we look at the Psalms verse by verse and word by word and the heading of Psalm 51 in the King James Bible is, to the chief musician, that's this Psalm was written, for the musician to lead the worshipping in God's house, the temple. The Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Okay, so this historical note explains to us that this is about the incident in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12 where David was tempted by the sight of a woman bathing. He committed adultery with that woman who became pregnant and David in his attempt to cover up his sin ended up in ordering the death in battle of

the husband of that woman. The Psalm heading presents that to us very gently.

It presents it just in a summary of a series of visits when Nathan the prophet came to David after David had been to Bathsheba and it presents it very simply like that and maybe that's deliberate because when Nathan came he uncovered David's sin, he uncovered David's heart before God, he uncovered all the lies and all the covering up that David had done to to hide away his sin so that no one really understood what he'd done. So it was Nathan's visit that caused David to turn back to God after this incident. But David's sin is also explained very simply in that heading.

David simply went into Bathsheba, he uncovered Bathsheba, the woman and that was David's sin. So the Psalm begins, verse 1, have mercy upon me O God according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. So David bases this prayer on his understanding of the character of God, he speaks about God's loving kindness, his great kindness, God's tender mercies and you might say well how can David speak about that? Is it not a bold statement when you're guilty of a terrible crime to pray to God, blot out my transgressions, wipe out the record of the wrong things that I've done? Well that's only possible if you know the character of God and in words from Exodus 34 and verse 6, God teaches about his character and the Lord passed before him, that's Moses, and proclaimed the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sins.

And so it continues, so God's character is that although he punishes sin, he would much prefer to forgive it. He is a God of mercy, of kindness and he is a God who wants his people to turn from their sins and to turn back to him and that is what David was doing here, he was turning back to God, he asked God to show him kindness and love and to forgive the wrong things that he had done. Now to blot out means to erase from record and so it's thinking there maybe about God as a judge erasing the record, the wrong things that David has done.

But in verse 2 there's a different picture, it's a picture of washing, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. So we've got transgression and iniquity and sin, the different words that David used in verses 1 and 2 to describe his wrong deeds and he's saying God if it's a record that records my sin then blot it out, erase it, but if sin is like dirt then wash me because I don't want to have that sin anymore, I don't want still to be guilty of these terribly wrong things, I realise my errors, I realise the wrong thing that I did and I'm turning back to you from it. Verse 3, for I acknowledge my transgressions, in other words I know the wrong things that I've done and my sin is ever before me, my conscience tells me that I'm guilty and it's such a weight, such a burden on me, I can't remove that sin, I can try to pretend it's not there, I can try to forget about it but that won't help because the sin will still be there.

So I'm placing it before you and asking you to see me and in mercy to act, to forgive me. Verse 4, against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. Very curious statement that, against thee, thee only have I sinned, God I've sinned against you and only against you and well you've heard the record of it, David sinned against Bathsheba because he committed adultery with her and he certainly sinned against the husband of Bathsheba whose death he ordered but David says in prayer against thee only have I sinned, against God only and maybe that's because the sin against God was foremost in David's mind and so David had turned to God and asked God to forgive him.

He was guilty, he knew he was guilty, he knew he'd done terrible things and he wasn't trying to lessen the sin by saying I've sinned against God only, no he was trying to make it greater as it were or to see it in its

reality that this was not just something he'd done wrong against other people, it was above all something he'd done wrong against God and it was God who he had to deal with and God who he has to face. That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest. When someone is guilty of a wrong deed or of a crime they often try to justify themselves, they often say well I was only following my natural feelings or I only did what I thought was good to do.

David doesn't justify himself, he justifies God. He says God you're right to speak against me, you're right to be my judge, you're right to declare me guilty and I don't pretend that my sin is anything less than it really is. I realise how serious it is in your sight.

