

## Putting First Things First

### 2 Samuel 11-12 ; Psalms 51

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

It was the springtime when David sent Joab and the whole Israelite army out to war while he stayed home (11:1). While others risked their lives, little did David know how susceptible he was on his “vacation” from war to give into “cheap thrills.”<sup>1</sup> The



roof of most Israelite homes were flat and were often used to sleep, bath,<sup>2</sup> and catch a good breeze. As King David strolled on his rooftop, he noticed in the distance a beautiful woman bathing (11:2). He immediately sent

someone to find out her status and even though she was married to Uriah the Hittite and was in the process of “purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness,” David was so filled with lust

that he summoned and had sex with her (11:4)! A cheap one-night stand might have been what David was looking for that night, but he got so much more! Shortly after the affair Bathsheba sent the dreaded news that forever changed David’s life: “I am pregnant” (11:5)! To keep from being caught as an adulterer the king sent word to his general Joab to immediately send her husband Uriah home (11:6). To ensure the credit might be given to Uriah for the pregnancy and not to him David commanded Uriah to “go down to your house and wash your feet” (11:8) which was a euphemism to have sexual intercourse with your wife.<sup>3</sup> To David’s horror “Uriah slept at the entrance to the palace” (11:9) because he did not want to indulge himself while the armies of Israel were camped out for war (11:11)! This unaware “stunning rebuke of the King”<sup>4</sup> resulted in “Plan B,” to send Uriah back to battle with a letter to Joab outlining Uriah’s execution (11:14)!

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*David simply could not have his subjects know he was an adulterer so he told his general to put “Uriah on the front lines where the battle was the fiercest then withdraw from him so that he would be struck down and die” (11:15).*

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. Greear and Heath A. Thomas, *Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 214.

<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “1-2 Samuel,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 283.

<sup>3</sup> John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 458.

<sup>4</sup> John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 458.

Uriah died that day never knowing about the King's heinous crimes of both adultery and now murder! How relieved David must have been for now not only was his secret safe, but he was free to marry the beauty from the roof (11:26)!

While king David thought he had gotten a free ticket from the consequences of sin this was not true for what he "had done displeased the Lord" (11:27)! We are told that the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to give king David a rebuke he would not soon forget. To help David understand the depths of his



depravity he told him a story. There was a rich man with a "very large number of sheep and cattle" (12:2) and a poor man who "had nothing except one little ewe lamb" who he treated like one of his very own children (12:3). One day a

traveler visited the rich man and instead of taking one of his own sheep or cattle to feed him he took the poor man's only ewe and prepared it for him (12:4). "David burned with anger against the rich man and said to Nathan, surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die. He must pay four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity" (12:6). In response Nathan said, "you are the man!" He told David the Lord had blessed him beyond measure and would have given him more and yet he

chose to do evil in the Lord's sight (12:7-9). As a result, Nathan stated this is what the Lord says will be your punishment, the "sword will never depart from your house, because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own." Also, a member of your own household would sleep with your wives not in secret like he had done but in "broad daylight before all Israel" (12:12)! Not only that but the "son born to you" with Bathsheba was going to die (12:14). And yet though David deserved far worse punishment than this, death for having committed adultery and murder, the Lord told him he had taken away his sin and David would remain alive (12:14)!

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*The rest of this sermon is going to review Psalms 51 which is David's confession and restoration of these heinous sins. From it we are going to learn how important it is to always put first things first when we sin, i.e., repentance and restoration!*

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## The Plea for Forgiveness

I can only imagine how many times king David re-played the words, "you are that man" over in his mind! "When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made him see his guilt"<sup>5</sup> David was overwhelmed with shame. Since there were no sacrifices that could be made to atone<sup>6</sup> for his

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<sup>5</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 401.

<sup>6</sup> David Platt, Matt Mason, and Jim Shaddix, [Exalting Jesus in Psalms 51-100](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2020), 7.

heinous sins of abuse of power,<sup>7</sup> adultery, and murder; all David could think of doing was to “prostrate himself as a guilty man before his offended Maker.”<sup>8</sup> Knowing full well that the Lord’s

### Psalm 51:1-2

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

judgments were just David did not plea to be released from his punishments but instead pled that the Lord would reveal “His gentlest attributes”<sup>9</sup> of mercy, unfailing love, and compassion, and

forgive, cleanse and restore his broken heart ravaged with guilt and polluted by sin. His missing the mark of righteousness had “disrupted his fellowship with the covenant-Lord,”<sup>10</sup> and David knew the only path to restoration was to “bring the sin out of its hiding place”<sup>11</sup> and see it for what it truly was, an abomination before a holy God!

<sup>7</sup> Christine Brown Jones, [“Psalms,”](#) in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 439.

<sup>8</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Psalms](#), vol. 1, *The Pulpit Commentary* (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 394.

<sup>9</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 402.

<sup>10</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, [“Psalms,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 379.

