



# The Mercy of God

2 Samuel 12:1-14 Psalm 51:1-12 Luke 18:9-14

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Pastor Dave Bolte

Today is the first Sunday in Lent. Lent is a 40 day journey that will take us into Holy Week. Lent began this past Wednesday with Ash Wednesday, where we received ashes on our bodies as signs of humility and repentance. The ashes on our bodies reflected the cry of our heart for mercy.

The idea of mercy is that you are broken and empty and that you look only to the One, True and Only God for help. You realize that you are utterly unable to help yourself. God alone can rescue you; the Lord alone can help you. Christ alone can you fill with grace, peace, and forgiveness.

There is a story in King David's life that demonstrates God's mercy. King David needed God's mercy after his affair with Bathsheba was exposed. King David committed adultery with Bathsheba; she became pregnant; the King kills her husband Uriah; and then they move in together as if nothing was wrong<sup>1</sup>.

The Lord had to send the prophet Nathan to **confront** King David and **expose** his sins. Nathan's words pierced David's heart and led him to repentance. David's confession is the basis of Psalm 51<sup>2</sup>. Part of that Psalm says this:

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<sup>1</sup> This scandalous story is told in 2 Samuel 11:1 - 12:24.

<sup>2</sup> The Psalms were the "hymnbook" of the Old Testament; Israel used them to worship God, sing His praises, learn His ways, and confess their faith. In addition, the Psalms are a collection of prayers. Heart wrenching

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight Psalm 51:3-4

King David is truly **broken** and **humbled** by his great sin, wickedness, and depravity.

- ✓ He rebelled against God and His Word *transgressions*
- ✓ He corrupted and twisted God's 10 Commandments *iniquity*
- ✓ He murdered a man and committed adultery with his wife *depravity*
- ✓ He completely missed the mark of God's holiness *sin*

King David was a broken man; he was humbled by God's Law; and his sin was exposed. **He needed God's mercy!**

**Does all of this sound familiar?**  
Not because you know the David & Bathsheba story;  
**BUT BECAUSE IT DESCRIBES ALL OF US!**

God's **Holy Law** is like “Nathan the prophet” to you. God’s Holy Law confronts you and exposes your sins. It might happen through your conscience as it accuses you of sin; your sin might be exposed through a Scripture lesson or a sermon; perhaps a friend *who cares enough about you to say something* will confront you.

The **Law of God** works in many ways to expose your sin and uncover your disobedience. God's Law teaches us that

- ✓ **LIKE KING DAVID**, you have rebelled against God and His Word *transgressions*
- ✓ **LIKE KING DAVID**, you have corrupted God's 10 Commandments *iniquity*
- ✓ **LIKE KING DAVID**, you have been tangled up in rebellion, immorality and wickedness *depravity*
- ✓ **LIKE KING DAVID**, you have completely missed the mark of God's holiness *sin*

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prayers for all kinds of hardships are included throughout the Psalms. Some of the most prominent are prayers for forgiveness. There are seven Psalms that are called “Penitential Psalms” (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143); and they teach us about repentance, sorrow over our sin, and the sure and certain hope of God's mercy and the forgiveness of all of our sins. Psalm 51 is one of those Penitential Psalms. **The background of Psalm 51 is the David and Bathsheba story.**

## The Law of God

confronts you, exposes your sin, and leads you to repentance,  
*just like Nathan the Prophet did for King David.*

You can even use King David's very words from Psalm 51 as your own confession! You can pray to the Lord and say, *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight* Psalm 51:3-4

King David turned from His sin, confessed it to God, and fell on God's mercy. That is what *repentance* does: it turns you from sin, you confess your sin to God, and you fall on God's Mercy.

In *Psalm 51*, King David used these words:

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

**Mercy is God's compassion and kindness  
to broken and humbled sinners.**

God's **mercy** is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into the world to take your sins upon Himself and to suffer and die for you and your salvation.

One way to think about Jesus' suffering and death is that God had **NO MERCY** on Jesus. He faced the **FULL WRATH OF GOD** for your sins; the **FULL FURY OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUS ANGER** was poured out on Jesus when He suffered and died on the cross for you and in your place.

God showed **NO MERCY** to His Son Jesus  
so that He can show **Full Mercy** to you!

God is merciful to you!

His mercy is described in many different ways in *Psalm 51*:

- † your sins are **blotted out**
- † You have been **washed thoroughly**
- † You have been **cleansed**
- † Your sins have been **purged with His blood**
- † You have been **washed clean** in Holy Baptism
- † You hear **words of joy and gladness**
- † The Lord has **hidden His face from your sins**
- † He has created a **clean heart** within you
- † The Lord has put a **right spirit** within you
- † You will **not be cast away from God's presence**
- † The **Holy Spirit will not be taken away** from you
- † The Lord **restores the joy of your salvation**
- † He upholds you with a **willing Spirit**
- † The Lord **opens your lips** so that you can declare His praise.

All of these are Gospel words and Gospel images to help you understand and apply the Mercy of God to yourself!

God showed **NO MERCY** to Jesus  
so that He can show **Full Mercy** to you!

Mercy is *God's compassion and kindness*  
to broken and humbled sinners!

God's mercy is found only  
in the Lord Jesus Christ!

As we begin our Lenten journey, perhaps we should start with Psalm 51 and God's mercy. Use the handout given to you today, and make King David's words your own words --- *as you turn from sin, confess it to God, and fall on God's Mercy.*

Amen!

# Psalm 51:1-12

- 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.
- 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.

## A CATENA OF God's Mercy

"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" Exodus 34:6-7

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Deuteronomy 7:9

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Psalm 25:10

"But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth." Psalm 86:15

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face." Psalm 89:14

"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." Psalm 145:8-9

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23

"Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:18-19

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ; it is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:4-5

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16