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HAROLD CAMPING

Psalm 51:  
A Broken  
and  
A Contrite  
Heart

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# Psalm 51: A Broken and a Contrite Heart

By Harold Camping

**P**salm 51, like many of the Psalms, was written by King David. It begins with a heading that describes the important context of the Psalm.

We read this introduction to Psalm 51:

**To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David; when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.**

Before He even begins this psalm, God wants us to know the setting. David was the beloved king of Israel. We know from many Scripture passages that he was a child of God, and dearly beloved by God.

God had chosen David to be the King of Israel. David had a very special, close relationship with God. Yet David fell into grievous sin.

Back in 2 Samuel 11, we find the account of David and Bathsheba. In order to fully understand how this came about, we are going to read this account and spend some time looking at it. This story is shocking because of who David was. It does not seem possible that this could have happened; yet we know it is true because it is in the Bible. God wrote this out for us in plain language.

Only when we have studied this story of great sin will we be able to understand David's despair, and his desperate plea for forgiveness in Psalm 51.

David was a God-fearing ruler, and he is going to commit horrible sin, and then he is going to take actions to make himself look innocent. This shows us the pit that sins brings us to. That is the terrible nature of sin.

We always have heard good things about David. In his early life everything God said about David was good. David was one of the finest men in the Bible. God calls him a man after His own heart. We read in Acts 13:22 – **“He [God] raised up unto them David to be their king, to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all My will.”** But yet David fell into terrible sin.

In this true story his sin is on display in all of its ugliness. Every true believer should pay close attention to this story of David. It brings us to the depths of sin, to which even a true believer like David can come to.

So now, in order to get the setting for Psalm 51, let us begin to read 2 Samuel 11 at verse 1.

- 1. And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab [the captain of the army], and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.**
- 2. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.**
- 3. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?**

Right here we see the seeds of sin being sown. As king, David should have been at the battle, but he had stayed behind. He looked over the rooftops and saw a beautiful woman washing herself. At that moment David should have averted his eyes and gone back inside, to avoid temptation. But he did not: he looked at her and began to desire her.

His sinful thoughts became action, as he asked his servants who she was. When they told him she was the wife of Uriah, David

should have immediately dismissed her from his thoughts, because she was married. But he did not. We go on in verse 4:

- 4. And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.**

So now David's sins of covetousness and lust have become the sin of adultery. He acted on his thoughts. David was the king; his commands were to be obeyed. He used his kingship to make this woman a fulfillment of his lust. But it did not end there. In verse 5 we read:

- 5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.**

We can imagine that when Bathsheba discovered that she was pregnant, she was filled with despair. An illegitimate child would have been extremely shameful. How would she face her husband, who was away at war? What should she do? So she did the only thing she could do: she told the king. After all, her situation was entirely his fault. He would have to find a solution to this problem.

Now David had a terrible problem. He was trapped! His sin of adultery has led to an illicit pregnancy. Did David cry out to God for help? Did he say, "Oh God, I have done a terrible thing and I am in trouble. Have mercy and show me what to do"?

No, not at all. David tried to cover up his sin. He came up with a solution that was very devious. We read in verse 6:

- 6. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.**
- 7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.**
- 8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house.....**

David has figured out that if he can get Uriah to spend the night with his wife, Uriah would assume the child was his. Everything would turn out okay, and no one would be the wiser. No one would find out the truth. But God was not going to let David get away with this terrible sin. For Uriah does not go along with the plan, as we read in verses 9 – 11:

- 9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house.**
- 10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?**
- 11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.**

Uriah was a very loyal soldier. He was not going to take advantage of being home. So David decided to try again. Let us read on:

- 12. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and tomorrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow.**
- 13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.**

David thought that if he could get Uriah drunk, he would go home to his wife and forget his pledge of loyalty. But even in his drunkenness, he did not go to his house.

We are shocked as we follow David's path of sin after sin. How could a child of God have gotten into such an awful situation? And we

will see that it gets much worse. By now, David was getting desperate. We know that because of the next step in his plan to cover up his sin. We read in 2 Samuel 11:14:

- 14. And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.**
- 15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.**

God put these verses in the Bible in the plainest possible language, so there is no mistaking the meaning. God has given us all the details. Uriah has carried a letter to his commander that is his own death sentence. How is this possible? David has ordered the execution of Uriah. He is to be killed by the enemy so no one will question his death. And because David is the king, Joab will obey, even if he does not agree with the command.

David is about to commit murder to cover up his sin of adultery. There is a biblical principle that sin begets sin. We can read in James 1:14-15, for example, **"...every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."** We see this principle in action in the sins of David.

Temptation led to lust, then adultery, and now murder! Yes, it is murder, just as surely as if David personally had killed Uriah. David was not a wicked man; he was the king; the beloved of God! How can he have fallen into such grievous sin? Where is his walk with God?

2 Samuel 11 goes on to tell us that Captain Joab obeyed David, and Uriah was put into the hottest part of the battle. Joab sent word to David that Uriah was killed, exactly as David had hoped. David subsequently took Bathsheba to be his wife. We read in 2 Samuel 11:26-27:

- 26. And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.**

**27. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.**

David may have felt the situation was taken care of and all was well. But of course God knew everything, and He was going to confront David for his sins. In 2 Samuel 12 we read that God sent the prophet Nathan to David with a message from Jehovah. We read there, beginning with verse 7:

- 7. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;**
- 8. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.**
- 9. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.**
- 10. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.**
- 11. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.**
- 12. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.**

What a terrible thing that David is hearing from God Himself! We read all these verses because God put them into the Bible for us to read. God wants us to have the whole story.



God's anger has fallen on King David, and resulted in a consequence that God wants us to know about. David's kingdom will be jeopardized because of his sin. He thought his sin was secret, but God will reveal it to everyone. Even though David was a child of God, his sin will not be ignored. God declared that David did evil and despised God's commandments.

We read in the next verses:

13. **And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.**
14. **Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.**

God makes it very clear to David that these sins were terrible and will have tremendous, long-lasting consequences. In addition, God says that the child born from this adulterous union will die. This was another consequence of this terrible sin.

But there are amazing words of mercy mixed in with God's condemning words. **"The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."** David's sin will be put away by God; that is, God will not hold on to it. God will forgive David! And David will not die. We read in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. But David will not pay that price, because his sins will be forgiven. Even these horrible sins can be forgiven – because David was a child of God, in spite of everything.