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*David’s heart was defiled, and no sacrifice was available to wash him clean, so he appealed to the Lord’s hesed to rid him of the guilt upon his soul,<sup>12</sup> cleanse him from unrighteousness and pronounce him clean,<sup>13</sup> a redeemed masterpiece of His grace!*

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David put first things first by seeking the Lord who is always near to forgive and restore his relationship with Him, that was never earned but by His grace was granted!

## Acknowledging whom one has Sinned Against

After Nathan had “pricked his conscience with the word of God”<sup>14</sup> David dwelled upon how heinous sin is to God and how easily it controls a person’s life.<sup>15</sup> It started out so subtly.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Brooks, [Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the Old Testament](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 121.

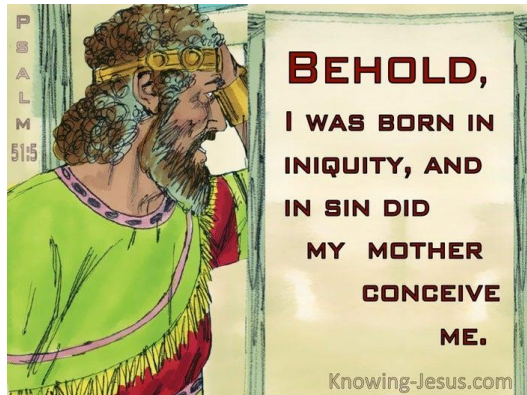
<sup>12</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 402.

<sup>13</sup> Robert G. Bratcher and William David Rebyburn, [A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1991), 468.

<sup>14</sup> James E. Smith, [The Wisdom Literature and Psalms](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), 293.

<sup>15</sup> David Platt, Matt Mason, and Jim Shaddix, [Exalting Jesus in Psalms 51-100](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2020), 5.

It was hard to believe that it only took a mere “prolonged” glance across the roof<sup>16</sup> that turned into lustful indulgence, abuse of power, adultery, lying, and murder.<sup>17</sup> These sins were forever in David’s thoughts and were oppressing his spirit<sup>18</sup> because they were a direct offense against his holy God! Even if David could



go back in time and stay with his army instead of venturing on that rooftop it would not erase the much larger issue that everyone is born with a nature prone to sin!<sup>19</sup> Upon reflection David became

overwhelmed with guilt and shame as the often “forgotten and committed unwittingly sins”<sup>20</sup> burst forth with great tenacity in his mind. Surely God expected His representative as king of Israel to be pure and righteous in His sight! To make matters worse his sin was not just against Bathsheba, Uriah, but against God Himself and yet David found himself powerless because he

could not change the sinful nature, he had acquired from his forefather Adam. David did not see his inability to stop sinning as justification for falling short of God’s glory<sup>21</sup> but instead the reason for his intense cry that He who “knit him together in his mother’s womb” (139:13) might enable him to seek truth and holiness in the most inward parts of his being.<sup>22</sup>

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*David came to realize that the remedy for the “sinful heart condition” of a person can only be obtained from divine wisdom, strength, and power from God!*

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Sadly, there is no time in a person’s life that they are sinless, but this does not absolve the believer from obeying the command to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). To walk rightly in the ways of the Lord is only possible by inviting the Lord to cultivate furrows of forgiveness and righteousness in one’s heart! This is why David’s lifetime plea was, “search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any

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<sup>16</sup> David Platt, Matt Mason, and Jim Shaddix, [Exalting Jesus in Psalms 51-100](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2020), 5.

<sup>17</sup> David Platt, Matt Mason, and Jim Shaddix, [Exalting Jesus in Psalms 51-100](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2020), 5.

<sup>18</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 402.

<sup>19</sup> James E. Smith, [The Wisdom Literature and Psalms](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), 293.

<sup>20</sup> John H Walton, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs](#), vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 369.

<sup>21</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 403.

<sup>22</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, [The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57](#), vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 403.

offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting” (139:23-24)!

## Restoration and Renewal

Feeling deeply unclean to the extent that David felt pain like the crushing of his very bones,<sup>23</sup> he cried out to the Lord that He might cleanse him (51:7). In full view that “his impurity is of the extremist kind,” David asked for a remedy “which was of the greatest purifying power, the hyssop with its blood of sprinkling (Leviticus 14:1-9).”<sup>24</sup> David was not looking for mere forgiveness of his sins of adultery and murder nor was he looking to merely be granted some sense of peace “and restoration of what was before,”<sup>25</sup> but instead in his deeply unclean, crushed spirit he was radically asking the Lord to re-



create him from within<sup>26</sup> a new heart! David was crying out to the Lord to “save him from the evils which my sin has created and nourished me.”<sup>27</sup>

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*“While the joys of pardon would have a voice louder than the voice of sin”<sup>28</sup> with all its crushing sense of guilt and shame, that would be pale in comparison to unspeakable joy David would feel if only God would grant and sustain within him a willing spirit that was faithful and obedient!*

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In faith David knew beyond a doubt that He who knit him together in his mother’s womb (139:13) could create within him a pure heart (51:10), one that would be unmoved by the assaults of temptation and able to continually “bask in the light of His countenance.”<sup>29</sup> Should God grant him this new heart that both Ezekiel (36:26) and Jeremiah talk about (31:33), David said he would not only rejoice but having been given “a new lease on life” with the Lord he would teach other “transgressors God’s ways, so that sinners would turn back to Him” (51:13). From

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<sup>23</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 775.

