Create In Me A Pure Heart

Psalm 51:1-19

Key Verse: 51:10: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Psalm 51 is David’s repentant prayer for his personal and national forgiveness. Through this psalm we study the process and content of repentance. I divided it into three parts by verse order: realization (1-6), restoration (7-12), and restitution (13-19).

First, realization (recognition): (1-6). Before this psalm starts, introduction part explains why David wrote this psalm. “***For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba***.” David wrote this psalm right after the prophet Nathan came to him and rebuked his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. This story is written in 1 Samuel 11:1-12:13. I will summarize what happened to David at that time. One day while David’s army went out to fight his enemies, David overslept in his palace. It sounds not right for David to stay at a palace while his army was in the battle field. When he woke up, he saw a beautiful woman, bathing. He was tempted to take her. So, he called her and slept with her, and she got pregnant. Her name was Bathsheba, a wife of Urijah, one of David’s loyal soldiers. David committed adultery. In order to cover up his sin, David used tricks. He called Urijah to the palace in the middle of war and sent him home to sleep with his wife so that the baby in Bathsheba’s womb might be known as Urijah’s son. When Urijah refused to go home, David sent him to the frontline of the battle field so that he might be killed by his enemies. After Urijah was killed, David thought that everything was going well as he had planned. He called Bathsheba and made her his wife. Even though he cheated the eyes of his people, he could not cheat God. God sent his man, the prophet Nathan, to rebuke David and to repent. David came to realize that he could not hide his sin anymore. He had fear of God who knew everything about him and his relationship with Bathsheba.

The story between David and Bathsheba was made for movie which entertains peoples’ eyes. But, to David it was a terrible mistake which left a big stain in his whole life. In the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1, this story is also written in this; “David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Urijah’s wife,” (Mt 1:6) In this way David’s sin is recorded in the Holy Bible and remembered from generation to generation as warning against the sin of adultery. People say to you that it will be okay if you are not caught in the act of adultery or of other crime. But it is not true. Even though you can cheat people, but not God who sees everything you do and who knows every behavior of yours 24/7. God knows and judges even the deep thought of your heart and the motivation of your plan. We can’t cheat God because he knows everything about us, you and me. David came to realize this. He came to realize that he escaped from peoples’ eyes, but not from God’s. He thought that the adultery was only between Bathsheba and him because nobody knew about their hidden secret. But there is no secret before God. God knew everything about David and Bathsheba. When David realized this, he was trembled. When Nathan rebuked him, he was shaken with the fear of God. Then, he knew that he couldn’t cheat God anymore. He confessed all his sins before God and before Nathan, the prophet.

This is the reason why he wrote this psalm. David’s story is not only for him, but also for you and for me. If you have hidden a secret, do not think that you can keep it forever. Jesus said, “*For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.*” (Lk 8:17) All things we did in darkness and secret will be disclosed and exposed before God and before people. Now look at verses 1-2, “***Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgression.***” David started with his plea for God’s mercy for his sin. He asked God’s forgiveness of his sin because he trusted in God’s unfailing love and great compassion. David came to realize that he made a big mistake before God. He admitted his wrongdoings. He did not make an excuse to escape from God’s judgment. He was ready to receive God’s punishment. Still, he asked God’s mercy and his forgiveness because he knew who God is. Our God is merciful and compassionate. God knows our weaknesses and our mistakes. Our God is God who shows his pity on our weaknesses rather than punishes our mistakes. When we read in Exodus 20, we know who God is. Exodus 20:5-6 says that our God punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but shows love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. David found himself in God’s words. So based on God’s unfailing love and compassion he came to God with confidence.

Hebrews 4:16 says that we approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace because we have Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who knows our weakness and died for our sins on the cross in our place. We call God ‘*Abba Father’* and come to him just as we are because we believe God’s mercy and his unfailing love. God demonstrated his unfailing love for us through Jesus Christ. God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Ro 5:8) Amen!

Read verses 3-6. “***For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Surely I am sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.***” David confessed that he knew his transgressions and sin. Repentance starts with realization of sin. Repentance starts with admitting that I was wrong. David knew that he was wrong when he took Bathsheba and slept with her. He knew that he murdered his loyal general Urijah. He knew that he tried to cover up his sins. But he did not justify himself by saying that he has a right and authority to do so as a king. But he came to God for mercy. Many people justify themselves after they did wrong. They will not admit their wrongdoing by making many excuses. But they cannot cheat their conscience which convict their corrupted heart. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the son repented and came back to his father’s house when he came to realize that he did wrong. He said, “*I have sinned against God and against my father*.” (Lk 15:18) It take time for us to confess our sins before God because we are stubborn and rebellious. We don’t want to admit our wrongdoings because we believe that we will be okay without repentance. David also thought like that when he covered up his sins by murdering and lying. But God exposed all things through Nathan the prophet and David could not hide himself any more. Anyway, David repented his sins. His repentance started with his realization of his sin.

