

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes Book of Psalms
2-9-11

Psalm 51

The Story Behind The Psalm

After David committed his sin concerning the death of Uriah and his unholy relationship with Bathsheba and after the death of their boy, a prophet named Nathan came to David and lovingly but sharply rebuked him for his sin. David was convicted, and he repented. He came to God and sought forgiveness in one of the most moving times of his life. He was forgiven. Psalm 51 is a penitential Psalm. It is David's prayer for forgiveness after his sin. In verses 1-4 he seeks forgiveness. In verses 5-12 he pleads for restoration. In verses 13-17 we find his promise to do better, and in verses 18 and 19 he asks God not to make his people suffer for his sin.

The Way It Was Used by God's People

It is obvious that this is a penitential Psalm, and this is the Psalm that was read and sung by the Jews when they were truly sorry for their sin, either individually or nationally.

Theme: David's plea for mercy, forgiveness, and cleansing. God wants our hearts to be right with him.

Author: David

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba

PSALM 51:1-7

David was truly sorry for his adultery with Bathsheba and for murdering her husband to cover it up. He knew that his actions had hurt many people. But because David repented of those sins, God mercifully forgave him. No sin is too great to be forgiven! Do you feel that you could never come close to God because you have done something terrible? God can and will forgive you of any sin. While God forgives us, however, he does not always erase the natural consequences of our sin. David's life and family were never the same as a result of what he had done (see 2 Samuel 12:1-23).

PSALM 51:4

Although David had sinned with Bathsheba, David said that he had sinned against God. When someone steals, murders, or slanders, it is against someone else—a victim. According to the world's standards, extramarital sex between two consenting adults is acceptable if nobody gets hurt. But people *do* get hurt—in David's case, a man was

murdered, and a baby died. All sin hurts us and others, but ultimately it offends God because sin in any form is rebellion against God's way of living. When you are tempted to do wrong, remember that you will be sinning against God. That may help you stay on the right track.

PSALM 51:10

Because we are born sinners (51:5), our natural inclination is to please ourselves rather than God. David followed that inclination when he took another man's wife. Like David, we must ask God to cleanse us from within (51:7), filling our hearts and spirits with new thoughts and desires. Right conduct can come only from a clean heart and spirit. Ask God to create a pure heart and spirit in you.

PSALM 51:12

Do you ever feel stagnant in your faith, as though you are just going through the motions? Has sin ever driven a wedge between you and God, making him seem distant? David felt this way. He had sinned with Bathsheba and had just been confronted by Nathan the prophet. In his prayer he cried, "Restore to me again the joy of your salvation." God wants us to be close to him and to experience his full and complete life. But sin that remains unconfessed makes such intimacy impossible. Confess your sin to God. You may still have to face some earthly consequences, as David did, but God will give back the joy of your relationship with him.

PSALM 51:13

When God forgives our sin and restores our fellowship with him, we want to reach out to others who need this forgiveness and reconciliation. The more you have felt God's forgiveness, the more you will desire to tell others about it.

PSALM 51:17

God wants a broken spirit and a broken and repentant heart. You can never please God by outward actions—no matter how good—if your heart attitude is not right. Are you sorry for your sin? Do you genuinely intend to stop? God is pleased by this kind of repentance.

Psalms 52

The Story Behind the Psalm

The story is much like that of Psalm 34. David was running from Saul. He came to Ahimelech, the priest. He asked for bread. The priest had none but holy bread and asked if David's men were clean. When David replied that they were, he received the bread. David then asked him if he had a sword or a spear. He said he had none but Goliath's. From there David went to Achish, king of Gath. He was recognized, and because he was recognized he acted like a madman. A man named Doeg saw David and told Saul where David was. Marvelously once again David was delivered and upon the deliverance he wrote the 52nd Psalm.

The Way It Was Used by God's People

When slandered or criticized, the Jew would often turn to the 52nd Psalm. Few among us have not been slandered or been the object of fierce gossip. Perhaps huge doses of the 52nd Psalm should be administered at such times.

Theme: God will judge the evildoer. Our anger must not block our confidence in God's ability to defeat evil.

Author: David

For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Doeg the Edomite told Saul that Ahimelech had given refuge to David

PSALM 52:1

This psalm was written about Doeg the Edomite, who had betrayed Ahimelech and David and then killed God's priests (see 1 Samuel 21:7; 22:9-23). Doeg thought he was a great hero—even boasting about his deed. In reality, his deed was evil, an offense to God. It is easy to mistake "accomplishment" for goodness. Just because something is done well or thoroughly doesn't mean it is good (for example, someone may be a great gambler or a skillful liar). Measure all you do by the rule of God's Word, not by how proficiently you do it.

PSALM 52:8

With God by his side, David compared himself to an olive tree, thriving in the house of God. Not only is an olive tree a thriving tree, it is one of the longest-living trees. David was contrasting God's eternal protection of his faithful servants with the sudden destruction of the wicked (52:5-7).

Something to do

Verses 8 – 9: There are two important words here:

- kind love (hesed in Hebrew)
- your people (hasidim in Hebrew).

You can see that in Hebrew they use the same word in two ways. "Kind love" (hesed) is what God gives to people. "Your people" (hasidim) accept the kind love that God offers.

1. In your Bible, read 1 Samuel 21:1-9 and 22:9-23. It will tell you the story of David, Ahimelech, Saul and Doeg.
2. Accept God's hesed and become one of the hasidim. What does this mean? Have you done it?