There are so many lessons we can learn from this sad story. This is truly one of the most tragic stories in the Bible. But God put it into the Bible for everyone to read.

It is shocking that such a godly man as King David could fall into such terrible sin. This was the man who had written **"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,"** and many other beautiful psalms that were a testimony of his close walk with God.

This story of David's sin is a warning to all of us who claim to be a child of God. Not one of us can say, "It would never happen to me. I would never commit such terrible sins." This account really makes it

clear how very important it is to keep our eyes on Christ. Even a child of God has the potential to fall into sin, because we still have our old sinful nature.

The Apostle Paul, who was a child of God, spoke of this in Romans 7:25, where we read: **“...So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”**

We know that because of God’s wonderful mercy we cannot lose our salvation if we are truly saved. We know that from many, many Scripture passages. For example, we read Jesus’ words in John 6:37: **“All that the Father giveth Me shall come to me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.”** Or Romans 8:1: **“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”**

We have this wonderful assurance that we are safe with Christ if He has saved us. But we can impact our relationship with God, as David did. The important difference in the life of a true believer is that when he sins, he recognizes his sin and truly repents. He finds he is greatly distressed by any sin in his life.

When confronted with his sin, David immediately confessed that he had sinned against Jehovah. Because David was a child of God, his reaction to the sin in his life is the reaction that every true believer should have when they discover sin in their life.

True repentance means to turn away from sin. It means to acknowledge our sin and to cry out to God for mercy. We will see that David was in great despair as he saw that his relationship with God was broken as a result of his sin.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David wrote Psalm 51 as a desperate plea to God after his sins were exposed in all of their ugliness. So now let us begin to examine this Psalm carefully.

We read in Psalm 51:1:

- 1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.**

This is a wonderful beginning. David is pleading with Almighty God for mercy.

This is David speaking, who had committed all these sins. His cry is a result of his situation. It is a tremendous cry for help by someone who committed dreadful sin. And he is crying out to the One against whom he has sinned. This is the model or pattern for every true believer who has committed sin and must go to God for forgiveness.

This is a showcase for every one of us who claims a relationship with Christ. When we sin we should recognize that we are in trouble with God, and we come pleading for mercy. We throw ourselves on God's mercy.

David goes on:

- 2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.**

David is using very appropriate language. There is no claim of partial sin, or of not deserving God's wrath. He needs cleansing from sin. This plea includes an admission of sin and a cry for mercy. This is the proper attitude of a child of God as he is thinking of his sins.

We must all understand that just because God is so merciful, that does not minimize the awfulness of sin we have committed, whatever it may have been. We may think our sins are small in comparison to David's sins. His sins, after all, were very grievous. But if we are a child of God, we should be distressed by any sin at all that we find in our life. Because our desire, as a child of God, is to be in close communion and fellowship with Christ all the time.

Our repentance must be an honest reaction from our hearts; we should feel horror that we have done this. We want to turn away from that sin and get it out of our life.

David stated that his sin is ever before him. That is, it is at the forefront of his mind, his attention. He cannot get away from it. That is the way we should feel when we sin.

David takes full responsibility for his sin. He has broken the law of God. David is asking God to wash him from his iniquity; to cleanse him

from his sin. These are actions that God must take. We cannot cleanse ourselves from sin. And David is talking about *his* sin: he calls it *mine iniquity; my sin; my transgressions*. These are big statements he is making.

Effectively this Psalm is saying: don't try to transfer the guilt of your sins to anyone else. It is your sin. We should not ever have any notion that our sin was excusable. Really, who do we sin against? Why is it sin?

The answer is in verse 4:

**4. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest.**

When we break the law of God, our sin is against Almighty God. David recognized that although his sinful actions involved people, his sin was against God alone. It is to God that we are accountable. It is God who judges. The judgment is being regulated by God Himself. He is a just God.

When we commit sin against God, effectively we act as if we disdain God's Word. But if we are a child of God, our walk with Christ should be of paramount importance in our life. That is why David cried out to God for mercy so desperately. He knew that his help could only come from God. Only God could forgive him and make him clean.

Of course, a child of God has had his sins forgiven by the act of salvation. We do not lose our salvation because we commit a sin after we are saved. Our salvation is not based upon our works. However, the plea of David shows us how we are to come to God when we do sin. We come without any reservations to protect us in any way. We come with all of our sins and freely admit all of our sins. We want our wonderful close relationship with God to be restored.

Psalm 51 is King David's plea to God for mercy. King David – the greatest king that ever ruled over national Israel – is making a plea to God. He is showing us that we have to empty ourselves of all pride; of everything we think we can boast about, when we start talking about a relationship with Christ. This is the model or pattern for every true believer who has committed sin and must go to God for

forgiveness. Don't think it isn't for you. If any one of us looks at ourselves very honestly, as we should be, and are thinking about a relationship with God, this applies to each one of us because we all are just as human as David was.

Let's go on to verses 5 and 6:

**5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

That statement alone scares us. You mean that was a bad job that God did? God was in control; He was in charge of forming me from the womb. So how is it possible that I was shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin? That is what the Bible says. But that is not because of an inadequacy in what God was doing; it is because I am a human being and identified with sin. No one can deny that he is identified with sin from conception.

So we must be honest and upright as we look at this or we won't see the divine import of what God has written here. I was shaped in iniquity – I personally. And in sin did my mother conceive me. How that was, I don't know, but I know this is a statement that applies to every human. My mother is also a human, and every human being is identified with sin. We are conceived in sin - this is a sinful world and we have to begin with that fact. We have to have that clearly laid out in our minds or we won't understand what the Bible talks about when it talks about the consequences of sin.

**6. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.**

Verse 5 has laid out the terrible problem, and then verse 6 immediately shifts over to the way there can be hope. "Thou" is God in all His purity; all His wisdom; all His greatness. God desires that mankind who are to be His own are the ones will have truth in the inward parts. He came to save a people for Himself. This is a beginning point – to desire truth. It is God who begins to bring it. There is a hidden part within us deep in our soul. God deals with us there, and we are not even aware of it. It is there that God makes correction.

It is true that finally there can come a time that we love God with all our heart and want to do God's will. That doesn't mean that

we will live perfectly, but it means that God has placed within us an intense desire to do the will of God. The desire to serve Christ is the first thing that has to happen to any human who is going to be a child of God. Christ is everything and He comes as our mediator. He comes with the whole plan of salvation.