<sup>24</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 395.

<sup>25</sup> James E. Smith, *The Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), 294.

<sup>26</sup> R. E. O. White, “Psalms,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 382.

<sup>27</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57*, vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 404.

<sup>28</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57*, vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 404.

<sup>29</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 395.

king David we learn that when we fall short of the glory of God, we need to put first things first, God alone can forgive, and He is the only one who can enable one to become righteous in His sight! So, let us be like David and fall prostrate before the Lord and ask that he grant us an obedient, faithful heart!

## Worship and Praise

With the enormity of his sin weighing heavily upon his heart,<sup>30</sup> David now turned to what his sacrifice to the Lord might look like. Sadly, upon reflection he came to conclude that there simply were no sacrifices in the Mosaic law<sup>31</sup> that led to forgiveness and purification of the intentional (Numbers 15:30-36),<sup>32</sup> heinous sins that he had committed! Such an offending individual was left to the mercy of God<sup>33</sup> who as King alone had the right to either grant pardon or the wages of these sins which was death!<sup>34</sup> Is this not true of all sacrifices? David stated that the Lord does not “delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; He

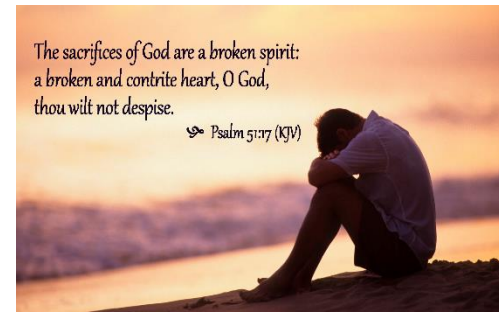
<sup>30</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 211.

<sup>31</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 396.

<sup>32</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 370.

<sup>33</sup> John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): The Minor Prophets, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 370.

takes no pleasure in burnt offerings” (51:16) because the efficacy of the sacrifice is only found in the “gratitude, devotion, self-renunciation, and obedience”<sup>35</sup> of the one making the



offering! So, David offers God a “broken and contrite spirit” for that alone “God will not despise” (51:17).<sup>36</sup> As Spurgeon rightly stated, “when the heart mourns for sin,

Thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe.”<sup>37</sup> David was not looking to get out of the consequences of his sin but instead to be released from the guilt and have his relationship with God restored so that he might once again sing praises unto His glorious name! David pleaded with God to open his lips, pour forth inspiration in his soul, and grant him the fruit of rightly saying thanks for the pardon not earned but received by Thy mighty hand! From David we learn that to put first things first one can only maintain a righteous relationship

<sup>34</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57*, vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 406.

<sup>35</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Psalms*, vol. 1, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 396.

<sup>36</sup> R. E. O. White, “Psalms,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 382.

<sup>37</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 27-57*, vol. 2 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 407.

with a holy God by humbly accepting the truth that it is only by His grace and mercy that one can surrender and have one's heart transformed into a sweet aroma in His presence!

## Conclusion

The “sacrifices of righteousness”<sup>38</sup> are not just to be offered by an individual but are also meant to be offered by whole household of God! While the last two verses could have been added by the exiles from Babylon<sup>39</sup> or from David's own lips the message remains the same, the restoration of those who have sinned against God only happens when the offenders offer sacrifices with contrite and broken hearts. As descendants of Adam, we simply are incapable of pulling ourselves up from our bootstraps and living a holy life. To be right in God's sight is not a function of one's effort but one's surrender. Though we have the mind of Christ and participate in the divine nature we still fall short of God's glory because our depravity is not conquered by human effort but divine grace and strength. The chains of sin that so easily entangle were broken on the cross, yes, but remain enticing and all consuming for those who try to accomplish holiness through sheer effort alone. Repentance is turning away from sin, but this does not happen until one learns to hate the sin like God does and surrender one's will over to, He who knit and continues to transform one's very heart! Christ is not looking for a sacrifice, for He paid the price for our sins in full, but instead utter dependence on Him to forgive

and grant us a new heart that is molded and shaped back into His glorious image daily!

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*So, the next time you sin and feel there is no forgiveness for such heinous acts, put first things first and offer to the Lord all He wants to grant you forgiveness and freedom from sin's deep clutches, a contrite and broken heart!*

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<sup>38</sup> James E. Smith, [The Wisdom Literature and Psalms](#), Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 1996), 295.

<sup>39</sup> Gerald H. Wilson, [Psalms](#), vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 777.