

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Overwhelmed

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10

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Help, I'm Guilty

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 51



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Good morning, church family. It's good to see you. Another good morning to you. I'm glad you're here. If you're here in the room, if you're joining us online, we're grateful that you've joined us this morning. We're continuing our series through a series called Overwhelmed, where we're looking at different feelings, emotions, things that we go through that can be overwhelming to us. We looked at fear, looked at being forsaken. And last week, looked at anxiety. This morning, we're thinking about guilt. The title of the sermon, Help, I Am Guilty. So thinking about guilt and thinking about what God has to say about it, that's what we want to do this morning.

Guilt is an interesting thing. We use the word in different ways, where you can be pronounced guilty. Sort of like a judgment where it's decided that you are in the wrong. You can feel guilty, where you just had this sense that you are in the wrong that you've done something that you shouldn't have done. You can feel guilty before God, feeling that you've sinned against God. You can even have false guilt, where you feel guilt that you shouldn't, or maybe you feel guilty about a sin that you've committed in your past. And you've confessed it before God and it's forgiven, but you carry it with you. Or maybe it's the sin of someone else that you carry guilt for. All of those things are real and things that we can experience and they're things that we can be overwhelmed by. And so this morning, I want to think about guilt. What is our true guilt? Are we guilty? And what does God have to say about it? And maybe most importantly, what hope does he have to offer us in the face of our guilt?

This morning, we're going to look at Psalm 51. That's where we're going to be this morning. It's a well-known Psalm to some of you. And it's a unique Psalm in that we have a little bit more context to the Psalm than we do most others. We get this information in the superscript above the Psalm. So the little description of the Psalm before the Psalm that describes a little bit about it. And so a lot of Psalms have that kind of description up there, but very few give us this much information. It says, "This is a Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba." So that's pointing to something that happened in David's life in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, where it's an absolute low point in David's life.

In general, David was a good King. He was a godly man. In fact, the Bible says that he was a man after God's own heart. But this unique event in his life is a real downturn where he turns astray and he does some terrible things. You can read about it in 2 Samuel chapter 11 and 12. But essentially he sees a beautiful woman from the rooftop of his palace and it says in 2 Samuel 11:4, "So David sent messengers and took her and she came to him and he lay with her. Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness, and then she returned to her house and the woman conceived and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'" So David's in trouble here. This is a married woman, and he's done something that he knows is wrong. But instead of trying to make it right, or instead of confessing it before God, he decides he's going to try to cover over it.

And so he calls Uriah to come back home, her husband and so he's wanting them to be together so that his sin will be covered over, but that doesn't work. And so he sends Uriah back to the front lines with a note to his commanding officer that says, "Put Uriah in the front line in the heaviest part of the fighting, and then

pull back from him and let him die.” And so Uriah dies and word gets back to Bathsheba and she mourns. And then when she’s done with her season of mourning, David brings her into his house and makes her one of his wives and he thinks all is covered over.

Then Nathan, the prophet comes to David and tells him a parable. And God uses that parable to reveal to David his guilt, that it’s not covered over. And that his sins have risen to God like a stench. And he feels the weight of his guilt. He’s swept over with conviction and Psalm 51 is his response. And so it’s raw with emotion and it’s intense. And I’m going to read the first five verses in just a second here, but let me pray first, before we get into the word.

Heavenly Father, would you be with us now? Use your word, I pray, to speak to us. God, reveal yourself to us, reveal your heart, reveal our guilt, and reveal the hope that you have promised us. God, would you help us this morning to understand what your word is saying? Spirit guide us into all truth. I pray in Jesus name, amen.