Christ is the only One who can deal with our sin and help us overcome the sin in our life. He is the Savior; the only One who can forgive our sins. He is our only hope.

It seems very negative to talk about sin if you are a child of God who loves the Lord Jesus. But the fact is that the potential to sin is there as long as we live in this sinful world. It is the nature of being a human being. But as long as we keep our eyes on Christ, we can increasingly live without that sin. Our will is increasingly fixed altogether on Christ as our Redeemer and our Savior. We therefore can live without despair because our hope is built on Christ and His righteousness.

In Psalm 51:6 we read: **“Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom.”** God desires truth, because He is truth. Jesus said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** He is the only source of real truth. And He is the One who can make us to know wisdom, which we all desperately need.

The Bible tells us in many places that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We can read in Proverbs 9:10, for example, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”**

God will make us to know wisdom, and it begins with the fear of the Lord. What kind of fear is this? What does the Bible mean by the fear of the Lord? Does that mean we are cowering in a corner, filled with fear? That would be the case for unbelievers: they should have great fear and dread of God’s judgment. They should be very fearful of being under God’s wrath.

But what does the fear of the Lord mean for a saved person?

The fear of the Lord includes great reverence and awe we must hold for God and His law. It involves obedience to God and the

hatred of evil. This should be a prominent characteristic of our life. But it also means that we walk with fear and trembling before God, who is our Lord and Master. As a child of God, if we sin we come to God with fear and trembling. At that moment we don't know where we stand with God. That is why we cry out to God for mercy, as David did.

Sin is rebellion against God and brings the wrath of God. If it were not atoned for – that is, if Christ had not paid for those sins, it would lead to death. But wonderfully, God has made provision for our sins. In His great love He has provided a Savior to atone for our sins. He has paid for our sins if we belong to Him.

That is why God tells us to come boldly to the throne of grace. If we are His child, we will be restored to a right relationship with God. That is the wonder of God's healing mercies and His great love. He is ready to hold us up and surround us with love. He will not leave us in the depths of despair that we feel after we have sinned against Christ whom we profess to love.

If we are indifferent to this kind of thinking, we may have serious problems in our life. We never want to be complacent about our relationship with God. We should never assume that because we believe we are saved, it doesn't matter if we sin, because God will have to forgive us. Our attitude as a child of God should be to hate the sin in our life.

We have a living relationship with God. We are surrounded by sin in this world. But every time we fall into sin we can call upon God for mercy and forgiveness. And in His wonderful love He will forgive and comfort us.

This is part of our walk with Christ. We grow in grace as we go along. We hopefully see less and less sin in our life, because we develop a hatred for sin. This is the fear of the Lord that comes from our relationship with God, and results in wisdom. This is not the kind of wisdom that the world offers, but is true wisdom that only comes from God's Word. It is the truth of God's Word that will bring us to a right relationship with God.

**"In the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom,"** we read in Psalm 51:6. God will put wisdom into our hearts. That

wisdom will grow as we grow in grace, as we walk with Christ. Grace is the wonderful gift of salvation, which will become more and more a distinct part of our personality because we are a child of God.

We have come down to verse 7 in our examination of Psalm 51. We read in Psalm 51:7:

**7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

Why did David talk about hyssop? What did that signify? In the Old Testament, the hyssop plant was regularly used as part of the ceremonial laws that God had instituted. God had instructed the Israelites that a bunch of hyssop was to be dipped into blood or water and sprinkled upon the sacrifice, or whatever was being used to portray the cleansing provided by God. So the hyssop plant was used for sprinkling, and the sacrifices and burnt offerings were a picture of spiritual cleansing by God.

So we can see that when we read **“purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,”** the psalmist is asking for cleansing from sin. David is declaring that only a sin offering can cleanse him from his great sin. The blood sprinkled on the altar, representing the blood of Christ, will take away his blood stains. Remember, David was guilty of murder.

David sees his great need for atonement, which only God can provide. To receive atonement means to be again in harmony with all of God’s laws. And he has great faith that once God does that purging, he shall again be clean. He will be clean in relationship to all of God’s laws.

In verse 2 David had prayed, **“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”** We can see very clearly the intense longing of his heart.

Now he is repeating this petition, because his need for cleansing is so great. He is not talking about physical washing. Physical washing cannot make us whiter than snow, no matter how much we might scrub our skin. So we know this language has to be understood spiritually. This is talking about spiritual washing, in order to make his sinful heart clean. This is to be spiritual purification, which



will remove the pollution of his sin. We are defiled by our sin, and we desperately need cleansing. David wanted to be purged and washed and cleansed from the filthiness and the pollution of sin.

To be whiter than snow would mean there is no dirtiness at all. What can be whiter than snow? It is perfectly clean and pure. That is what happens to our sinful heart if God spiritually washes it clean of sin. It becomes pure in God's sight. That is what we so urgently desire if we really are a child of God.

But spiritual washing is not something that we can do. We are asking God to wash us. It is entirely God's action that washes us clean from our sins. God must purge us and wash us. We have to keep God in the picture all the time, because He is our Savior. It is our Savior who cleanses us from sin. We need God to act on our behalf.

There is no action that we can take that will cleanse our dirty, sinful hearts. God tells us in the Bible to cry out to Him for mercy, and we should not hesitate to do that. But He must do the cleansing. We cannot get ourselves cleansed; Christ has to do the cleansing.

Only God can whiten our heart to be whiter than snow because it is purged from sin. In other words, we have to remember: all the action that is being successful in cleansing us comes from God. It is not something we have done that affects this. We owe all of our cleansing to eternal God Himself.

Wisdom, truth and cleanliness all go together, and they all come from God. God alone gives us wisdom and puts truth within our hearts. He alone cleanses us from sin. These are God's actions that bring us into a close relationship with Him. If we are a child of God that has fallen into sin, we want to restore that relationship. We want to be clean in God's sight.

That is why David was pleading with God to purge him and wash him. To purge means to cleanse or purify. This is what we desire. We do not want any sin left in our personality. David wanted God to remove the stain of sin and make his heart clean. His sin was very great, and he was very distressed over this sin.

