

Psalm 51:1-10

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 0 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

A Good Wash

There are probably few who know that itchy, crawly feeling of prickly chaff and scratchy dust mingled with sweat that grinds into your skin better than a farm boy. No one would welcome a cleansing stream and refreshing pool nor appreciate the gentle scrub of soap more as well! Nevertheless, it was not for want of physical cleansing that David, the former farm boy turned king, cried out to be washed. No, King David had a deeper need, a more uncomfortable and weighty feeling of uncleanness of soul.

Yes, David - the man after God's own heart, felt the great burden of His sin of adultery and murder sweep over him like a wave of the sea, the undertow of which pulled him down into the depths of despair, and separated him from the fellowship and blessing of God. Though he succeeded in keeping his sin from the eyes of men, he could not escape the eye of the living God. Upon rebuke from Nathan, the prophet of the Lord, David's will was broken and his spirit crushed. He cried: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalms 51:1-2,7).

When man looks upon his own life in comparison to fellowman, he justifies himself and excuses his sin, after all, "everybody does it!" However, when brought into proximity to Holy God, man sees his own uncleanness, grieves his own sin, and cries "I want to be washed!" When Moses approached the burning bush possessed by the presence of God, he became aware of the Holy ground he tread upon. When Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, he understood that he was a man of unclean lips. When the woman at the well confronted Jesus, she became convicted of her immoral life.

There is need for all men to be washed for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). David, sensing the weight of his sin, knew the answer lay in the lovingkindness of God. As scripture bears witness: "God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

In answer to man's cry, "I want to be washed", God provides a cleansing stream, as William Cowper penned so long ago: "There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains: The dying thief rejoiced to see, That fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, Wash all my sins away." Like David, may this be your earnest prayer to God: "I want to be washed!"

What is my response:
