



## “Cleansed” Psalm 51:1-10

**Idea:** Sinners are cleansed by the substitutionary atonement of Jesus upon the cross.

**Intro:** A young girl in the U.K. named Liz was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her five-year-old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed. The doctor explained the situation and asked the little boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. He hesitated for only a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, “Yes, I’ll do it if it will save her.”

As the transfusion progressed, he lay in bed next to his sister, and smiled, as everyone in the room did, seeing the color returning to Liz’s cheeks. Then his face grew pale and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, “Will I start to die right away?”

The little boy had misunderstood the doctor. He thought he was going to have to give his sister *all* of his blood in order to save her. This boy loved his sister so much that he was willing to die *instead* of her – as her substitute.

I hope you understand how much God loves you. He really does love us. The amazing and wonderful message of the Bible is that God came to this earth in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and died in our place (Rom 5:8). Words, images, metaphors, pictures, and illustrations (such as that of the five-year-old boy) can help our understanding, but they can never perfectly describe the indescribable love of God. Jesus died for my sins. He died instead of you and me.

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*  
– Mark 10:45

**Inquiry:** As we focus our attention on the Lord’s Supper today, I want to remind you what this ordinance that we observe is. The Lord’s Supper provides a powerful symbol of the sacrifice Jesus made to provide for our forgiveness. Let’s reflect on the broken body and shed blood symbolized in the bread and wine.

The Bible tells us that before Jesus was born, the angel Gabriel visited both Mary and Joseph and declared that the baby she carried was no ordinary baby. He was the Son of God who would save His people from their sins (Luke 2:10-11; Matt 1:21).

Jesus, however, did not come to simply proclaim sinners forgiven. He came to receive the judgment against sinners so that they might be forgiven. He came to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sinners.

*...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*  
– Heb 9:22b

There on the cross, God the Father exhausted His wrath upon God the Son. God’s just judgment against our sin was unleashed on Jesus as He hung on the cross. Therefore, as the Lamb of God, the blood that He shed became the atoning sacrifice that satisfied the justice of God the Father. So now because of Christ the words of Isaiah become reality:

*though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.* – Isaiah 1:18

What did Christ accomplish? Atonement. He paid the penalty for your sin so that you can be forgiven of all sin. The Bible says that we have all sinned; we have all fallen short of the glory of God...short of His standard (Rom 3:23). Our sin is great. It is devastating. It separates us from God who is holy (Is 59:2). But Jesus made a way back to the Father for us. He sacrificed Himself on the cross. He shed His blood. He died in our place. Jesus became our substitute in order for us to be set free from the penalty for sin. Like Liz's young brother who substituted himself for her, Jesus stood in our lawful place.

In the face of such good news, what should be our response? King David shows us how to respond to God's grace. The king had sinned greatly. He had committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife Uriah. David tried to cover up his sin and the consequences of his sin by having Uriah killed in battle (2 Sam 11). For an entire year the king held onto his sin. He refused to repent. He simply sat on his throne in Jerusalem brazening out the whole thing.

Then Nathan the prophet came and confronted the king with a story about a poor man's lamb, stolen by a rich man to provide a feast for a passing guest (2 Sam 12). David reacted instantly to that tale of injustice. He swore to take the offender's life and make him repay the stolen lamb fourfold. Then Nathan declared to the king that he was the offender.

The sword was at David's throat before he even knew Nathan had a sword. Down off his throne came the king. The fountains of the deep in his soul were broken. The pent-up passions of remorse, shame, guilt, and anxiety were released in a flood of tears. And with his heart still pounding in his chest, David cried out what we have in Psalm 51.

Read Psalm 51:1-10.

David's sin was great, but God's grace was greater. David's sin and the refusal to confess his sin proved that he had stopped loving God, but God never stopped loving him. God pursued David. God's confrontation of David's sin was an incredible act of grace and love. David was overwhelmed by it. His response to the grace and mercy of God is how we should respond.

Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross. He became our substitute, taking our place as the wrath of God the Father was exhausted on our sin. By it we can be cleansed of all sin. What should our response be? Like David, we must:

### **1. Turn to God (vs. 1)**

When confronted with the greatness of his sin, David immediately turns to God, crying out for mercy. He did not turn to religion, a person, or his attempts at trying harder. I tend to think that that is what he had been doing for the last year. Roughly a year had passed between the time when he sinned and when Nathan confronted David. During that time, I believe the king did everything he could to make up for the sin or to forget it. The problem was he could not make up for it, and God had not forgotten it.

So when God confronted David through the prophet (2 Sam 12:7-12), he was broken and turned to God (2 Sam 12:13). This is our first response to the grace of Jesus.

