

Psalm 51:1-13ⁱⁱⁱ

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.

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

⁴Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.

⁵And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.

⁶Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁷For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

⁸Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

⁹Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

¹⁰Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹¹Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹²Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

¹³Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

iii About Psalm 51:1-13

This is one of the great penitential psalms. The psalm's title, added later, ascribes this psalm to David during the time of his repentance for the seduction of Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11:11-12:25).

The constant hope and the goal of the covenant people was to become a community in right relationship with God and one another. Sin identified whatever disordered relationships. The psalmist seeks not merely the removal of guilt, but the restoration of a right relationship to God. Verse 4 does not exclude sin against one's neighbor, for that was also understood as an offense against God because it broke down the covenant relationships desired by God.