



Text: Psalm 51¹
Series: Songs of God – Psalms We Sing
Title: Create In Me a Clean Heart, O God
Date: July 17, 2011
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Cf. Keith Green “Create In Me a Clean Heart”

“Create in me a clean heart, O God
And renew a right spirit within me (2xs)
Cast me not away from thy presence, o Lord
And take not thy holy spirit from me
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation
And renew a right spirit within me”²

“To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.”

**1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.**

**2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!**

**3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

**4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.**

**5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

**6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.**

**7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

**8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.**

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² <http://www.lyricstime.com/keith-green-create-in-me-a-clean-heart-lyrics.html>



⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your
righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;

¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Prologue: David's Sin (2 Sam 11:1-12:25)

- one of the few Psalms for which we know the occasion for writing
- David plots adultery with Bathsheba 11:2-4
 - David sees her bathing and desires to have her
 - David "takes her"
 - Bathsheba declares she is pregnant

David's scheming cover-up – the murder of Uriah 11:5-27

1. recall Uriah from the front and send him home to his wife
2. get him drunk and send him home
3. send him to the front and conspire to kill him
4. marry his widow and pretend everything is OK

NB. David was guilty of adultery & murder – both of which were punishable by death, according to God's Law! (Lev 20:10; 24:17)



- God's exposure of David's sin through Nathan the prophet ... 11:27-12:12

- the story of two men, the one rich and the other poor
- the poor man had one ewe lamb that was like one of the family
- the rich man had many flocks and herds
- a guest came to visit the rich man
- the rich man took the poor man's lamb for his guest to eat rather than one from his own herd

David was indignant...

“As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die ... because he did this thing and because he had no pity.” (2 Sam 12:5-6)

Nathan said to David...

“You are the man!” (2 Sam 12:7)

- God gave you so much as king over Israel
- You have struck down Uriah and taken his wife
- Now the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised the LORD and done evil in his sight.
- Your wives will be taken and given to another
- **“I will raise up evil against you out of your own house.” (2 Sam 12:11)** – ie Absalom, his son, will rise to usurp the kingship from him (2 Sam 13ff)

- David said...

“I have sinned against the LORD.” 2 Sam 12:13

- Nathan said...

“The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” 2 Sam 12:13

- but the child born to you and Bathsheba shall die

- although David fasted and prayed, the child died
- then he broke his fast and worshipped the LORD
- Psalm 51 was probably written during this time

- he and Bathsheba had a second child – David named him Solomon but the LORD sent a word thru Nathan the prophet...

“So he called his name Jedidiah because of the LORD.” 2 Sam 12:25
(“Jedidiah” means: Beloved of the LORD)

NB. God's forgiveness and love to David came along with the convicting message of the prophet Nathan.



I'm impressed by **the change** from the scheming, self-protective sinner we read about in 2 Samuel to the broken, repentant sinner we find in Psalm 51.

- What accounts for the change?

- The only reasonable explanation is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit of God
- God had been working on David's conscience...

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.” Psalm 51:3

One Bible scholar summarized the message of Psalm 51 this way...

The message of this psalm is that the vilest offender among God's people can appeal to God for forgiveness, for moral restoration, and for the resumption of a joyful life of fellowship and service, if he comes with a broken spirit and bases his appeal on God's compassion and grace.³

We see in David's psalm the heart of true repentance ... it helps us to develop a heart of true repentance. If we truly long for a clean heart, we must acknowledge two things:

- **Our desperate need** for deep-seated renewal
- **God's great desire and ability** to renew us

Please remember: **David's repentance is the repentance of a believer** – not an unbeliever.

- God calls us to a life of repentance, not just a momentary initial repentance when we first believe in Christ
- We begin a process of change to become more like Christ – that involves ongoing repentance and renewal through the grace of God

Cf. John Newton

"I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am"⁴

What does true repentance look like?

v.1-2 David's Plea for grace – “I clearly remember two things...”

