

# Theological Analysis of Psalm 51

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**Abstract:** Psalm 51 is in “Book II of Psalms” (Reddy, 2020). In this study, the theological analysis of Psalm 51 reveals the nature of man in communicating with God. It has observed that all sins are against God, and there is a consequence to each sin committed. Man is exposed to know that, the “ultimately our sin is against a holy and righteous God.” Without restoration and renewal of the heart, a human being is in danger with God’s relationship. However, God accepts our pleas for forgiveness. The goal/objective of this study is to bring the readers into a focus of cultivating a sense of being alive to God; walking with him, engaging with him, having their hearts enlarged by him, building our intimacy-relationship with him, and finally help oneself to live with his/her Creator, God peacefully. The “Structural Analysis Method” and the “Whole-Book context” in general have been used so as to bring a coherence of theological themes of Psalm 51. In this study, extensive analysis is given, and life application for the study is determined and provided. Therefore, one need not live in guilt and shame forever. In other words, “Christians do not need to fear” (Sattesahn, 2008, p.25). Rather, we should take a further step of confessing our sin immediately when we discover that we have sinned against God. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John:9).

**Keywords<sup>6</sup>:** Psalm 51, Theological analysis, Sin, Forgiveness, Relationship with God, Confession.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Theological Reflection in Psalm 51 is what any human being may find himself/herself in court with the Creator, God. Bauer asserted that “The Psalms are a photograph album of ancient Israel in its relationship to God and a mirror of our own relationship and reaction to God who summons his people and promises his presence and secures the future” (Bauer, 2018). In this theological study, a teachable knowledge is centered from Psalm 51.

In this study, the purpose and goals/objectives are clearly stated; methods and background are all inserted in the introductory chapter, that is chapter one. Chapter two discusses extensively the structural analysis of Psalm 51; chapter three examines theological themes found in the Psalm. Chapter four is about application of the theological themes discovered in the psalm, and chapter five concludes the study. Also the study acknowledges all study sources gathered to make this research possible. However, with the purpose and objectives in mind, it is the researcher’s hope that, the knowledge of this theological study will bring change in the readers’ life, and become alive to his Creator, God, and finally seek to live him forever.

#### **1.1 The purpose**

The purpose of this study is to help enable a clear understanding of the scriptural passages with a focus on applying God’s truths to our lives individually and corporately (CGL, 2019).

#### **1.2 The goals/Objectives of the Research study**

The Goals or objectives of the study Psalms 51 is to be “Alive to God:” to show and cultivate a sense in the people/readers live for God, walking with him, engaging with him, having their hearts enlarged by him (CGL, 2019), and finally building their intimacy-relationship with him.

### 1.3 Specific Goals/Objectives

The specific goals or objectives for this study is to encourage the people/readers to (a) analyze David's experience of sin, its causes and effects on his life, family and public state, and the need for David's life (b) be open and transparent before the Lord in times of confession of sins; and (c) to remember that God's forgiveness is assured with honest confession because of Christ (CGL, 2019).

### 1.4 Methods

As Barentsen (1984) states, "The task of combining exegesis and theology is one of the most difficult but also one of the most fruitful challenges in biblical studies. It requires the interpreter to make detailed observations resulting from exegesis to yield theological conclusions while avoiding the proof-texting method typical of some systematic theologies." In order to allow necessary detail of the overall message of the Bible, a method of this research paper uses structural analysis as a tool for contextual analysis of the Psalm 51. The advantage of structural analysis is its assumption that human thought is organized; thus, an analysis of the structure of biblical texts should prove very helpful as a tool for biblical theology - as it's seen in "Appendix A" (Barentsen, 1984, p.248). In addition, Deibler (2021) states that,

Commentaries are also useful in this paper. This is because the *Semantic and Structural Analysis (SSA) commentaries* are designed to assist Bible translators and Bible translation consultants. Due to the careful attention to meaning at all levels of the discourse, they should also be useful for Bible scholars, teachers, preachers, and anyone interested in a thorough understanding of the biblical text. The analysis is firmly based on discourse linguistics and assumes that each of the Old and New Testaments books is an integrated whole. The analytical process involves a detailed study of the grammar, lexicon, and discourse structure of the Greek, intending to present the meaning of the text and the linguistic evidence on which the meaning is established (Deibler, 2021).