So David, Psalm 51:1, he’s responding to Nathan. This guilt has come upon him and this is what he says. He says, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

We’re going to work all the way through Psalm 51 this morning, and I want to use three questions to make our way through it. The first question that I want to look at together that I want you to write down is, am I guilty? Am I guilty? David doesn’t just feel guilty here, David is guilty. David has done something wrong. In fact, he’s done many things wrong and he rightly begins the Psalm by pleading with God for mercy. He’s asking God to do something that he knows he does not deserve. Mercy is unmerited, but he’s asking God to treat him in a way that he knows he doesn’t deserve to be treated. He says, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”

Now, notice that David appeals to God’s steadfast love and not his own character. So he doesn’t say, “Have mercy on me because I’ve been such a good king up to this point. Have mercy on me because I’ve really tried to follow you up to this point. Have mercy on me because of my past performance.” No, he says, “Have mercy on me according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy.” He points to the character of God. He appeals to the character of God. He goes on to say in verse two, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Now, David has used the words, transgressions, iniquity, and sin to describe his guilt. He knows he has done wrong. And his guilt is this constant and heavy burden. Now, listen to how he describes it in verse 3, “For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.” That’s a good description of the way that we experience guilt sometimes. “I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.” Sometimes our sins can take on a life of their own and they follow us around and they seem to be ever present in our thinking. It can be overwhelming.

He goes on in verse four to say, “Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.” Now, what does he mean by that? These are probably the hardest words to understand in this first section. Surely others were hurt by David’s sin. Uriah is dead. Bathsheba was taken advantage of by someone in power. Did he not sin against them? Well, of course he did. But his sin was greater than that. Ultimately, his sin was against God.

When he took Uriah’s life, he took the life of a man who was created in the image of God himself. When he took advantage of Bathsheba, he took the power and authority that God had given him, that God had given him so that he could protect the people, and he used it instead to abuse the people. His sin was against his creator. He had violated his God. He had sinned against a holy God, betrayed his creator, which is why David admits that God was blameless in his judgment. When Nathan the prophet went to David, he pronounced all these judgements and these consequences that were going to come from his sin. And David is saying, “You’re justified in your judgments. What you’re saying about me is true.” David’s saying, “God, I agree. I see my sin. I see that your judgment of me is right. I am guilty.”

Finally, in these verses of confession, it sort of crescendos in verse 5, where he says, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” In other words, David is confessing that he hasn’t just committed this one sin, this isn’t some aberration or some rare occurrence. He’s saying, “What has come from me has come from the deepest parts of my heart. This is who I am. I haven’t just like stumbled at this one time, I am a sinner, born this way, conceived in iniquity. This is who I am.” David is confessing his sin and his sin nature. What I want you to see here is that the path to freedom from our guilt begins with acknowledging it. And I think that seems counterintuitive to us, but it’s the first clear lesson of Psalm 51, that we must confess our true guilt before God.

The Bible teaches clearly that we are all guilty. Romans 3:23, a well-known verse says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” But that’s really the tamest part of the whole chapter. Earlier in chapter 3, it starts in verse 10 saying, “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

God is very clear with us, that we are guilty. We have sinned against him, but our instinct is to deny it. We think that if we can cover over our guilt, the way that David did, or if we can deny it or justify it away, then we can have peace. But that is a lie. There is no peace to be found in covering over your guilt. You can’t cover

it with enough good works. You can't cover it with enough justification. There's no way for you to cover the guilt that we have amassed in our hearts.

Listen to how David describes what's going on inside his heart when he refuses to confess his sin in Psalm 32:3-5. He's talking about a time when he was refusing to confess. He says, "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night, your hand was heavy upon me. My strength was dried up as by the heat of the summer." He's talking about the weight that he was carrying when he refused to confess his sin and the conviction of God was heavy upon him. He says it was rotting him from the inside. His bones were wasting away. His strength was sapped. And so he turns, verse five, "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."

If you want freedom from guilt that begins with confession. The first point of application that I want you to write down this morning is let's confess our guilt before a merciful God. Let's confess our guilt before a merciful God. And all those words are important. You would only want to confess your sin if God is truly merciful.