³John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:832.

⁴http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/60149.John_Newton



In one of his last sermons to his London congregation, John Newton said...

“My memory is nearly gone but I clearly remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour.”

David remembered that the LORD is a great Saviour

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy...” Psalm 51:1

“Have mercy on me, O God,” [OR “Be gracious to me, O God”]

NB. David has no other recourse than to throw himself upon the mercy of God
- “according to” the law, he should die! (cf. v.14 “bloodguiltiness”)

His only appeal is...

- “according to your **steadfast love**”
- “according to your **abundant mercy**”

David knew his God! Do we know how ready He is to forgive? Do we comprehend the immensity of his heart of mercy for us?

Listen to some of the OT Scriptures that shaped David’s confidence in the “steadfast love” and “abundant mercy” of God...

When God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai...

“The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’” Exodus 34:6-7

Later, when Israel had sinned greatly against the LORD by refusing to believe that He could give them the Land of Promise, Moses prayed that God would forgive them and he reminded the LORD of what he had said to him when he gave him the Law. Moses prayed...

“And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.’ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now.” Numbers 14:17-19



And God forgave His people, as Moses had prayed.

Listen to other OT voices declare the LORD's love and mercy...

The prophet Joel wrote...

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.” Joel 2:12-13

The prophet Jonah had not wanted to obey the Lord's command to preach a message of judgment against the wicked inhabitants of the city of Nineveh precisely because God was abundant in mercy. And when the Ninevites repented of their sin and God forgave them and removed his judgment, Jonah was irate!

“O Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.” Jonah 4:2

The prophet Micah declared...

“Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.” Micah 7:18

The OT prophets were the “bad news” men of the Bible. But these “bad news” messengers clearly had a strong grip on the “good news” of God's grace and mercy! God's “steadfast love” and “abundant mercy” are deep reservoirs of grace that repentant sinners can never exhaust

David remembered that he was a great sinner!

“blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” Psalm 51:1-2

“blot out my transgressions”

“blot out” – wipe out from the book (cf. Ps 69:28 – blotted out of the book of the living)

“my transgressions” = to go beyond the limits



- of the Garden – God set the limits of what mankind could & couldn't do and Adam & Eve “transgressed” those limits as an “act of rebellion” against God (Word Biblical Comm)

But David knew that our God is One who wipes our record clean if we come to him in humble repentance...

“I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” Isaiah 43:25

Cf. the great “blotting out” – our sin was blotted out with the blood of Jesus Christ!

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses ...God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” Colossians 2:13-14

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin” (v.2)

“wash” – to launder (not used re washing the body) -- used especially of clothes that needed to be purified of defilement from leprosy, etc.

- David sees his sin as a defilement – he's dirty on the inside – how do you clean that kind of dirt?!

A Launderer was coming! God was planning “a great washing up day” when sin and defilement would all be washed away.

“For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.” Malachi 3:2

“...and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6

“and since we have a great priest [Jesus, the Son of God] over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:10; 4:14

We have just two things to remember if we desire to live a life of sincere repentance – that we are great sinners & that our God is a great Saviour – but we struggle to remember them together!

On the same day, Rebecca Pippert attended two very different events: a graduate-level psychology class at Harvard University and a Christian Bible study adjacent to Harvard. She offered the following observations on how the two groups addressed (or failed to address) their faults, problems, and sins:



First, the students [in the graduate-level psychology class] were extraordinarily open and candid about their problems. It wasn't uncommon to hear them say, "I'm angry," "I'm afraid," "I'm jealous" Their admission of their problems was the opposite of denial. Second, their openness about their problems was matched only by their uncertainty about where to find resources to overcome them. Having confessed, for example, their inability to forgive someone who had hurt them, [they had no idea how to] resolve the problem by forgiving and being kind and generous instead of petty and vindictive.