Furthermore, Whole-Book context is also developed in a wide array of Psalm 51. Accordingly Barentsen (1984) the structure of the psalm is analyzed, and an illustrative chart is adopted in order

to make more understanding of the relationships between the various constituents (i.e., divisions, subdivisions, etc.) of the psalm. This also helps to discover theological themes of the psalm (Barentsen, 1984, p.248). After the structural analysis, the contextual exposition of the psalm is briefly analyzed, and then theological themes are integrated and discussed so as to bring personal application to one's life.

### 1.5 Background

As Reddy (2020) stated, Psalm 51 is in Book II of the Book of Psalms. It is the first psalm of the second Davidic collection and is strategically located after Psalm 50. Psalm 51 is ascribed to David who wrote it when the prophet Nathan came to chastise him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is composed in the first person with David, the petitioner referring to God in the second person. It is a lament that begs God for mercy, confesses sin, and focuses on God's grace (Reddy, 2020, p.1). This penitential psalm has a considerable relationship with Psalm 32, which arose out of the same historical circumstances, reflecting a different time of composition, didactic in teaching sinners God's ways, and still fitting the same mold. The other traditional penitential psalms identified are Psalms 6, 38, 102, 130, and 143. Of these, Psalm 51 is perhaps one of the finest examples of a penitential psalm. Also McCabe (2016) comments this:

Of the seven historic penitential psalms (6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143), Psalm 51 is clearly associated with the subject of repentance. As Luther states, whoever first referred to this as a penitential psalm "knew what he was doing... Here the doctrine of true repentance is set before us." Many assume that repentance is a one-time action that takes place at conversion, like exercising initial saving-faith. However, this misunderstands the Bible's overall salvific message. In particular, Psalm 51 undermines this view since its content indicates that David is already a believer. As such, this suggests that repentance should be an aspect of a believer's growth in grace. Returning to Luther, in the first of his 95 theses, he further highlights the significance of repentance in a believer's life: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said 'Repent,' willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance." If there is any substance to Luther's words, this means that a significant part of our sanctification involves repentance (MacCabe, 2016, p.1). Thus, we can be confident with the relevance of theological themes found in Psalm 51 as given in this study (*emphasis mine*).

The Psalm 51 mirrors David's turmoil in guilt. However, it must be noted that the emotional flavor of Psalm 51 does not imply a lack of reflection. Again Dalglish, as noted by Barentsen (1984) states that, "his monumental work on this psalm, has pointed out many parallels with another ancient Near Eastern literature, Egyptian as well as Sumero-Akkadian" (Barentsen, 1984, p.249). Thus, it may be well that Psalm 51 belongs to a category of highly structured literature common throughout the ancient Near East; this kind of composition used certain traditional expressions to indicate submission to a superior and repentance on the part of a subordinate (Barentsen, 1984, p.249). But Barentsen, challenges Dalglish that, "if the Hebrew psalms of lamentation are indebted to the Sumero-Akkadian, they have in turn contributed their own most definitive creativity in their formulation." Thus, none of the theological biases of the ancient Mesopotamian religions need have influenced Hebrew common Psalmody. In addition, even if Psalm 51 follows a traditional pattern, that does not diminish the emotional value of the poem. Rather, it heightens the genius of the poet who was able to use certain set forms to convey such deep emotional struggles (Barentsen, 1984, p.249).

Nevertheless, the researcher does not devalue any of the above contributors. Rather, for seeking logical flow and theological themes, he mostly, concurs structurally with Barentsen's and Sattesahn's exhaustive expositions.