This leads to our second question. The first question, am I guilty? Now, the second question is, am I forgiven? Am I forgiven? David has confessed. His sin acknowledged his present failure and his sin nature. And then verse 6 starts with a contrast between David's failure and God's expectations. So think about where we just came from verse 5, where David is confessing his sin and saying, "Not only have I sinned, but I am a sinner. My heart is polluted." That's what he's saying. Verse 6 says, "Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being." He's confessing. "God, I know that what you delight in is righteousness. I know you delight in truth in the inward being, and I know that's not what I have done."

He's confessing this gap between what God is expecting, what God is desiring and what he has done. He goes on to say, "You teach me wisdom in the secret heart." David is confessing, "I knew that what was right." But David is rejecting what God has taught him. He confesses that he rejected it. He confesses the sin, he acknowledges the righteous requirement of God, and so he's left with only one thing to do. There's this great chasm between what God wants and what he delights in and what David is. And so he does the only thing that he can do, he pleads for mercy, he asks for forgiveness where he says, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." He's saying, "God restore me, cleanse me, forgive me." This language, "purge me with hyssop" is referring to a ceremonial cleansing.

In Leviticus and Numbers, there were these ceremonies that they had to do to restore their cleanliness so they could worship with the people of God. If they were in contact with someone who had leprosy, or if they were in contact with a dead body, they were considered unclean according to the law. And so they had to go through this ceremonial cleansing in order to rejoin the people of God in their worship, and in the process required a blood sacrifice where blood was spilled by a sacrifice, and then they would take a hyssop branch,

which is like a scraggly sort of bush. They would dip the end of that hyssop branch into the blood and they would sprinkle it on the person that was unclean. They would do that seven times, and then the priest would declare that person clean, clean before God.

This is what David has in mind, “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.” This is what David has in mind, “Cleanse me God.” Now hyssop pops up repeatedly in the Bible. Hyssop is what they use in Exodus to spread the blood over the doorframes when the angel of death was coming, and they put the blood on their doorframes so that he would pass over their homes and not kill their firstborn. And then it comes up again in Leviticus and Numbers in these cleansing ceremonies. Ultimately, we see it again in John chapter 19, when Jesus is hanging on the cross. And if you pay attention to the details there, John says that the soldiers took a hyssop branch with a sponge on the end of it and they dipped it in red wine and they held it up to Jesus. Think of imagery that John is trying to communicate there. Blood, red wine dripping from the end of a hyssop branch saying, “This is how you are cleansed. This is how you are purified whiter than snow.” His asking that God would remove the stains of his sin.

David writes in Psalm 103:10-14, “He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far to see remove our transgressions from us. And as a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him for. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.”

God is a forgiving and merciful God, and David is asking, “Purify me, forgive me, remove my sinful stains.” So what will this restoration look like? This is what he goes on to describe in the next few verses, verse 8, “Let me hear joy and gladness. So instead of this lingering presence of my sin, let me rejoice, let the bones that you have broken rejoice, hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.” He’s saying, “God, see my sin no more.” Verse 10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” He’s asking God to give him a new heart, not just patch over or cover over the one that’s broken, but God give me a new, clean heart. Verse 11, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

Full restoration is what he’s asking for, and a promise to help him walk in future obedience. “Lord sustain me, help me, uphold me with a willing spirit.” In other words, he’s repenting, he’s turning from his sin, he’s turning to God. He wants God to help him to walk in faithfulness. “Help me to turn to you and never turned back.” How is all that possible though? God is just. And so how does he just blot out these sins? How does he make it so that he just sees them no more? How can that be?

What David has done is horrifying, so how can a God of justice and righteousness just cover that up? How can he do that? Well, Colossians 2:13 and 14 tells us, “And you ... ” It says, “ ... who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us of all our

trespasses.” How does he do that? Verse 14, “By canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

How does God cover over our sins? How does he cancel our debt? He has nailed them to the cross. He paid for it in our place. This is the good news. This is the gospel that we talk about weekend and week out. Gospel just means good news. And the good news is this, is that Jesus has canceled the record of our debt with its legal demands, he set it aside, he nailed it to the cross. He lived the life that you and I could never live. He was righteous before God, the Father in every way. And then he died the death that you and I deserve to die on the cross. And he did it in our place so that his righteousness could be given to us and our sin could be placed on him, and the record of our debt canceled.