But if we look honestly at the sin in our hearts, we have to admit it is also very great. We should be crying out: "Oh God, have

mercy!” David believed that God could make his heart clean and pure again. We should also believe that with all our heart; that it is only God who can make our hearts clean so that we stand right before God. David’s plea for cleansing should be our plea if we have fallen into sin. Only God can make us spiritually whole again.

To be purged with hyssop or to be washed clean, or any other figure the Bible uses to indicate spiritual cleansing – in every case it is instructing us and helping us to see how important spiritual cleansing is in the eyes of God, and it should also be equally important in our own eyes. This is the wonderful cleansing that is part of being a child of God, and is something that should be desired with great desire by every individual.

Now King David goes on in verse 8:

**8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.**

The broken bones in this verse are figurative, not literal bones. In the Bible the figure of breaking bones refers to pain and suffering. David was like someone whose bones had been crushed. He was weak and helpless. He was broken; he was crushed. He couldn’t get up by himself.

This is how a child of God will feel when we have allowed sin into our lives, and we are no longer in fellowship with our Savior. We are weighed down by our sin, and we need God to lift us up out of our sorrow.

The analogy of broken bones points to the utter seriousness of what God is doing in David’s life. We should be amazed by such a disclosure. The bones had been broken by God. It was God that brought about David’s helplessness as He confronted David with his sins. And David represents every one of us in this Psalm. We can and should apply these words to ourselves.

No one can really appreciate this picture until they have physically broken some bones. Having a broken bone is very painful. And notice the psalmist says that bones are broken. It is a plural word. Not just one bone is broken, but more bones. This would be even more painful. How many bones did God break? As many as He wanted.

Notice the wording: **“the bones which Thou hast broken.”** This was not an accident; it was intentional on God’s part. There was intent to harm. How is that possible? For what purpose would God bring this pain?

To give us some additional insight, we read these words in Hebrews 12:6-7: **“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”**

God brought chastisement upon David because of His great love for David, as the love of a father for a beloved son. God figuratively broke David’s bones as a result of his sin. He is pressing on David. Breaking bones causes pain and misery. The bones were broken purposefully by God.

This is a big statement about the relationship between the one with the bones and the bone breaker. Yet it is from this figure that God provides the remedy of forgiveness. David needed the healing that only God could give.

David is asking for repair so that the bones may rejoice. What a task he is giving God! Broken bones do not heal quickly. Only God knows how to make the bones rejoice. That is a difficult job. But when God heals us He comes with a whole package. He comes with joy and gladness, and a sense of happiness. Only God, out of His profound love, would break our bones and then come with joy and gladness that we will feel as He repairs the bones He has broken.

God breaks us and then restores us. That process cannot be painless or incidental. God’s cleansing process is very big, and can be very painful. It tells us that the bones were broken because of sin in our lives.

God is using that kind of language that assures us that this is activity we can expect from God as He provides for our sins. Yet it is from this figure that God provides the remedy of forgiveness. David needed the healing that only God could give. He is seeking joy for a sinful heart, and healing for broken bones. God had crushed him, and only God could cure him. With that healing would come rejoicing; wonderful rejoicing into David’s heart.

God in His perfect righteousness has figuratively broken David's bones, and now he is coming to God with a demand. He is speaking to eternal God, and asking: "Make me to hear joy and gladness. Oh Lord, you broke my bones; now make me to hear joy and gladness." This is a desire that seems impossible. He is not asking for less pain, or for endurance. God is talking about joy and gladness. What a big demand upon God.

God sums it up to make sure we understand: "**Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.**" This is not an appeal for halfway healing, or the appearance of healing that is not really healing. The required action is beyond our ability. God declares the high and wonderful expectation that God has. When we ask Him for help it isn't for whatever He can do, or something we can live with. This is the language of complete healing.

We are asking for God to take full responsibility. We are acknowledging that we deserve that God break our bones, because of our rebellion as we have gone our own way. But then He backs it right up: this task of rebuilding bones is so big and serious that God has to produce healing that brings joy and gladness into the soul of the one whom He has broken.

This is beyond what we would ever dream of asking, if it were not written here in the Bible. We are asking because when God brings punishment for our actions, it is very relevant and painful, and we should be ready to cry out, "Lord, help me to endure this with rejoicing."

We are not asking for the pain to be taken away, but that I might rejoice in spite of the broken bones that I so rightly am enduring.

There is a lot of suffering in this passage. But many of us do not want to suffer. We might think: "I have sinned. So what? Hasn't God promised to forgive our sins? I don't need to suffer." We want to have our sins paid for but we never want to suffer. We do not welcome chastisement from God.

If that is our attitude, we miss the holy calling that God has given us, as God deals with our sins and brings suffering into our soul.

If we are a child of God, God's program is that if we sin there will be suffering, and we have begun to understand that. Even though it seems we cannot endure it, yet God knows what we need.

But along with that we have the wonderful ability to plead with God, and He will hear our plea. This is the outcome of God's action of cleansing. We can again hear joy and gladness, because we are altogether broken before God, acknowledging that He is our Savior; our Lord; our King. He is everything, and we ask God's total forgiveness for all of the arrogance of our hearts. We cry out to God for His mercy.

Joy and gladness relate to salvation. As a child of God we experience the joy of the Lord in our life. We have the wonderful joy of knowing we belong to Christ for eternity. What a glorious conclusion!

How can it be that God is so merciful? The picture is one of bones that have been broken, and God will bring healing, which will bring rejoicing of the highest kind. What a wonderful Redeemer! He will not leave us with broken bones, as it were. He will not leave us crushed and broken in spirit. He will bring us back to the joy and gladness that only comes from our Lord and Savior.

This is because of God's great love for His children. Christ has paid for their sins, and He cares about His own. What a wonderful Savior!

In our study of Psalm 51, we have come to verses 9 and 10, where we read:

**9. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.**

**10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.**

What is David asking here? God is allowing us to ask Him to hide His face from our sins, and to blot out all our iniquities. Why would God want to blot out our iniquities?

Effectively we are looking at God and looking at our sins, and we see that there is a lot of difference between the two. It has to

begin with getting rid of our dirty heart, so we pray: create in me a clean heart. And at the same time we ask, please **“hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.”** In other words, we want Christ to look at us as if we are clean; as if we are a new creature. We would like there to be nothing else to erase. We want a new heart; a clean heart. We would like to be ready to face God exactly as we are; after we have been cleansed. We are hoping that is the way God will look at us, and this would leave us wide open to be looked at with a right spirit renewed within us. It will be as if we are brand new; as if we never had any sin. So God can begin to have nice things for us as He faces us.