Psalm 51 is written by king David at the height of his power, the Psalm is both "*a poignant expression of repentance and a heartfelt request for God's forgiveness*" (O'Neal, 2018). Barentsen (1984) expresses his thoughts that "Many expositors of Psalm 51 (as well as of many other passages in Scripture) fail to account for the structure simply because they do not recognize it;" he scholarly criticizes Harrison's thoughts of rigidity analysis of the psalm's difficulties because of the emotional upheaval. However, he agrees that, "David intermingled and repeated the petitions which clamored for utterance." Of David, he says, "It is quite true that Psalm 51 is strongly

emotional, but this does not imply that the psalm was “blurted out” as it came to David’s mind” (Barentsen, 1984, p. 250).

Barentsen’s concern is against Dalglish’s approach of strophic structure in analyzing the literary features of Psalm 51 in the light of ancient Near Eastern parallels. Dalglish develops a strophic structure based on observations about the meter, and on this builds an outline to describe the logical flow of thought in the psalm. Barentsen however says that, “although this approach has certain validity, a more careful analysis can be done based on the internal coherence of the text. First, building an outline on the strophic structure is somewhat hazardous because of the uncertainties about meter and strophes in Hebrew poetry.” Instead, he suggests that, “an analysis of the parallelisms in the psalm is likely to yield more accurate results. Second, word repetition within the psalm is not accounted for in Dalglish’s method. But the repetition of key terms, coupled with the use of structural markers such as ‘therefore,’ ‘since,’ ‘and,’ and so on, is one of the more obvious tools available to the poet” (Barentsen, 1984, p.250). Although parallelism is preferred here, the objective of this research is not to seek intellectual competition on how one is superior to others. The study seeks to discuss David’s experiences of penitent prayer, and analyze theological themes found in the Psalm, so as to bring application that can lead to change the readers’ life.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF PSALM 51

#### 2.0 Structural Analysis by Barentsen and Auffret's Approach

##### 2.1 Structural Survey of Psalm 51

In Psalm 51, Barentsen states that, “there is little doubt that there are three main divisions in the psalm. Verses 1-2 are recognized as the title and setting, while verses 20-21 are generally seen as material extraneous to the psalm proper. Some even go so far as to state that the last two verses are a later liturgical addition; even if this is not true, it must be acknowledged that verses 20-21 manifest a shift in thought from the body of the psalm, verses 3-19 (Barentsen, 1984, p.250). With references from Auffret’s analysis, technically Barentsen explains that “the main body of the psalm rather easily falls into two sections. The shift of terminology from one section to the other is the clearest distinguishing feature of the two sections. Verses 3-9 are primarily concerned with sin, purity, and cleansing, while verses 12-19 are more concerned with restoration and renewal of heart and spirit.”

This survey of terminology shows that the movement of the psalm is from the *pardon of sin in verses 3-9* to the *restoration of the heart in verses 12-19* (italicized for mine emphasis). But the latter section also describes in considerable detail man’s reactions to God’s restoration. The theme, then, may be more appropriately identified as praise resulting from God’s restoration of the soul (Barentsen, 194, p.250).

So far, verses 10-11 have not been considered. These verses seem out of place, because verse 10 already is concerned with joy, the theme of verses 12-19, while verse 11 still cries out for forgiveness, the theme of verses 3-9. It is therefore reasonable to identify verses 10-11 as the hinge of the psalm. The main sections of the central division are therefore *3-9, 11 and 10, 12-19*

(italicized for *mine* emphasis). Now let us see the details of these two divisions given by Barentsen (1984).

(1) Within the first division the movement of thought is as follows: Verses 1-2 represent an exclamation of blessing in the third person singular. This marks them off from verse 3f, which are written in the first person singular. In addition, verses 3 and 4 start with the conjunction, which indicates a transition. Verse 3 may be interpreted as a time indicator, “when,” rather than an expression of cause or result. But the recurrence of the conjunction at the beginning of verse 4 shows that the relationship also has logical components. Thus, verses 1-2 appear to stand at the head of the first division.

The rest of the division, verses 3-5, 7, can be subdivided into two sections. This is mainly done on the semantic level. There is a clear contrast between verses 3-4 and verses 5 and 7. Verses 3-4 mention concepts like silence, judgment, and misery, while verses 5 and 7 contain the opposite concepts, those of confession, forgiveness, and deliverance. Thus, the first division is made up of three sections: verses 1-2, 3-4, and 5 and 7.