### **2. Confess our sin. (vs. 1-5)**

David confesses his iniquity (v.2), transgressions (vs.1b,3a) and his sin (vs.2b,3b). Transgression speaks of a high-handed revolt against God's Law. Iniquity describes the perverseness of his nature. And sin portrays his missing of the mark or falling short on God's standard of holiness. He rightly understood that he was born into sin (v.5). You see, he sinned because he was a sinner. This prayer is in response

to a specific sin, but David recognizes there is a deeper problem as well. Sin is not just an occasional act. It is something deeply ingrained within all human beings from our very earliest moments.

### 3. Ask for cleansing. (vs. 1,2,7)

David cries out for *mercy* (vs. 1). He asked to be *washed* (vs. 2). He asked for God to *blot* out his transgressions (vs. 1). In response to the sacrifice and substitution Jesus made on our behalf, we turn to God, confess our sin, and ask Him to cleanse us completely.

In asking for God to cleanse him, David acknowledged that he was absolutely powerless to clean up the mess in his life. Only God could clean him, and only God can clean you and me.

### 4. Receive His healing. (vs. 8-9)

David had become deaf to the voice of God, deaf to the sounds of joy. Sin had cut him off from the joy of knowing the Lord. As David turns to God, confessing his sin and asking for cleansing, he receives a full healing from the effects of sin. In verse 10 he appeals to God that He would create within him a clean heart. The word translated *create* is *bara*. It is the word used in Genesis 1:1 when God created the heavens and earth. It means to create absolutely, supernaturally, and from nothing.

David was asking for the Lord to build upon what was found in his heart because it was evil. It was asking for God to give him a new heart. David understood that his heart was wicked. He did not need some tweaking or an upgrade. He needed a new heart. He needed a full healing, a complete overhaul.

And like David all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Our sin is great. It is devastating. It is pervasive. But God's grace is greater.

**Conclusion:** How could David receive a full pardon for his sin and a complete healing from its effects? How can we experience the same in our lives today? It is all because God the Son, Jesus Christ, invaded this world, sacrificed Himself on the cross, and became our Substitute.

An invasion took place in 1868 that was on the scale of the invasion of Normandy. The invasion took place because in 1864 Theodore III of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) took 53 hostages that were citizens of England and the British Empire. He took the thirty adults and twenty-three children deep into the heart of Ethiopia and placed them in a fortress built on a mountain that was 9,000 feet tall.

Queen Elizabeth began to write letters in 1864, 1865, and 1866. She sent emissaries, diplomats, and military advisers who pleaded with Theodore III to release the hostages. Now, the 53 people taken captive were just commoners. They were not diplomats, magistrates, soldiers, or wealthy merchants. They were just commoners...foreigners, farmers, missionaries, and their families.

The queen pleaded with him for four years until she became fed up and said, "enough." She then called up her troops stationed in Bombay. At that time India was part of the British Empire. She called up the regiments from Bombay, 32,000 soldiers. They boarded ships and trains and headed toward the horn of Africa. They arrived with 44 Indian elephants to carry the number of cannons that were going to be used. They built an entire dock on the banks of the sea. They built a water filtration system. They built a railroad into the heart of Ethiopia. They built a telegraph system. They built buildings, supply depots, and amassed huge caches of weapons and food. They brought in over 50,000 tons of meat just to feed this massive army.

The British took off in 1868 into the heart of Ethiopia, and on Good Friday they attacked. The forces of Theodore III melted away. The British army captured the fortress. They broke into where the hostages were

held captive and set them free. There they found the body of Theodore III with a pistol in his hand. He had taken his own life. The interesting thing is that Queen Victoria had given him the pistol as a gift years earlier.

The British army released those 53 commoners, having spent what would be in our day billions of dollars. They expended massive amounts of resources to rescue just ordinary common people. What a high price to pay for ordinary people, but God has done something greater than that.

There was an invasion at Bethlehem and the battle was fought at Mt. Calvary. And the same God who sent His Son to fight the battle that day at Calvary, when the forces melted away is the same God who greatly desires to rescue you. Because if a little queen could rescue 53 commoners, the King of Kings can rescue us from the sin that holds us captive.

This morning if you are not in relationship with Christ, what is preventing you from turning to God, confessing your sin, asking for cleansing, and receiving His healing? As we look to begin a new year, what better start can there be? Beginning a new life in Jesus Christ is the best start anyone could ever receive.

Are you walking at a guilty distance from the Lord? If so, then like King David, I urge you to turn to God, confess your sin, ask for cleansing, and receive his healing.

The Lord's Supper that we partook earlier helps us look back at the cross. It is also a time to look forward to the Lord's return for His bride. And as the bride we want to be clean and pleasing to Him when He returns. Until then, we also want to be clean vessels for God to use, so as we enter a brand new year here is an opportunity to get things right with the Lord and yourself.