Those are ideals that we would like. Yes, that is what we would like but that is not quite the way it will be. God will wash us, but in the process of washing and cleansing it will reveal all the dirt; all the wickedness that has been a part of our life. And the fact is that while we ask for a plan that will leave us clean as possible, the fact is that our sins will show up. God will not erase them as if they never existed. They are there for God to look at and do with as He wishes. It is true that God blots out our iniquities, but not before He has complete knowledge of them. And blotting them out is part of the cleansing process. It does not mean that He will never remember them again. That's not God's nature and not the significance of sin.

Sin is a terrible thing that God has so many ugly things to say about. Our sins won't disappear from God's memory, as if we are as clean as can be and always have been clean. We may get that impression from a verse here or there but we should not think God forgets our sins. He cleanses us from sin and sometimes the cleansing process is very difficult for us. But when we have been cleansed, now God views us as someone whose sins are blotted out. Now God can look at us in the eye and not come with judgment.

Our sin is so terrible it could never be altogether forgotten. We would like it to be forgotten and we hope God will treat it as if it is forgotten. But God is God and He is very knowledgeable about everything that has happened in our life, and we are thankful that he can make statements as if He has forgotten. He will not hold those sins against us because we are cleansed. We stand before God as if we have not sinned. I believe that is the way we must look at these verses.

The desire here as God is expressing it in verse 10 speaks of creating and renewing. To renew carries the thought that there was something bad going on and we need renewal; we need to start again. We were right with God, but now we are not. We can't go on as we have been going. This is what has to be in our thinking as we approach God in our sin and our depression from our sin. We want to be asking him to renew us - to give us a new heart; a new soul; a new spirit. Not physically, but spiritually - this is what we are desiring. We come to God as if we never had that sin; as if we always had walked right before God. And yet we know we have sinned. We know we were wrong and we are in trouble with God. Oh God have mercy on us...this is the sense we want in our thinking as we come to God for renewal. There is no one who should avoid coming to God for renewal - we all need it. We all have sin so that we need to cry to God for mercy, knowing full well that He is a God of mercy and that He will provide mercy.

That is the wonder of it all. It is not conversation with a person who will not speak to us so that there is no hope. But rather it is Someone who is encouraging us to pray for mercy and renewal; to pray for God to hear us and cleanse us so that we are like a new person altogether. We are asking God to do a miracle. I have a heart that is dirty because of sin I have committed, and now I am asking God for the impossible: to create in me a new heart.

The word "create" says that God has to do a work of creation - to create something brand new. Only God can do this. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. This is a statement that indicates that God has full knowledge of how bad we have been; of how we have departed away from God in our sin. It is like we need to be recreated; we need to start all over again. How demoralizing it is to think about: God sees us as if we have become so bad that we need to be completely renewed right from scratch. That tells us a lot about how bad our sin has been. We thought we just sinned a little bit; we just got a little bit dirty. But God has been looking at us through His perfect eyes and it is so bad that He is ready to recreate us, as it were.

That should tell us about the horrible nature of sin. It is never acceptable. The focus of God will be on the removal of any taint of that sin. We don't want it to stay with us even as God does not want it to

stay with us. We are to be as clean as the snow that comes down and is perfectly clean. So that is our target: to be clean, clean. We cannot play around with ideas that God will be happy with just a little bit of cleaning. No, we want to be completely cleansed by God. It will not be easy. We are making a big demand: to create in me a clean heart. But we must recognize that because of our sins we have become so filthy and hopeless that the only answer is to start over again with a clean heart. This is what we have to be praying and to be crying out for. We must mean it. We want to be perfect before God and then we are on the right path.

Psalms 51 really is a statement we would not expect to find in the Bible from the mouth of David. But God wanted to be sure it would be read because it is so meaningful. Now we read, as David is praying to God in verses 11 and 12:

**11. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.**

**12. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.**

Oh my, that David would say these words – David! We're not just talking about someone who is just a man on the street. We are talking about the man who is closer in a relationship to God than anybody. King David. And what is he saying? He is praying to God: **"Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."** Let's analyze that verse because it is solemn beyond our imagination that King David would make this kind of an expression.

David is worried. He is praying something that we ordinarily would think could not possibly come from the lips of David. But it is possible because it is recorded in the Bible for you and me to see, so we can't just say, oh that was a bad moment for David but not important. But it was written there by the will of God for us to see, and it reveals to us the terrible situation that David came into because of his sin. This is not something little; this is big news. This is the kind of thing that we should read and look at and realize how awful it was, and it is a wonder David is still called a child of God.

When we look at verse 12 we have assurance that King David knows he had been saved. That verse effectively is telling us that David



had had a wonderful relationship with God. He had the joy of knowing he was in the presence of God as his Savior. He had all the attributes and sensations of someone who knew he was safe and secure forevermore in the presence of Almighty God. Nobody could be more secure than what David was emphasizing here in these two verses. Every statement here is driving the nail deeper: David, you are a child of God. David, you have nothing to worry about. David, God has saved you; you belong to Him; don't worry about it. No action of yours could upset this; you are secure.

And yet here is David speaking in a way that shows that at this point in this life, because of his sin – the basis of all this discussion – he is unsure where he stands with God. He was a child of God, secure in Christ. He was the kind of a person we all would have liked to have been. He was secure in Jesus, and yet he is speaking here as someone who is right on the threshold of being thrown out of the Kingdom of God.

How could that be? That shows something to us. If this is happening to David, this wonderful God-fearing man, and bringing about this kind of fear in his life, what do you think it is telling us, who claim that Jesus is our Savior? We say it so casually and flippantly at times: Christ is my Savior, I have nothing to worry about. Was that true of David? No, he had to face this time, although he was so secure in his relationship with God, and yet now here he is making statements we don't want to hear, they are so awful. **“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”**

This is a statement of fact, placed here so we can read it and think about it. This happened to a man who was the most pleasing to God, way more faithful than you or I, and he is saying it with such fervor. Could David ever be cast away from the presence of God? When we look at his whole history, could he be cast away? If this kind of reaction can be seen in the actions of King David, according to the way he is stating it here, yes, he had an actual fear that he could be cast away. If David could fall into sin and be cast away from God's presence, what is the possibility of any of us being cast away?