(2) The second division is structured differently. Verse 6 mentions the theme of deliverance and includes an exhortation to pray. Verses 8-11 also contain an exhortation to turn to God and mention the benefits thereof. Verse 6, then, is the introduction to verses 8-11.

Verse 13 starts with the declaration that David will teach sinners about the mercies of God. The rest of this section appears to be the content of the teaching. Verse 9 metaphorically warns those who do not turn to God; verse 10 uses the format of a proverb to state the basic principle on which the exhortations are based; and verse 11 repeats the principles of verse 9 in a positive manner. Thus, this second division is structured around David’s desire to teach others about God’s forgiveness.

Referring to Auffret’s knowledge, Barentsen has pointed out that the unity of the first section is maintained by parallelisms between 3-4 and 8-9 on the one hand, and 5-6a and 6b-7 on the other. The relationship between verse 4 and 9 is shown by the use of the same words. The relationship between verse 3 and 8 is through similar terms of verse 3 corresponding with verse 8. Thus the structure is parallel in an “a-b-a-b” pattern (Barentsen, 1984, p.251).

The internal structure of verses 5-7, however, is not parallel, but chiasmic. In verses 5 and 7 the first person singular is prominent in both independent pronouns and verbal forms, while in 6a-6b, the second person singular is more prominent (although one verb is still in first person by way of transition). The structure here is chiasmic in an “a-b-b-a” pattern (Barentsen, 1984, p.251-252).



Again, Barentsen (1984, p.252) shows that, the basis of unity in the second section is similar. Verses 12 and 19 have things in common, while verse 12 is relational to 19 ... reoccurs, and verse 13 is also relational to verse 18. Thus, verses 12-13, 18-19 form a unit and are arranged chiastically (a-b-b-a). Verses 14 and 16a have a relational share, while verse 15 ... also uses antonyms found in 16b, thus showing a parallel arrangement (a-b-b-a). Also the details of this is seen in "*Appendix B: The Barentsen's Constituent Organization of Psalm 51,*" page 37, whereas the illustration gives a full view of the methodological structure.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEOLOGICAL THEMES**

#### **3.0 Theological Themes**

From the above structural analysis, we can find theological themes that can give us lessons and application to our life. Now let us look and discuss theological themes found in Psalm 51.

#### **3.1 Communication with God**

In Psalm 51, God is a personal God with whom David can communicate in human language. David refers to Yahweh as “God” six times (verses 1, 10, 14 (twice), 17 (twice), as Lord once (verse 15) and as Holy Spirit once (verse 11). Psalm 51 is in the Elohist Psalter (Psalms 42-83) because these psalms use Elohim (God) instead of Yahweh (the covenantal LORD). David uses Elohim instead of Yahweh to communicate with non-Israelite people. According to Barentsen’s structural analysis, literary structure of Psalm 51 is given as follows:

- David asks God for Forgiveness (verses. 1-2)
- Concerns of Sin, purity and Cleansing (Verses 3-9,11)
- Restoration and Renewal of heart and Spirit (Verses 10, 12-19)

**Note:** verses 20-21 are extraneous material to the psalm proper.

#### **3.2 The Problem of Sin**

The examination of the movement of thought in verse 1-5 is that, “the man (David) has sinned and that he is aware of it. Then the sin is put in proper perspective: it is primarily directed against God. Turning his attention to God, David recognizes God’s judgment is just, while in contrast his own origins are in sin” (Barentsen, 1984, p.258). Adding to this, Sattesahn (2008) explains that, “unquestionably, the heart of the world’s problems is the sinfulness of man. But more than that, the source of each person’s problems is sin, most specifically, one’s own sin. Every Christian must set a watch over his own life. Once sin is made known to the heart, confession must follow

immediately” (Sattesahn, 2008, p.12). The apostle John declared, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

David certainly felt his sin and was ready to confess it.

