

## **PRAYING THE PSALMS**

### **ROADMAP OF REPENTANCE**

Saturday, January 27

Reading: Psalm 51

**Psalm 51:10** *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me...***12** *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me...***17** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

Psalm 51 was written at a low point in David's life. He had committed adultery and murder. He then tried to cover it up for months before the prophet Nathan confronted him (see 2 Samuel 11-12). This is also a time that shows why David was a man after God's own heart. When convicted by his sin, he repented and turned back to the Lord. Psalm 51 is his prayer of repentance recorded for all to read. In it, David gives us a kind of "roadmap." He reveals the attitudes and truths we must embrace for true repentance and forgiveness to take place.

First, we must realize that it is only because of God's mercy and love that forgiveness could happen (51:1-2). David knew it was not because he was such a good person but because God is a great God.

Second, we must see sin as God sees it (51:3-9). David realized his sin had offended the holiness of God. It was not just a wrong done to people. It flew in the face of God's love. Only when we see our sin through God's eyes can we truly understand how awful it is and gain the strength to make it right with God and then with those we have hurt.

Third, we must allow God to change our hearts (51:10-12). Repentance is not merely saying we are sorry. It is the determination that we will never do it again! This can only occur by God working and changing our heart. He alone can restore the joy we have lost and give us the "steadfast and willing spirit" to do what is right.

The fourth attitude David mentions is often ignored by people today. He promises to teach others God's way and give praise to God for His forgiveness (51:13-15). When we have been forgiven, we need to share what we have received with others. We can see others going down the same path we were on and help them avoid the sin into which we fell. We can share with others the wonder of obeying God's Word and the joy of being forgiven when we fail.

Lastly, David points us to the fact that we cannot earn forgiveness (51:16-17). The Law of Moses prescribed the proper animal sacrifice to offer for all sorts of sins. But David realized that these offerings were worthless if they did not come from a heart that was broken before God. No sacrifice, no good works, nothing could earn God's forgiveness. What God wants is a heart that is broken over its sin. The word "contrite" literally means crushed. When we realize our guilt before God it should crush our sinful pride and drive us to the feet of the only One who can make us whole again.

**PRAYER THOUGHT:** David's prayer contains some lines we don't need to pray! We no longer need to worry about God casting us from His presence or taking the Holy Spirit from us (51:11). Before Jesus came, that was a possibility. Today, the Spirit indwells all those who come to Christ and promises never to leave or forsake us. But these words should remind us of the need to repair the relationship broken by sin. Read through this psalm again and see if there is anything in your life that needs repentance.