But when we read on in the Bible and see all the information, we know that David could not be cast away because he belonged to Christ, and Christ is the one who would forgive him of his sin. God has

a love for David; God has forgiven David and made him His child. But that does not come out in these verses.

These verses are recorded here so that we are very sure that we must have a right relationship with God, which we do have if we are saved. But these verses put all of us on trial; they help us to look at ourselves much more carefully; to take nothing for granted. We don't have to think, "Well sure, I sinned; I know I sinned, just like David sinned really badly, but he never lost his salvation. He was still safe and secure as a child of God, after all."

Yes, but look at the turmoil he had to endure as God was training him; he had to endure a time when God is using language that sounds like his security is not secure at all. Later on we will find that God will never throw him away; God had saved him. But we can't look at that until we look at what God could do to David. David was loved by God in every way, so we can know that whatever security David had in Christ, we can have the same security.

One more comment about these verses: while it is true these two verses reveal the extent of misery that David felt, yet on the other hand if we read these carefully, we find a security here that we don't want to miss: a security in our relationship with God when He is our Savior. David says: "**Cast me not away from Thy presence.**" That already indicates a definite sense of salvation. Regardless of how sinful he had been, there was a sense that David believed he was a child of God and would not be cast away.

So he dared to ask the next request: "**Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.**" That is what he was missing: the joy of that salvation that was so big and important in his life. For the moment it gave the impression that he had lost his salvation. But no, he says: "**Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.**" These are important statements: that God could bring back the wonderful joy of salvation. He still trusted in God all the way, but he had to look in the mirror and see his sin and see how bad he had been. Now he begs for restoration and the sense of security and the joy of salvation.

Effectively he was saying, "Oh Lord, now You have to take over in my life; I trusted myself and that brought me into deep water insofar

as having a right relationship with You. My whole understanding of what salvation should be has been warped and troubled. Now let's get it all straightened out, because when I am a child of God I know you will uphold within me Your free spirit; the spirit of being a child of God and being free from my sin and being free to serve God. That is what I ask for. Now please" – we can see David begging God; he really is begging God: "please restore unto me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with Your free spirit."

He is not asking for that free spirit or for salvation as an unbeliever. He is recognizing that in his sin he has gone far away from these wonderful joys that should be a part of every child of God, finding his security in Christ. So now he is asking for that security to be restored. That is what you and I should be asking for constantly. If we ask for that in an honest way, it means that we also have to straighten out our life and see the sin, and start running away from it as far as possible.

We understood from verse 12 that in order to have the joy of salvation, God has to bring that joy. That is what is so wonderful when we become saved; we have the joy of knowing that Christ is our Savior and all is well between me and the Lord. And we are upheld by the free spirit: it is free; it does not cost us.

We have seen that David was asking God to again bring him into a condition of security with God. A condition *again*; because David had sinned and broken his relationship with God. As he confessed his sin and implored God for forgiveness, he again felt the security of his relationship with God. There had been a break in that close relationship but now it has been restored.

Because of his sin, he was weighed down with guilt. He needed to feel God's forgiveness. He wanted to again experience the joy that only salvation can bring. He wanted God to uphold Him. That is what is so very wonderful about trusting in the Lord. We have the freedom to know that we are safe in Christ. He has forgiven my sins, and how wonderful it is to know that Jesus Christ, God Himself, is my Savior. This is a wonderful piece of truth that I want to shout, as it were, from the tops of the mountains so everyone can hear it: God, my God has saved me. We want to speak again and again to God to tell Him how wonderful it is to be restored to a right condition with Him.

Now in the next verse we can see the consequences of that action on God's part. We read in verse 13:

**13. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.**

This is a very curious statement; David wants to be forgiven not just so that he will again be in a right relationship with God. It is way bigger than that. It is so that as he will be able to share the Gospel and God will be saving people. He is focusing on salvation.

That is the nature of salvation. It is not just for the convenience of the person who is saved; that is not the end product. The end product is that we will have a new relationship with the world, as David did. It was his desire that as he expressed the joy of having Christ as his Savior, it would impact other human beings so that they too would become saved. That is our joy; that is why we are so concerned about the world today. We want our life to "tell for Jesus," as the song goes. It is the desire that our lives are a living testimony of the existence of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved to serve; let's never forget it. When we are free in our thinking because Christ has set us free, we are then happy in the Lord. We have something real substantive about which to be exceedingly happy. And so that's the reason David added in verse 13, "**Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.**"

This little statement is very significant because it points out the consequences of being in a right relationship with God. We know He is hearing us when we pray, and He is hearing us when we speak about God to others. So we are able to teach others about God's ways. This is a necessary prerequisite to sharing the Gospel; that is, we must be teaching the ways of the Lord: how Christ loved us and made payment for our sins, and so on. So that is a wonderful action as it is found in our lives.

When we will teach transgressors, who are they? Anyone who is in the world around us. The world is loaded with transgressors. That is anyone who is sinning against God. Anyone who is living in sin and going his own way is a transgressor. But when they turn around – and some do turn around – then we are teaching the way of the Lord, and sinners shall be converted. Before anybody can become saved, he is a sinner. He wants what he wants and thinks he knows better than God.

When we get turned around by God and we know that what we are teaching is faithful to the Lord, and we are teaching the way to God, then we are doing the Lord's will. Then we are in the right path. And we know there is going to be fruit; there are going to be those whose ways are changed. **"Thy ways"** are the ways of God; and **"sinners shall be converted unto Thee."** What a blessed promise! Sinners will be turned unto God. Who are the sinners? Everybody in the world who has not been touched by Christ. Until God has made a change in that person's life, he is going his own way, and that is a way to perdition. That is the way people are going until the wonder of salvation has overtaken them.

The Bible shows us that that process of becoming aware of sin and receiving the mercy of God is a result of being saved. Those who are saved are no longer subject to God's wrath. This is effectively happening in the world we are living in. How wonderful to have the assurance that indeed our God is a saving God, and that there are sinners today that are being saved. How wonderful that this is still going on, and will continue to go on until the last one that God wants to save will have been saved.

We have seen from this study that sin isn't just incidental: "Oh, I sinned, and I need forgiveness. Well, I know God will forgive me." No, it is much more serious than that. When we are a child of God, our sin puts a wedge between us and God. We feel locked in; we cannot go on until we sense that God has truly forgiven us.