One day after the class, I dropped in on a Bible study group in Cambridge. [The contrast] was striking. No one spoke openly about his or her problems. There was a lot of talk about God's answers and promises, but very little about the participants and the problems they faced. The closest thing to an admission [of sin or a personal problem] was a reference to someone who was "struggling and needs prayer."

"The first group [the psychology class] seemed to have all the problems and no answers; the second group [the Bible study] had all the answers and no problems."⁵

We need to hold both the confession of our sin and the confession of our Saviour together!

v.3-6 David's Confession of sin – "I have sinned. No denials. No excuses. No minimizing."

"For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me." (v.3)

When he said that his **sin** was constantly **before** him, it must be remembered that his confession came **about a year** after he had sinned (the young child died a week after the confession; cf. 2 Sam. 12:13-18).⁶

- for a year he'd tried to justify and rationalize
- he'd fought with his conscience
- he'd had sleepless nights
- he wondered who knew

⁵ Copyright © 2011 by the author or Christianity Today International/ PreachingToday.com. Rebecca Pippert, [Hope Has Its Reasons](#) (InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 31-32 | posted 4/11/2011

⁶John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:832.



- he steeled himself – get on with life! Get on with ruling! It’s over, it’s done with... but it wasn’t.
- The strength of his reaction to Nathan’s story indicated that something was boiling in David’s spirit ... it was the stirring, unsettling action of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit

He quickly declared to the Lord before Nathan, and now before the world...

“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.” (v.4)

David calls his sin **“evil”** – there was “no redeeming value” in what he’d done; it was bad, through and through. There’s no attempt at rationalizing or minimizing his sin: “But at least I didn’t...or ‘at least I’m not as bad as...’ ‘I only did it because...”

Cf Randy re police interviewer: “At least you’re not a drag-em-in-the-bush rapist!”

God is completely right in his judgment against David **and against us!**

Cf. adultery ... “Oh, not me...” but Jesus said:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27-28

Cf. murder ... “At least I haven’t...”; really now? But Jesus said:

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” Matthew 5:21-22

David’s sincere, direct confession: **“I have sinned against the LORD”** (2 Sam 12:13) stands in contrast to our father’s mealy-mouthed self-defense.

Our father Adam – Gen 3:11-12

“The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’” Genesis 3:12

“The woman” – we blame others ... “If you had / hadn’t done / said / etc...”
“You gave to me” – we blame God ... “God made me that way / you



allowed...”

“She gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” – we blame circumstances

True, sincere repentance = “I have sinned against the LORD.”

v.7-12 David’s Passionate Prayer for Renewal – “Change me from the inside out!”

True godly confession leads to change

David piles images of cleansing and restoration one upon the other because of the depth of his longing for it:

Cleanse me!

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” (v.7)

Cf. Lev 14 re prayer for cleansing of a leper – “hyssop”
- blood of a bird sprinkled over the “healed” leper to declare that he was clean using a stem of the hyssop plant (14:4ff)

Cf. v.2 re laundering for clothes – the “healed” leper was to wash his clothes

“Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Isaiah 1:18

Restore me!

“Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have broken rejoice.” (v.8)

- David’s deep pain (broken bones) at his sin – he longed for God’s healing touch.
- His sorrow for his sin kept him from hearing joy – he couldn’t stand the sound of gladness & happiness

Forgive me!

“Hide your face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities.” (v.9)

Make me new!



**“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”
(v.10)**

- cf God’s act of creation “in the beginning” Heb bara – bring something into existence that did not exist before!

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Empower me!

“Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.” (v.11-12)

- The “troubling line”

- “cast me not away” / “take not your Holy Spirit from me” – David is thinking of Saul (1 Sam 16:14)

- cf. Saul’s disobedience AND denial to the LORD

- 1 Sam 15 – destroy the people of Amalek – everything!

