

A black silhouette of a person kneeling in prayer, with hands clasped together in front of their face. The figure is centered in the background against a solid red background.

# **PSALM 51**

**BIBLICAL CONFESSION**

# Introducing Psalm 51

- **Several well-known individuals turned to Psalm 51 at death:**
  - Sir Thomas More
  - Lady Jane Grey
  - Henry V
  - William Carey
- **It is one of the penitential psalms:**
  - Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
- **Background: 2 Samuel 11–12**

# Praying Psalm 51

A black silhouette of a person in a kneeling position, facing left with hands clasped in prayer. The figure is centered behind the text, with the head and hands visible above the list of verses.

- Be gracious and merciful to me, O God. (v. 1)
- Lord, I have sinned against You. (v. 4)
- Help me to rejoice in Your loving discipline, Father. (v. 8)
- You are righteous, Lord. (v. 14)
- Father, do good things for Jerusalem. (v. 18)

# Understanding Psalm 51

- I. Confession (vv. 1–9)**
  - A. I Have Sinned (vv. 1–4)**
  - B. I Am a Sinner (vv. 5–9)**
- II. Restoration (vv. 10–13)**
- III. Praise (vv. 14–17)**
- IV. Intercession (vv. 18–19)**

# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 1** “Be gracious to me”: Tem  
misericórdia de mim

- **Confession and forgiveness are both based upon the reality of God’s grace.**

***Unmerited favor.***

# Understanding Psalm 51

## **vv. 1–2** Three Words for Forgiveness

- **“Blot out”**: *apaga* = metaphor of erasing from a book—accounting.
- **“Wash”**: *Lava-me* = metaphor of laundry.
- **“Cleanse”**: *purifica-me* = metaphor of ritual cleansing.
- **Totality and absoluteness.**
- **Reverse order in verses 7–9.**



# Understanding Psalm 51

## **vv. 2–3** Three Words for Sin

- **“Transgressions”**: transgressões = rebellion against divine authority.
- **“Iniquity”**: iniquidade = perversion and guilt.
- **“Sin”**: pecado = falling short of God’s holiness.
- **Totality of sin and its absolute wickedness.**

# Understanding Psalm 51

- v. 3** “my sin is ever before me”: o meu pecado está sempre diante de mim
- **The natural consequences of sin are pervasive and often permanent.**
  - **Many times the effects are exhibited in one's own family.**





# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 4** “Against You, You only”: Contra ti,  
contra ti somente

- Sin is anti-God.
- Even when it is committed against someone else, it is rebellion against God.
- See 2 Samuel 12:13,  
**Então disse Davi a Natã: “Pequei contra o SENHOR.”**

# James 4

**11** Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, **speaks against the law** and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge *of it*.

**12** There is *only one Lawgiver and Judge*, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 5** “in sin my mother conceived me”:  
em pecado me concebeu minha mãe

- **About the psalmist's sin nature, not about his mother's morality.**
- **Biblical foundation for doctrine of original sin.**
- **David's confession: a sinner since conception.**
  - ***What implications does this have for the abortion debate?***

# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 7** “hyssop”: hissope

- Hyssop was a small plant that grew in rocky crevices in Palestine.
- Employed like a brush in purification ceremonies in the Old Testament.
  - Exodus 12:22
  - Leviticus 14:4–6
  - Numbers 19:18



# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 10** “Create in me a clean heart”: Cria em mim

- “Created” [criou] in Genesis 1:1.
- Creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing)? Compare Romans 7:18,  
**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not.**
- Reference to the miraculous nature of what God must do.

# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 11** “do not take Your Holy Spirit from me”: não retires de mim o teu Espírito Santo

- **Loss of salvation?**
- **1 Samuel 16:13–14,**

**Then Samuel . . . anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. . . . 14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.**

# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 11** “do not take Your Holy Spirit from me”: não retires de mim o teu Espírito Santo

- David was aware that God had not taken the Holy Spirit from him in spite of his grievous sins.
- Verse 12 should be conclusive:  
“Torna a dar-me a alegria da tua salvação.”

# **Understanding Psalm 51**

## **vv. 13–17**

**“The proof of the forgiveness described in Psalm 32:7–9 is found in the altered heart attitudes depicted in [Psalm 51] verses 13–17.**

**“This changed attitude is evident in verses 18–19, too.”**

**—James Montgomery Boice**



# Understanding Psalm 51

**v. 13** “I will teach transgressors Your ways”: Então ensinarei aos transgressores os teus caminhos

- Psalm 32 may have been a partial fulfillment of David’s vow.
- A writing ministry or dealing with people one-on-one to help others escape sinful living.

# Understanding Psalm 51

## **vv. 18–19** David's Intercession

- David recognized the effects his sins had on his own nation.
- He prays for the nation and for God's blessing.
- Intercession is another ministry that every restored sinner can and must do.

# **Preaching/Teaching**

## **Psalm 51**

- **God desires that we confess our sins.  
Cp. 1 John 1:9.**
- **Sin affects us, our family, and our  
community.**
- **God's disciplinary measures are  
aimed at our restoration.**