Sattesahn (2008) identifies three Hebrew root words for sin (*ht'*, *pš'*, and *'wh*), which occur 959 times in the Hebrew Bible. Thirteen of those times are in Psalm 51. It is interesting to note that all three root words are used in the beginning of this psalm. They are “transgressions” (*pš'*), “iniquity” (*'wh*), and sin (*ht'*), which is an indication that David was aware of the gravity of his sin. Note again, the three words for sin used by David along with Hebrew understanding of these words in these opening verses are given by Sattesahn (2008):

(1) *My transgressions*. The Hebrew word used here means the willful breaking of a known law, the deliberate overstepping of a well-marked boundary. This is rebellion against authority, unwillingness to stay within the limits laid down by God for men. Such deliberate disobedience is blameworthy, for no irresponsibility is implied. The rebellious spirit is deserving of punishment.

(2) *Mine iniquity*. This word indicates that which is not in conformity with a standard. It is the opposite of righteousness. Instead of being true, or correct, the deed is warped, awry, and askew. The parallel English word “*wrong*” is related to the word “*wring*,” indicating that which is twisted out of shape. Iniquity is therefore that which is perverted, disregarding the norms and standards of right living.

(3) *My sin*. Here is the word which means to miss the mark, or miss the path. It is error, though not accidental. It is failure to arrive at the goal, failure to achieve, failure to live in ways that God requires. Commonest of all the kinds of sin, it is nevertheless equally devastating in its result, for the sinner just does not arrive where he is supposed to be (Sattesahn, 2008, pp. 12-13).

Again, Sattesahn (2008) adds that, there are some translations that render the word sin or transgression as “offense” or “wicked.” This word however carries the connotation of rebellion. In verse 1, the psalmist appeals to God’s compassion to blot out any rebellion. In verse 3, there is an honest acknowledgment of the personal nature of this revolt. Still the rebellious psalmist can use this experience to lead back others in revolt against God (verse 13; Sattesahn, 2008, p. 13).

The wrong for which David seeks forgiveness is not some simple shortcoming. It is rather

complex with a series of sins, following one upon another with inevitable consequences, piling up as it were until the psalmist can no longer maintain his self-respect. Unable to bear the weight of these sins, and in desperate submission, he throws himself upon the mercy of God. David begs that the loving-kindness that God had revealed to the prophet (i.e., Nathan) may effectively bring relief to his troubled conscience. It is because God is merciful and full of loving-kindness that the sinner dares plead forgiveness. A righteous God demands righteousness in men, and this man has fallen short. The sin is so vivid in the mind of David and he senses how unethical he became that all of it was in violation of God's righteous character (Sattesahn, 2008, p. 13).

In Verses 3-4, we see how the verses open with the acknowledgment that David knew his sin; thus, he exposes his guilty conscience. The acknowledgement of verses 3 and 4 is the condition of divine forgiveness; all sin, in essence, is committed against God. Therefore, God demands that the transgressions be acknowledged, placing the blame where it rightfully belongs - on the perpetrator. He cannot and, in fact, will not, forgive sin that is not acknowledged and for which no responsibility is taken (verse 3). While David's sin were against Bath-Sheba, her husband Uriah, and all of Israel, still, the ultimate direction of sin, perfected by Satan, is always against God. All sin is departure from God's ways to man's ways (verse 4; *The Expositor's Study Bible*, 2013, p.922).

Verse 5 reads, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." This reflection upon God's nature turns the psalmist to consider his own nature. This is not saying that some stigma of sin was attached to him from birth, but rather, as a member of the human race, he is subject to the pollution that characterizes all men, whereby "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). As the Apostle Paul said in the New Testament, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; Sattesahn, 2008, pp.13).

Unequivocally, the verse proclaims the fact of original sin. This passage states that all are born in sin, and as a result of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden. When Adam, as the federal head of the human race, failed, this means that, all who would be born would, in effect, be born lost (The Expositor's Study Bible, 2013, p.922).

