

Fact Sheet for **“When You Sin Royally”**
Psalm 51

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All of us have messed up big-time in our pasts. How do you make that hard journey back into a right relationship with God? God has provided us with a great Psalm to that effect, Psalm 51

ESV Psalm 51 Superscription

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

The story behind this Psalm is found in 2 Samuel 11 & 12. One evening in Jerusalem King David, from his rooftop, saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired about her and was told that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. *David was already on a destructive course.* Now Uriah was away in battle. David sent for her and she became pregnant. To cover up his sin David sent to Joab, the commander, to have Uriah return to Jerusalem. David intended that Uriah would sleep with his wife, and the child would be assumed to be Uriah's. But Uriah didn't return home, even when David made him drunk. So David sent a sealed note *with Uriah* to Joab at the battle front.

ESV 2 Samuel 11:15 In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die."

So, Uriah was soon killed by the enemy. After Bathsheba mourned for her husband David sent and took Bathsheba as his wife. David thought that his sin had been covered up well. But God knew, and sent Nathan the prophet to confront David. And there were consequences (2 Samuel 12:10-14).

David continued in his plea to God.

**¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.**

**² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!**

David had sinned royally, and you can hear his cry to God in this Psalm.

Now be careful. Any sin, no matter how small, even if it is unintentional (Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15, 18; Numbers 15:27), needs a Savior. But all sin is still not equal. If you are convicted of armed bank robbery you will be labeled a felon, and will be in for a lengthy prison term. But if you are caught speeding you will get a ticket. It doesn't make us a felon or result in our incarceration.

**³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.**

Have you ever felt this way about your sin?

**⁴ 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.**

The New English Translation of this verse begins "Against you— **you above all**— I have sinned".

**⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.**

David knew that he had a sin nature from his very outset.

**⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**

Hyssop was used at religious ceremonies to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice, representing the removal of sin (See Hebrews 9:18-22).

**⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.**

Next we find words to a song that Keith Green made it popular.

**¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.**

The words of this song were obviously written by King David. But Shiloh Worship Music, which has ties to the Jesus movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's, holds the copyright to this music. The Jesus movement itself grew out of the Charismatic Movement, and was very influential in the creation of various groups such as Hillsong. The theological ancestry of Shiloh Worship Music includes the belief that we can lose our salvation. When someone sings this song with that theology verse 11 will shout to them, "Don't take salvation away from me!" Here are three questions.

1. What is good theology about the security of our salvation?

Christians are permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 1:13-14)! This doesn't fit with the theology that we can lose our salvation!

2. Should we not sing this song because of who holds the copyright to the music?

If you go down this path you should realistically do a historical study on every song you sing, kicking out any of them which are connected with people or organizations with errant theology. Or, you can look primarily at what the songs communicate. Is it truth? Here the words of this song are God-inspired scripture!

3. What does verse 11 really mean?

What was David thinking of? Do you remember when Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:13)? Look at the very next verse (1 Samuel 16:14). David knew this and was crying out to God not to depose him too!

Next David wrote words of his recommitment to God (*Read verses 13-17*). Then, as with many Psalms, David ends with a blessing on Jerusalem (*Read verses 18-19*). And although it bears no superscription connecting it to Psalm 51, many have thought that Psalm 32 could be a companion to it. I would encourage you to read that whole Psalm.

There is a way back when you sin royally. Psalm 51 is a great Psalm to meditate on when you are feeling the impact of your sin.