And then God, the Father raised him from the dead to show us that sin and death had been defeated. This is the good news. The way that you get this righteousness and you have these sins removed is by putting your faith in Jesus Christ alone, trusting in him and in his work, what he has done in your place. You put your trust in it, and God says you can be forgiven. Will you put your faith in him?

This is the good news. This is the gospel. And some of you think, “Daniel, I already know the gospel.” And you may know it, but do you believe it? Are you believing it in all of its fullness? Are you believing it to the point that you’re confident in this moment that you are washed whiter than snow? Do you believe it in those moments right after you fall into some sin? Do you believe it when you haven’t done your quiet time or haven’t earned God’s favor? Is there some sin in your past that haunts you? Do you imagine that God hasn’t fully gotten over that one, or some season of your life that you think God must look back and not truly forgive you for that?

If you have a nagging sense of shame and guilt, I would encourage you to dig deeper into the gospel. He canceled the record of debt that stood against you with its legal demands, he set it aside, he nailed it to the cross. Do you believe it? I’m not asking if you know it, I’m asking if you believe it. Has it penetrated your heart and mind to the point that it is your identity? Cleansed whiter than snow, forgiven, accepted, favored. Not because of anything that you have done, but because of what Christ has done. Do you believe it?

Sometimes it’s hard to believe that we could really be forgiven. Sometimes it’s hard to believe this radical forgiveness that God offers us. It is our instinct to feel that we need to earn it in some way. So let’s write down, write down this second application point this morning. “Let’s preach the gospel to ourselves every day and ask God for greater faith to believe it in all its fullness. Let’s preach the gospel to ourselves every day and ask God for greater faith to believe it in all its fullness.”

We’ve asked the questions, am I guilty and am I forgiven? And the last question I think we should ask this morning as we work through the last part of Psalm 51 is, am I grateful? Am I grateful? Verse 13 shifts to David’s response. He says, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will return to you.” When



is he talking about? When is then? It's when he's been restored. It's when the joy of his salvation has returned, then he will encourage others to turn back to God in repentance. His response to God's restoration is going to be to plead with others to run to God to find the same restoration.

Verse 14, "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise." He's going to call his fellow sinners to repent, and then he's going to worship and praise the God of his salvation. Verse 16, "For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." And what does he mean there? Is he saying that God won't be pleased with the sacrifices that he has demanded? It was God who had instructed the people to make sacrifices. So what is David saying? He's saying that God does not want one without the other. God doesn't want empty, heartless acts of religious duty. And God doesn't mean for us to approach him with sacrifices and works to try to earn this forgiveness.

So often, we get that backwards. So often, we think, "I want God's forgiveness, so let me do a few things to earn it. I know I can't earn it all the way. I know he has to be merciful to me, but I can do some things. I can sit in my guilt for a while or I can try to do good works. I can try to volunteer more. I could try to give more money." David says, God doesn't delight in those kinds of sacrifices. What God delights in is a broken and contrite heart. A heart that recognizes we have nothing to bring, and a heart that pleads to God for mercy. What God wants is not empty religious acts, but he wants our hearts. He wants our heart to turn from sin and turn back to him.

In these last two verses, David shows us the proper order. David as the king turns now to the nation. He's aware that his sin might have a ripple effect among the people and weaken the nation that he's called to lead, so he prays for God's blessing. Look at the order he does it. Verse 18, "Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar." In other words, he appeals to God's good character, "Do good to Zion in your good pleasure." Do it because you're a good God. And then we will make sacrifices out of thanksgiving. We will respond to you. We will respond to your mercy by praising you and making sacrifices. Not the other way around. We can't earn your goodness and your mercy through the sacrifices. We're going to respond with the sacrifices.