We know when we go to the Bible and read all the verses and promises of God, that God does forgive us when we sin, if we are His children. But even so, the guilt of sin weighs us down, and we find that we keep going to God, asking for forgiveness. We will see that is what David did.

We read in verse 14, the next verse in our study,

**14. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.**

In verses 12 and 13, David had asked God to restore to him the joy of salvation so that he could again be a witness to others. But now David is focusing on his sin again. **"Deliver me from blood guiltiness,**

**O God.**" David was guilty of shedding blood, because he had orchestrated the killing of Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba.

David was guilty of murder. And even though he had already pleaded with God for forgiveness, now he asks for deliverance from blood guiltiness. He was oppressed by his guilt. He believed God would forgive him, and yet he is pleading for deliverance from his guilt. Our sin is against God, and only He can deliver us from our guilt.

This is why sin is such a big thing in the life of a true believer. We do not want to sin; we want to be faithful to God. So when we do sin, we are wracked with guilt, and we cannot live with it. That is why David asked God for deliverance. He knew he was guilty of sin, and yet he is asking God for a full pardon. He cannot help himself. Only God can help him.

David goes on in verse 14, "...**Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.**" David knows that his salvation comes from God. He knows that only if he experiences God's pardon will he be able to sing aloud of God's righteousness.

As long as he is under the burden of the guilt of sin, he is unable to experience God's healing touch. Only God can provide the healing that he needs in his soul so that he can sing aloud of God's righteousness.

This is the way it is with sin in our life. We believe that God has forgiven us, because we know He has paid for all of our sins. We have all the wonderful promises that come with salvation. Yet we cannot stop remembering that time when we sinned, and it was so awful. We are so sorry it happened, and we believe God has forgiven us. But we keep going to God for forgiveness. Christ paid for all of our sins if we are His child. We know that, and we have the joy of His salvation. But when we have done something wrong, we need that restoration; we need that healing that only God can give us.

Then we read in verse 15:

**15. O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise.**

David could not even open his own lips to praise God. Even that action had to come from God because David was so weighed down by his sin. So David asked the Lord to open his lips so that he could give God the praise.

God had to take all the action of restoration and healing. He is the author and finisher of our salvation, and He is the one who can restore to us the joy of our salvation after we have fallen into sin and begged for forgiveness.

God does not require our request in order to forgive us. Christ already paid for all our sins, including this one we are dealing with. We know intellectually that God will forgive us. But we need the sense of forgiveness; we need to restore our relationship with Christ to a right relationship. We find therefore that sin is a big problem if we are a child of God; that is, if we are truly born again.

After we become a Christian, we never want to sin again. So when we do commit sin, we feel terrible about it. We might not commit sins as grievous as murder, like David did, yet any sin breaks our close fellowship with Christ. It causes us to cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness.

We know that God has to take the action of healing our soul. He has to restore the wonderful joy of our salvation that we had before. We need God's help so that we can go on.

David wanted to be able to sing and praise God. But he recognized that he needed God's help. He went to God because he was unable to help himself, to deliver himself from guilt. It would take God's action.

Wonderfully we know that God did forgive David. We know this is so because David was a child of God, and therefore was forgiven. Every one of us who belongs to Christ can have this same assurance of forgiveness for sin. Praise God for His love and mercy!

We have discovered that the path out of sin is not an easy one; it can be a real struggle. But once we face our sin and bring it to the Lord, we finally get blessed relief, knowing that our sin is forgiven. It is a real fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins; therefore He can provide us with the total forgiveness that we desperately need.

Now we have come down to Psalm 51:16, where we read:

**16. For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it:  
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.**

What is this talking about? God does not desire sacrifice or burnt offering as physical items in our agenda to try to get right with God. In our day we do not make animal sacrifices or burnt offerings upon an altar as David did in his day. That Old Testament practice has been done away with by God. So how does this verse apply to us?

There are many kinds of sacrifices we can offer to God. We can give our money for God's work; we can give of our time and effort. These are noteworthy things perhaps, but they do not help with our salvation in any way. The money we give to God; the labor we give to God – anything that we think is of value in this world is not the kind of sacrifice that God wants.

The kind of sacrifice that God wants is what we read in verse 17:

**17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and  
a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.**

A broken spirit and a contrite heart is a heart in which we have become convinced we have done wrong, and we have to try all over again to be right with God. It is the situation when we have come to the end of our ability; we have come to the end of our resources. We are completely broken. We have no strength.

We always thought we had something to offer, something in reserve, but that leaves us in a miserable sinful condition. There we are, like a broken piece of merchandise worth nothing and we see that is how God wants us. In other words, He wants us where we quit leaning on our strength; on what we think we can do; on what we think we are worth. No, no, no....we come to Christ with a broken and a contrite heart without having anything we think we can offer.

There is nothing I can present to God to help make the payment for my sin. All I can do is look to God for His mercy: God's wonderful, matchless mercy. How wonderful to come to that point – completely broken; completely licked. We don't like that - we are



designed to be winners, aren't we? No, just the opposite. God is in control of every aspect of our being. All we can do is wait upon God and wait upon God, until we feel His glorious healing power.

Then we again are drawn into close fellowship and a close relationship with our Savior. Then it again becomes Christ and me – He must come first. He is totally in charge, and will see to it that when He is through, I will be fully His child.

We are nothing; God is everything. We don't like to hear that; we think we are something, and God has to give us some kind of credit. But no, God is everything. That is the way it has to be for a right relationship. We can't come part way; we can't make deals with God. We are so accustomed to making deals in every aspect of our living, but it won't work here. We know that when God is in charge, we are on the right path. We have to come all the way. And when we have been completely broken, God will tenderly pick up the pieces: the broken pieces of a contrite sinner. We are like a beautiful piece of glass that has shattered into a thousand tiny pieces. It looks hopeless. But under a master builder, who alone is God, it can be put together again in a beautiful way so that it is something wonderful. When God does it, we are whole; we are completely clean.

That is the sacrifice that God requires. A broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart God will not despise in any way. To be contrite means to be remorseful; to be repentant and ashamed. Our heart must be broken by our sin. That is the way we come to God – completely broken before Him. And He promises to pick up the pieces and make us whole. And we will know when He's picking up the pieces. We will sense that in our life when there has been a change. And we will have not nearly the ego and the feeling of accomplishment that we had before He took over in our lives. Oh how wonderful it is to contemplate what God can do with any one of us.

