

Lesson III.

DAVID'S CONFESSION

October 18, 1903

Ps. 51 : 1-17. Study vs. 1-19. Commit to memory vs. 1-4.

Read 2 Sam. chs. 11, 12.

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

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.

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.

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

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

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

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

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.

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.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

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

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

Revised Version—1 that which is; 2 mayest; 3 with a; 4 delightest not in; 5 thou hast no pleasure.

EXPLANATION

Connection—The origin of the Psalm is given in Time and Place, which see. [Note the peculiar "parallelism" of the parts of each verse, the same thought with a different shade of meaning. This is characteristic of Hebrew poetry.]

1-3. Have mercy; the compassion of God for the sinful and helpless. Mercy is the great need of the guilty. Lovingkindness; a beautiful word, teaching that the fountain of God's kindness to His people is His personal love toward them. Multitude of thy tender mercies. God's compassion is abundant (Isa. 63: 7; 1 Pet. 1: 3), and infinitely tender. Transgressions . . . iniquity . . . sin; three words used to describe sin, the first word meaning rebellion against God, the second, turning aside from the right path, the third, missing the end which God would have us seek. Every sin has these three features. Blot out; as a debt written on a slate might be wiped out. Wash; a prayer to be made clean, even as garments are washed; "but not my garments, but me," says David. Cleanse; as from the impurity of leprosy (see 2 Kgs. 5: 10-14), a deeper cleansing than the washing away of outward filth. We have thus three words for pardon, as for sin. I acknowledge. God knew David's sin all the time? His Holy Spirit, through Nathan, had made David conscious of it.

4-6. Thee, thee only. David's sin against Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 12: 9) was also a sin against God. For the moment he can think only of how he has offended his Lord. Mayest be justified (Rev. Ver); vindicated as a just judge. When thou speakest; condemning my sin. Shapen in iniquity. We come into the world with a sinful nature. Truth; instead of sin, which leads men to deceive themselves and others, and try to deceive God. The inward parts; "the most secret springs of thought and will." Wisdom; to see clearly what is right and wrong.

7-9. Purge me with hyssop. Hyssop, a common herb which grew on walls, was used as a sprinkler in cleansing the leper, Lev. 14: 4-7. This was the outward sign of cleansing. David wants to be made

pure within. Whiter than snow. Compare Isa. 1: 18; Rev. 7: 14. Joy and gladness; which sin always destroys. Which thou hast broken. David likens his grief at God's displeasure to the crushing of his body. Hide thy face. "Treat me as if I had not sinned." (See Isa. 38: 17.)

10-12. A clean heart. If the life is to be right, the heart must be pure. A right spirit; "a steadfast spirit," so that the heart may be kept clean.

Cast me not away; as Saul for his sin had been banished from God's presence, 1 Sam. 16: 1. Thy holy spirit; given to David at his anointing (1 Sam. 16: 13) and which he was now afraid of losing.

Free spirit; the spirit of willingness to obey God's commandments.

13-17. Then will I teach; because he himself has been made glad and strong by God's mercy. Converted; turned. Bloodguiltiness. David was guilty of Uriah's blood (see 2 Sam. 11: 15). Righteousness. God is righteous even in showing mercy. Christ bore the punishment of sin, that we might have the forgiveness. Open thou. Both the reason for praise, and the power to praise come from God. Desirest not sacrifice. Animal sacrifices express penitence, obedience, thanksgiving. Where these were lacking, God set no value on the sacrifices. A broken and a contrite heart; a heart in which the Spirit of God has changed pride and obstinacy into humility and penitence.



The Penitent King