David as well as being the king was also the judge, he understood about legal judgments and he was turning to God and saying I'm not going to say that I am right because I am wrong. For a year I've pretended that I had done nothing wrong but now I know the truth and so I want the truth to be clear. You are right, you are justified when you speak against me, you are clear when you issue your judgment against my evil deeds.

Verse five, behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. I was born, said David, into a family of sinners, the human family. Every person since Adam and Eve has turned away from God, hasn't obeyed God's law, has done what they've desired and David says or thinks I should have thought that, I should have realised that I could not trust my own feelings when I saw a beautiful woman and wanted to commit adultery with her.

David says I should have known that from my family, from the human race, from the fact that we're all sinners because I couldn't trust what my natural feelings were. I had to read your law, I had to see in your law thou shalt not commit adultery, I had to see that and it was in neglect of that that I committed these sins. So that makes me more guilty because if sin was already in my family, if I knew we had this weakness, then I needed all the more to reassure myself of what God's law said about the matter and to learn from it, to learn wisdom because, verse six, behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

It's deep inside me, David says, that I need to know the wisdom of God. I need to know the law of God written on my heart. I need, deep inside me, to know what God wants and to live what God wants, to live by the standards of truth which he has, not to live by lies, pretending I've done nothing wrong, pretending that everything's all right when really I've turned far from God.

Verse seven, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. People used to use herbs in washing and hyssop was one of those herbs. Purge me with hyssop, clean me up with hyssop and I will be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. David is saying I'm guilty but your cleansing will be total cleansing, like someone who cleans themselves thoroughly with the best herbs, like as if something red as blood, red as scarlet, becomes whiter than snow. Your cleansing, God, is perfect cleansing and it's your cleansing that I need.

It's you who I need to take away this sin. I'm feeling so guilty now. My sin is ever before me, verse three, but verse eight, make me to hear joy and gladness.

What is this joy? What is this glad news? Well, of course, that is the news, the assurance that God has forgiven him and then it is that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Oh, I feel so guilty as if

you've broken my bones. I feel so guilty but may the time come when they rejoice because I know your assurance of forgiveness, because I know, verse nine, that you have hidden thy face from my sins and blotted out all my iniquities.

God, if you hide your face from my sins, if you, my judge, turn away from the record of the wrong things that I've done, if you, my judge, wipe them all out of your record, then I can be changed, then I can be new, born anew by you. Oh God, verse 10, create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a right spirit within me. God, I need to be cleansed, I need to be purified, not with washing because that will only clean the outside of me, but deep inside, I need my heart to be renewed, to be created, just as you created the heavens and the earth at the beginning.

So I need in me a new birth, a new heart to be created, a right spirit placed within me that does the right things, that pleases you, that lives for you. But David knows that he's guilty and so in verse 11 and verse 12 he prays, cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy holy spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit. And people have discussed what this reference is to the spirit in those two verses, the spirit of holiness in verse 11 and the free spirit, the princely spirit, the generous spirit that appears in verse 12 and not everyone agrees in this.

The old Jewish writings say this is the spirit of prophecy that God gave to David. Other people have said this is the human spirit which needs to be made holy and made free by God's work of cleansing the person, but it could refer to God's Holy Spirit. Now our King James translators were very careful and they didn't use capital letters for Holy Spirit in verse 11 because they didn't feel they had scriptural authority for putting capital letters there, but if we understand both these verses to refer to God's Holy Spirit they do make sense.

David is saying by my sin I've grieved God's Holy Spirit. But God you've drawn me close to you, don't cast me away from your presence, don't throw me away from the place where you are. I want to be with you still, I want your Holy Spirit to be in my life and then you can restore or bring back to me the joy of thy salvation, the joy of knowing the God who frees me, who frees me from my sin, who upholds me, who strengthens me by the power of his Holy Spirit.