- Saul and the people keep “the good stuff” and only destroyed “all that was despised and worthless” (v.9)

- Saul declares to the prophet Samuel: I did what the Lord commanded

- Samuel: “What then is this bleating of sheep ... and the lowing of oxen that I hear?” (v.14)

- Saul: “the people spared the best” to sacrifice to the LORD

- “Samuel: “Stop!” (v.16) Why didn’t you obey the LORD?

- Saul: “I have obeyed the voice of the LORD ... but he people took of the spoil ... to sacrifice to the LORD your God” (v.20-21)

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.” 1 Samuel 15:22-23

NB The New Covenant promise re indwelling Spirit:

Ezek 36:26-27 promise of the indwelling Spirit to empower obedience

Eph 1:13-14 the Holy Spirit as a “seal” & “guarantee” of our salvation



In the New Testament the Spirit does not leave believers; at the moment of salvation He indwells them (cf. John 14:16; Rom. 8:9). But a Christian may be cast aside from service because of sin (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27).⁷

“But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:27

Cf. Current Christian leaders – the failure to repent when properly rebuked can lead to us being “cast aside from service”

- this week: news re a Christian leader I respect who has resigned from his leadership position to deal with sin issues – NOT “sex & money” issues but issues of “power” and “pride” – the issues had arisen before but not addressed

v.13-17 David’s Anticipation of His God-focused Renewal

“Jedidiah” – “Beloved of the LORD” (2 Sam 12:25)

- God’s love is the reason for his discipline – God loved David

- God disciplines “the one he loves” (Heb 12:6)

“Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.” (v.13)

I will share the story of your grace with other sinners like me!

NB. Our message is not “Go to the cross” ... it’s “Come to the cross.”

“Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” (v.14-15)

I will sing the praises of your glorious grace!

Micah 7:18 “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity...”

- cf. one of Dr Gerald Griffiths favorite hymns...

Great God of wonders!

Samuel Davies, 1723–1761

1. Great God of wonders! All Thy ways

cf. *confer*, compare

⁷John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985), 1:833.



**Are matchless, Godlike and divine;
But the fair glories of Thy grace
More Godlike and unrivaled shine,**

...

**4. In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
We take the pardon of our God:
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood,**

...

**Chorus:
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?⁸**

...

“For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (v.16-17)

For you are a God of grace who delights to pardon broken and contrite hearts!

There is a blessing in having our sin “ever before us” IF we take it together with the mercy and grace of our Forgiving God...

C.J. Mahaney is a pastor in the Washington, D.C. area. He has lived in the same area since he was a boy. As he tells his story of God’s grace in his life, he too was once a blasphemer. Before coming to faith in Christ in 1972, he wrote,...

“I lived for myself and my own pleasure. I lived in rebellion against God and mocked those who followed Him. I spent my high school and college days deeply immersed in the drug culture.”

Mahaney talks about how he and his friends would often seek out quiet, isolated places in the D.C. area to come down from their drug highs, perhaps one of the many Washington monuments, a peaceful tree-lined street or even the deserted corridors of the Dulles airport. Rarely does a day go by when he doesn’t pass one of those places in his work as a pastor. The memories flood back.

“Often,” he wrote, “my eyes fill with tears at the memories of my foolishness and sin. And in the same instant, my heart will be filled with an unspeakable, holy

⁸ http://www.scriptureandmusic.com/Music/Text_Files/Great_God_Of_Wonders.html



joy. By the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, I've been forgiven of the countless sins I've committed."

Many people, he notes, try to run from their past. They run from the "ghosts." "I suppose," he wrote, "I, too could try that by leaving the hometown that holds so many reminders of my sinfulness. But I consider living here a gift from God. The regular reminders of my past are precious to me. Why? **Because, ..., I never want to forget the great mercy shown me.**" (C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross Centred Life*, p. 27-28)

Invitation to Prayer

Final Song: Create In Me a Clean Heart, O God (Keith Green / Hendrik Auret)

Benediction