The sinful origin of humanity after Adam is in view as the psalmist's statements transcend his personal realm. Somehow, "natural generation inevitably produces corrupt human nature. God's just nature and man's sinful origin are set in contrast. Note that, we have moved from men and God's reaction to sin in verses 3 and 4 to the underlying reason: God hates sin because he is just, and man sins because he is a sinner. As a result of this, the second man, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, had to come into this world, in effect, God becoming Man, to undo what the original Adam did. He would have to keep the law of God perfectly, which he did, all as our substitute, and then pay the penalty for the terrible sin debt owned by all of mankind, for all had broken the law, which he did by giving himself on the Cross of Calvary (John 3:16). To a human being, the key to an acknowledgment of sin is first, the admission that sin is directed primarily against God, and second, that this enmity has its foundation in the opposite natures of God, which is just and that of man, sinful. To escape the judgement of original sin, man must be "born again," which is carried out of the believing sinner expressing faith in Christ and what Christ did at the Cross (John 3:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; The Expositor's Study Bible, 2013, p.922).

### **3.2.1 The Cause of Sin**

To make clear the reader understand the Bible passage on David's sense of experience on sin, again, the researcher analyzes David's situation, mostly using Sattesahn's knowledge.

Sattesahn (2008, p.9-10) states that, before looking at what David prayed for in his prayer of repentance, a question that should be answered is why did he pray this prayer? What was it that causes him to do so?" This biblical drama opens from the scriptural account in second Samuel

chapters 11-12 as David, feeling pleasure at the news that his armies have defeated Ammon and Rabbah, strolls onto his rooftop balcony to enjoy an afternoon of sun. As he looks down from his rooftop, the beauty of a woman bathing erotically stirs him. Bathsheba is bathing in full view. Some have pointed the finger at Bathsheba, suggesting that she seduced David by bathing where the king was sure to notice her. This makes Bathsheba, not David, responsible for the king's inability to control his erotic urges. Even if Bathsheba behaved in a way to arouse the king's passions, King David is fully responsible for what he does. Despite her beauty, Bathsheba does not have the ability to cause the king to lose all sense of control and responsibility any more than Goliath had the ability to cause David to be afraid. David is now abusing his power, being a well-known public figure and a ruler of the nation. He is getting what he wants. He is deceiving himself about the implications of his seduction on his life, Bathsheba's life, and the nation's life. David is blind to the long-term consequences that lay in wait for him. Even though he learns that she is married to one of his generals, he sends after her for sex, and then sends her home again. David's little seduction produces more and bigger problems. Bathsheba is pregnant, and she sends a word to the king (Sattesahn, 2008, p.9-10).

Again, Sattesahn (2008) exposes this; David concocts a plan to free himself from the consequences of his indiscretion. He calls Bathsheba's husband Uriah home from the battle with the expectation that Uriah would have an intimate affair with his wife. Uriah would have then become the scapegoat for Bathsheba's pregnancy. To David's surprise, Uriah refuses to go home to his wife to sleep, saying that he cannot indulge himself in such pleasures while his men are left in the battlefield. He said, "The Ark and the armies of Israel and Judah are living in tents, and Joab and his officers are camping in the open fields. How could I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife? I swear that I will never be guilty of acting like that" (2 Samuel 11:11 NLT), so he slept outside on the cold hard ground, not at home with his wife (Sattesahn, 2008, p.10).

David resorts to making him drunk, yet Uriah still resists the comfort of his wife's bed, sleeping instead with other officers bivouacked outside the palace. David panicked, which is a common reaction when saving face becomes the issue. Sin was still growing. He remembered the crafty way Saul had tried to kill him. He instructs Uriah to deliver a letter to his commanding officer, instructing the officer to place Uriah in the front lines where fighting is fiercest and let him be killed there. Uriah is doomed. In the battle, many innocent soldiers die needlessly, but David is pleased because Uriah is among those killed. On hearing the news of her husband's death, Bathsheba laments. After her period of mourning is over, David sends for her, and she becomes his wife. Their son is born and it appears as though David's cover-up, though terrible in price, will succeed (Sattesahn, 2008, p.10).