Now we go on with verses 18 and 19, the last two verses of Psalm 51:

**18. Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.**

**19. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt**

**offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.**

We find here that David is asking God to do His good pleasure; that is, His will, unto Zion, and to build the walls of Jerusalem. Zion is a name that also refers to Jerusalem. Immediately you see why we have been directed back to God, because you and I cannot literally build Jerusalem. So is David asking God to help to build up the literal, physical city of Jerusalem, the capitol city in Israel?

That is possible, of course, but there is another spiritual meaning to Zion and Jerusalem. We can get a clue if we read Hebrews 12:22 in the New Testament, which also speaks of Zion and Jerusalem. It is so wonderful when you are reading the Bible to compare Scripture with Scripture. When you find a verse you cannot understand, the best thing is to stop and pray for wisdom, and keep reading other parts of the Bible until you find some clues. We read in Hebrews 12:22: **“But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...”**

Of course it's not talking about a literal city or a literal mountain. In other words, spiritually speaking, Zion and Jerusalem refer to the Kingdom of God. Building the walls means the building up of the Kingdom of God. Now it is beginning to make sense. It is God who builds His Kingdom, according to His good pleasure. The focus of the Kingdom of God in this world is getting the Gospel out as God builds His Kingdom. Now we have to develop that a little bit, but we are on the right track. It is not building something physical; it is talking about the building of the Kingdom of God, which obviously is a very spiritual Kingdom. It is far more important and far greater than anything we can think of in a physical way.

The Kingdom is built as people hear the Gospel and God brings them into His Kingdom in His perfect timing. We are not brought into a physical structure or building; it is talking about being brought spiritually into a deeper living relationship with God. As God builds His Kingdom, He will be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness. God is detailing how the walls will be built again, and notice that it is built through the sacrifices of righteousness and burnt offerings. How is that done? It certainly involves a broken and a contrite heart; it involves a total surrender of people who have

rebelled against God and now have come to an understanding that they cannot rebel against God.

This sacrifice refers to everything we give to God as we offer ourselves to Him in our great love for Him. It is a whole burnt offering that is not given in part. There can be no holding back a part for ourselves. That is the burnt offering that God is talking about.

It is a *burnt* offering; that is, it is completely consumed. Our sacrifices to God – our broken spirit; our broken heart; our possessions – they must be completely committed to God, and used totally to glorify God. Yes, our possessions too! Are your possessions ready to be dedicated to God altogether because you want God to be number one in your life? Unless you include your possessions, you are just giving lip service to God. It is easy to say you have a broken and a contrite heart, but possessions are more tangible. Now, you may say, I don't know how I stand with God. Well, start praying, my friend. Start praying: Oh God, have mercy on me. Break me down so that I can see that until I am completely surrendered to You with all of my possessions, I am not surrendered to You at all. I am not committed to You completely, and that is not good enough. We have to go to God with everything, and hold back nothing at all.

When we sacrifice ourselves to the Lord, we give Him everything that is acceptable to God. Everything we have must be completely committed to God. After all, our lives; our possessions: everything we all call our own, have all been given to us in the first place by God. We may claim: "Oh no, I worked hard. I did it." We like to put the focus on how great we are, but really, who gave me the strength? Who gave me the desire? Who gave me whatever I have now available to give back to the Lord? It was all given to me by God in the first place, and I have to keep that in mind. And when I realize that it was given to me by God, and I realize it is a way I can show my love and my great desire to serve God, then it all begins to tie together and to make sense. This is what God is talking about when He is asking for a broken spirit and a burnt offering. We abandon ourselves to God. I am not important in this world; God is important. What I do and what I can offer to God are not important. It is what God has asked for, and as we go through the Bible, we find that God wants everything.

We learned in Psalm 51 verses 16-17 that the sacrifices that are pleasing to God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart. We do not truly have a broken spirit and a contrite heart until everything we own in this world and which we cherish have been given over to God.

And we give ourselves to God with joy. Yes, we not only have to give God everything He's ever given to us; we must go to God with joy in our hearts. Oh, my wonderful God and Savior; look what You have done for me. Look what You have meant to me. So now am I so happy that I can give it back to You. Oh Lord, this is what it is all about. Now I have joy in my heart, because I have found the meaning of giving. It's not so that I can claim this or that; it is so that we can give back to God. Because God is my Savior; my keeper; my sin bearer. God is everything, no matter where I look. God is everything, and therefore it fills me with joy and with extreme happiness when I can give that back to God without any resistance on my part.

That sounds too difficult to ever do. No, we keep praying for God's mercy. He is my God and I am a part of His Kingdom, and never can be separated from Him. Nothing can fill me with more joy than to think about that. Oh how wonderful God is, that He made all of this possible for a broken and a contrite heart such as I have had to experience because of my negligence. This is where we must come to: begging God for mercy. He is our Savior; He is the one who will bring us into eternal life. It is an expression of our desire to be faithful to God.

What we give to the Lord must come from our hearts, and used for the furtherance of God's Kingdom, with nothing kept in reserve. As I offer what little I have to offer, it comes as a sacrifice of righteousness; an indication that I want to walk righteously in order that God's Kingdom can be developed.

The bullock upon the altar is myself, given gladly to God. We want to surrender ourselves gladly to God because we should give Him everything. We should not be concerned with what is left over for *me*. We are ready to be used to the fullest to send out the Gospel and see that it is properly utilized, and to serve as a part of God's Kingdom.

How wonderful that we can have a part in this! God saves us first of all, and then, even though we are still sinful, He uses us in His

Kingdom. We have looked to Christ for relief from our sins, and now He uses us, sinful though we are.

God gives us the task of sharing the Gospel and proclaiming God's Word to the world. We cannot save anyone from sin, but God has chosen to use us as ambassadors of Christ. We cannot do this perfectly, but God is perfect and His way is perfect.

Our prayer must be like David's. We cry out to God for mercy, first of all. We come to God in our sin and misery and pray for mercy.

God, in His abundant love, will always carry out His perfect will as He brings His forgiveness and love upon those whom He brings into His Kingdom. But after He saves someone, that isn't the end of the matter – now that person has a task ahead as he lives out his life on this earth.

As we bring our sacrifices to the Lord, may we do so wholeheartedly and joyfully, with great love for our wonderful Savior.