The application here is for us to examine our lives and ask whether or not we're living in a manner worthy of the gospel, the good news that we have received, God has expressed his mercy to us. Are we responding with worship and praise? Are you living in the freedom of forgiveness and enjoying God's gifts? And if so, how are you living in response to those gifts? How should we respond to this gift? Well, we should teach sinners his ways. We should encourage them to turn back to God. We should share the good news with everyone we come in contact with. We should offer our lives in obedience to God in joy. Our mouth should be filled with praise.



The last point of application I want you to write down this morning is, let's respond to God's grace with joyful obedience and praise. Let's respond to God's grace with joyful obedience and praise. I spend a lot of time this week thinking about why we don't do this. Those of us who have been here for a while and we believed in Christ and we're enjoying the fruit of this salvation. Why is this not the nature that marks our lives? Lips filled with praise, always teaching centers to turn back to him.

I think we fail to understand or believe the depths of God's forgiveness. I think there's some part in so many of our hearts that thinks I'm still earning it, I'm still doing my part, and so our praises and our gratitude fall short because we don't recognize how utterly helpless we really were and how completely dependent upon his mercy we are.

And think about the picture that David paints in Psalm 103, where he talks about how God has compassion towards us like a father has compassion for his children. So God is teaching us something about his character there and teaching us about the nature of this forgiveness. Think about how he goes on, he describes how we know that. He says, "For the Lord remembers our frame. He knows our frame and he remembers that we are dust."

What David is saying in Psalm 103 is that God sees our weakness, not only does he see it, but he is familiar with it. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are, but dust. And yet he's not repelled from us. He sees our weakness, he sees our failures, he sees our sin, and he's not pushed away. Instead, it says, he has compassion for us like a father has compassion for his children. In other words, he's drawn to us in our weakness.

When my kids were a little bit younger, they used to conspire together to try to wake me up in the middle of the night every night. I have three kids and I'm convinced they had some sort of rotation, where they would take turns waking me up in the middle of the night because they needed something. And if we're all being honest here together, that's not like my finest hour. Being woken up in the middle of the night, I don't enjoy that at all. I don't appreciate any part of it. In fact, if one of you were to wake me up in the middle of the night, we may need some sort of counseling or reconciliation.

I'm the kind of person that really values his sleep and thinks about the consequences of losing sleep like days out in advance. Does anybody else do that? "I'm going to feel terrible on Wednesday because I lost sleep to-night." I do that sort of thing. But something unique would happen in my heart when one of my three kids would wake me up in the middle of the night. I'd feel a little hand on my shoulder waking me up and I would turn and I would see one of their tiny faces there. And they would say something like, "Daddy, I'm afraid. Daddy, I need your help. Daddy, I had a bad dream." And instead of being annoyed, instead of wanting to push them away, instead, a switch would flip in my heart and I was immediately drawn to them because they were my child and they were coming to me in their moment of weakness saying, "I need help."

I believe God put that in our hearts so that we would understand what David is saying in Psalm 103. That when God sees us in our weakness, he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust and he is drawn to us.

What I used to do is I would pick them up and I would carry them to bed and I would put them back down in the bed and I would lay down next to them and I put my hand on their back until they fell asleep, because I wanted them to know that I was there. I wanted to lend them my strength in their weakness. And this is what David says about the heart of God. Like a father has compassion for his children, so God has compassion for us.

He knows our frame. He remembers that we are but dust and he is drawn to us instead of pushed away from us. This is why it says in John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God abounds in steadfast love. He abounds in mercy. And he says, "Come to me and confess and I will make you clean. Carry your guilt and shame no more, I've already carried it for you."

We're going to end our time this morning with a time of confession as a church where we can run to God by faith and confess our sins and believe deeply in his forgiveness. Let me say a prayer and then we'll share that moment together.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to read your word and to be encouraged by it. God, would you give us grace to believe that your promises are true, that your forgiveness is real, that the work that you have done is enough and there's nothing we can add to it? God, help us to rest in this forgiveness. Help us now to come by faith, to confess our sins before you, a merciful God. I pray you'd heal us when we do. I pray in Jesus name, amen.



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