

Subject: A Prayer for the New Year

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-19

In most Bibles there is a subtitle under Psalm 51. In my Bible it reads: “To the chief musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” That is very helpful in understanding and applying this psalm. David had sinned against God. He committed adultery with another man’s wife and then had her husband killed. He tried to cover it up and acted like nothing had happened for a whole year. And then finally the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sin. This psalm is David’s prayer of confession and repentance, and it is a prayer we should pray for ourselves. David asks God to do three things:

1. CLEANSE ME (vs. 1-7)

A new car wash is being built on the Volunteer Parkway. Why do we need another car wash? Because cars get dirty. Car washes are busy all year round because cars get dirty. Our hearts get dirty with sin. Just as we take a dirty car through a car wash we need to take our heart through Psalm 51 and let God clean it up.

Look at David’s prayer in verses 2, 7, and 10. At first David tried to cover his sin, but he felt so dirty. Trying to forget unconfessed sin is like trying to outrun your shadow.

Proverbs 28:13 *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* Confession must come before cleansing.

- He asked for mercy – David based his prayer on God’s loving kindness (vs. 1) and tender mercies. He knew that He didn’t deserve God’s forgiveness and cleansing.
- He called sin by its name – David didn’t try to sugar coat it. He didn’t say it was a mistake or bad judgment. Look at the words he used: iniquity (crookedness, perversion); sin (missing the mark); transgressions (stepping over the line).
- He accepted full responsibility – David didn’t blame anybody else, not even the devil. He blamed himself and his own sinful nature (vs. 5). He knew the problem was his own sinful heart (vs. 6). His heart was deceitful and ignorant. The heart of the sin problem is the problem of the sinful heart. **Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*
- He asked God to make him clean – David couldn’t get rid of his guilt and shame, but God could make him whiter than snow. **1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* **Isaiah 1:18** *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* Only God has the power to cleanse sin and God has promised to cleanse sin. Sin is a debt that only God can cancel. Sin is a sickness only God can cure, and sin is a stain that only God can cleanse.

2. RESTORE ME (vs. 8-12)

David not only felt dirty; he was depressed. He wants and needs his joy back. David didn’t lose his salvation, but he lost the joy of the Lord. David asks for God to renew a right spirit (attitude) in him (vs. 10) and uphold him with God’s Holy Spirit (vs. 12).

We need to be careful with verse 11, to interpret it correctly. David is not speaking about his salvation here. He is referring to his God-given position as king. He prays that God will not set him on the shelf and replace him as king. He prays that God will not take the

Holy Spirit from him as God's anointed king (authorized and empowered by God). He didn't want to become like Saul.

3. USE ME (vs. 13-19)

David promised to teach God's ways (vs. 13). He did this in many ways (see Ps. 32). And David promised to sing God's praise (vs. 14-15). He did this both publicly, privately, in spoken and written word (all the psalms).

David was a king and he understood that his life had a great influence on others. We are not kings, but we are children of the King and we need to live like it. We are not kings, but we represent the King.

David understood what God was looking for (vs. 16-17). David could have made great sacrifices and burnt offerings because he had the means to do that. But he knew that what God wanted was a broken heart. Our hearts should break over the sin that breaks God's heart. We must not only be broken over our sins, but we must be broken from our sins.

Let's look at a couple of verses in another psalm written by David:

- **Psalms 139:23-24**²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*²⁴ *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*