Second, restoration (7-12) Let us read verses 7-12. “***Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me***.” Here David described sin in various terms such as transgressions, iniquities, sins, and so on. Transgression means the violation of the law or rebellion. It contains the meaning of trespass, which means ‘cross the line.’ David crossed the line by violating God’s law, especially the Ten Commandments. Iniquity means ‘perversity’ which contains, ‘twisted and corrupted’ David deceived his conscience and deliberately used his power and authority to satisfy his lustful desire. Sin means missing the target. David did not live for the glory of God. He did not reach to God’s standard by seeking his fleshly desire.

David prayed to God to cleanse all these transgressions, iniquities, and sins by his mercy and grace. He asked God to cleanse all his sins with hyssop. In the past the high priests used hyssop plants for ritual purpose. During Exodus the Israelites dipped hyssop plants into the blood of animals and painted them on the door posts. When Jesus was crucified, the Roman soldiers gave wine vinegar sponged by hyssop plant to Jesus (Jn 19:29). But now we don’t need hyssop plants for cleansing our sins because Jesus shed his precious blood to cleanse all our sins once for all. Jesus washed our crimson like sins and made us whiter than snow. Amen.

David prayed to God to create a pure heart in him. He did not ask to heal his heart, but create a new heart because he knew that his heart was completely corrupted and useless and unrepairable. He also asked to renew a steadfast spirit within him. Because of his sin his spirit was crushed. He asked new spirit, the Spirit of God who can sustain him. David knew that sin separates him from God. When Cain killed his brother Abel and did not repent of his sin, he was cast out from God’s presence. He became a restress wanderer. When we also sin against God, we are cast out from the presence of God, and the Holy Spirit cannot contend in us and with us. David knew the result of separation from God in his life. David had been protected from all his enemies, and he became a king of Israel because God was with him. God blessed David when he did right in the sight of God. But now David is afraid of God’s absence and the departure of the Holy Spirit from him because of his sin. So, David cried out for God’s presence and the restoration of the Holy Spirit. What do you think the most serious and painful punishment of God is? It is the separation from God’s presence. This is why Jesus cried out on the cross, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*?” (Mk 15:34) Jesus cried out because of the separation from God the Father when he died, even for a short period.

Let us read verse 12 again. “*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me*.” When we repent of our sins, and have assurance for God’s forgiveness, the first thing we can experience is the joy of salvation. Our heart will be filled with joy of salvation and freedom from the burden of sin. Peace of God will overflow like river in our hearts. David desired for this joy of salvation which comes from the forgiveness of sin. What is the most exciting and blessed moment in your life? It may be the hour when you are accepted by a school you wanted. It may be the moment when you see your newborn baby. It may be the moment when you buy something new which you desired. But, the most excited and blessed moment in your life should be the moment when you meet God personally. You will feel his presence and experience the fullness of God in your heart through the forgiveness of sin. This is the day when you restore your relationship with God. This is the day when you restore your sonship which we have assurance of his presence and guidance of your life. Amen!

Third, restitution (the result of restoration): Look at verses 12-17. “***Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.***” In the New Testament when Zacchaeus repented his sin, the first thing he did was to share all he had with others. (Lk 19:8) He experienced unutterable joy which he couldn’t buy with his money, which is the joy of salvation. Right after he followed Jesus, he shared his wealth with others who were in need. He expressed his joy and gratitude by sharing his stuff with others. After David experienced the joy of salvation, he wanted to teach the way of God to sinners. He wanted to use his life, his freedom to bring sinners back to God. He also wanted to open his mouths to praise God and glorify his name. Indeed, David wrote many songs of gratitude since then. Psalm 51 is one of them. Suppose someone saves your life when you are threatened to death, you will appreciate him throughout your lifetime, and you will do something for him. Right after I experienced the joy of salvation, I decided to live for Jesus who loved me and died for me. So, I accepted John 21:15 as my life direction and key verse. Jesus asked me, “Paul, do you love me more than these?” I answered, “Yes, Lord! You know that I love you.” Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.” I pray that God may restore your joy of salvation and your first love for Jesus. Amen!

In verses 18-19 David concludes his prayer with request for national forgiveness (18-19) Look at verses 18-19. “***May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.***” When we read the history of Israel, God punished his people when their leaders, especially kings, sinned against God. David knew the price of his sin and knew that someone should pay the price. In fact, because of his sin, later his kingdom was divided into two, Northen Israel and Southern Judah. David asked God’s mercy for his people. He asked the restoration of Zion, which means Israel and the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. As a leader for this ministry, I am concerned about my influence to others because of the price of my sin. Some might be hurt because of my harsh words. Others might be wounded by my misbehavior. I ask your forgiveness and God’s mercy. Four years ago, God saved my life from cardiac arrest, and he allowed me with an extra life. God wants me to use this grace for his name’s sake. But these days I wasted my life by doing many useless things, and displeased God with my laziness and selfishness. “*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my inequities and cleanse me from my sin*”. Amen! When I prepare my message for spiritual revival for ISBC, one word of God touched my heart, which is 2 Chronicles 7:14. “*If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*” Amen! I pray that you may also come to God as you are and receive his mercy and grace and experience the joy of salvation through the forgiveness of sin. Amen! May God richly bless our ISBC 2023 and enable us to see God’s glory through spiritual revival. Amen!