Verse 13. So when God has created in David a clean heart, when David's joy of salvation, of knowing God, of trusting God is restored, then David will be able to teach others to follow God, even those who've turned away from God, transgressors and sinners, those who like him are guilty. But he doesn't want to be an example of someone who is a sinner and a transgressor, he wants to say to them, look I turned back to God, you can turn back to God too.

Or rather it wasn't me by my efforts turning back to God but God who changed me and if you look to God then God can teach you his ways. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee. A sinner is converted when that sinner is changed, changed from his way of sin to the way of God.

A transgressor learns the ways of God when he leaves his transgression, when he stops his evil deeds and goes God's way and that's what David wanted to teach to the people around him who didn't know God. Verse 14. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, oh God.

Blood guiltiness means being guilty of a sin, a crime involving blood, in other words murder and David as we've seen was guilty of ordering the death of a man in war which really amounted to a murder. But in the

Hebrew it's much simpler that word, it's deliver me from bloods, oh God. In other words I'm guilty of a crime involving a man's blood.

God rescue me from that crime, forgive me God. Thou God of my salvation, God who rescues me and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness because I want to sing of your goodness, of how you are perfect. I can't sing of my own righteousness, I'm not righteous, I know I'm guilty, I'm guilty of terrible sins but I want to sing of your righteousness because I want that righteousness to be in my life.

I want God to live for you, to serve you, to teach others about you. I don't want these sins to be a burden on me anymore. Verse 15, oh Lord open now my lips and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

In other words how can I praise you God except you make it possible. If you open my lips then my mouth can show forth your praise. So open my mouth so that I can speak for you.

Verse 16, for thou desirest not sacrifice else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt offering. Now God's law required sacrifice, the gift of animals to God. It required burnt offerings, these were given routinely day after day at the temple.

But David couldn't get his sins forgiven by sacrificing animals, however many animals he sacrificed, because what God desired wasn't that outward show. Yes God wanted the ceremonies carried out at the temple but God wanted something much deeper in the life of a sinner and it's this that David saw he must offer. Verse 17, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, oh God thou won't not despise.

God you've broken my pride, it's like the breaking of a man's bones. Verse 8, it's like you've broken my bones except it's deeper still, it's my spirit, my heart that is broken as I turn back to you. Oh once my spirit felt so strong but then I got tempted by all these wrong things because I trusted in my own spirit and in the strength of my own spirit.

But now God I come before you with a broken and a contrite, a lowly heart, a humble heart and I come before you humbly as a sinner and I'm asking you God to come to me because you don't despise, you don't hate the person who comes to you in weakness, you don't laugh at their weakness or insult their weakness, you receive the person who is truly humble before you, who repents or turns away from their sins, who desires that you should work in their lives. Perhaps David in his sin thought he was making his rule stronger, perhaps he thought he was making Jerusalem stronger, perhaps he thought that by Bathsheba he would have a son who would be his heir and who would rule Israel after him. But now he saw that God must build the walls of Jerusalem, now he saw that he couldn't do it by his own efforts and by his pride, no that that was destroying things.

But now he'd come to God humbly, now he'd repented and turned back to God, then Jerusalem could be built and could become strong as capital city in the serving of God and then in Jerusalem people could offer the offerings. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with the right sacrifices, the good sacrifices, the sacrifices that God had told Israel's people to offer, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering, then shall they offer Balerk's young bulls upon thine altar, the place where they burnt the sacrifices, as a gift to God. In other words, those sacrifices, those sacrifices were supposed to be offered because they were how God was teaching his people, God was showing them how he could free them from sins, not by the gift of animals but by his son, his Messiah, who would come to take upon himself the sins of God's people and by his death to free them from their sins and to give them a right

relationship with him.

In a moment or two I shall read to you the whole psalm, but first my email address is 333kjv at gmail.com. Please write to me 333kjv at gmail.com. Now here's the whole psalm, Psalm 51. To the chief musician, a psalm of David, When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness, According to 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.

Cust me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it.

Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wouldst not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion.

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem, then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering. Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

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