For clarity of this, James gives us the nature of human temptation on the erotic urges that, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin" (James 1:14-15). Verse 14 here, speaks "the temptation to sin appeals to a moral defect in us. Even in the best, for none are perfect and verse 15 speaks of evil lust, as these temptations do not come from God, but from the appetites of man's sinful nature, which is a result of the fall" (The Expositor's Study Bible, 2013, p.2145).

Almost a year passed, during which time David covered his sins. However, he became weak and sick physically; he lost his joy; he lost his witness; he lost his power. God gave David plenty of time to make things right, but he persisted in hiding his sins. Had he come to the Lord on his own, in sincere repentance, things might have been different later on. While David did not have a Parliament, Congress, or a Supreme Court to hold him accountable, he did have the "close oversight" of God through the prophet Nathan. It is at this point that Nathan, the prophet and David's chief advisor, comes to chastise David. Nathan confronts the king indirectly, recounting the story of a wealthy man who, in order to feed a stranger, raids a poor man of his one treasured

possession, a sheep, rather than use a sheep from his own abundant flock. David flies into a rage at hearing this story, declaring that the rich man should pay the poor man four times over. Further, David declares the rich man deserves to die because he lacked pity for his poor neighbor. Nathan did not soften the blow. Nathan responds to David's rage with the powerful indictment, "That man is you!" We must commend David for bowing to the authority of the Word of God and confessing his sin. He could have slain Nathan. David found a spiritual person who would see and name what he had done (Sattesahn, 2008, p.10).

Maré (2008) clarifies David's situation that, "He also recognizes that his sin, which hurt another human being, is ultimately a sin against God. Not only has he caused social harm by means of murder and adultery, but his actions were particularly evil before God. In essence, sin is not a moral, social, ethical or psychological problem; it is a theological problem, a violation of the relationship with Yahweh. Ultimately, when humans sin they will have to deal with God" (Maré, 2008, p. 97).

David's punishment, Nathan tells him, will be public calamity in his own family, and the death of the son born to Bathsheba. At this moment of awareness and calamity, the ascription implies, David brings his sins before God, struggles with his passions and the deep grief he feels, and composes Psalm 51 (Sattesahn, 2008, p.10). A question, what are the causes of David's Sin?

### **3.2.2 The external and internal causes of sin**

Yakobe (2013) introduces us how sometimes people do have external influences to do some things which they could not do before. In such situations every person who has done that particular thing is responsible for his acts. We cannot blame somebody for our wrong doing; we have to shoulder the blame for whatever we have done. Of course the external cause of sin is the devil who has been sinning from the beginning, but this must not be our excuse to do evil. We have to be responsible for whatever we have done. When we read the story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-



13), we find that they played this blame game or shift blame game. Of course, Adam was asked, so far ...Did the woman force Adam to eat the fruit and said if you cannot eat I can kill you? The answer is no, Adam was not forced to eat the fruit, he ate it because he wanted to eat it, there is no need to blame the wife. To the woman ...Again when the wife was asked why she had done this, she blamed the serpent. Did the serpent threaten her that if you cannot eat this fruit I can bite you? Not at all, she ate it out of her own will. Sometimes we blame other people for our own wrong doing; sometimes we blame others that I have stolen these things because they (my friends) asked me to do that. This is obvious that we try to blame others for our own evil acts. God is the righteous judge and will judge everybody according to what he has done not according to what he was told to do by his friends. The Bible says: "The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him" (Ezekiel 18:20; Yakobe, 2013, pp.5-7).

The Bible is clear that we must not blame others for our own sins, when we read Mark 7:20-21 the Bible says "What comes out of a man is what makes him unclean. For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these come from inside and make a man unclean." Indeed it is true that sin or defilement comes from an impure heart. There is no need to blame others for our own sins (Yakobe, 2013, p.10). Neither is Bathsheba to David's act.

In fact, David's sin with Bathsheba had caused others to blaspheme God (2Samuel 12:14). The sacrifices had apparently degenerated into empty ritual, which is why God would not be pleased with them. Still, they soothed many a conscience, thinking that this deed corrected one's standing before God.

### **3.2.3 The Effects of Sin**

In “2 Samuel 13–24: *The Price of Sin: Tragedy in the House of David*” from “The Church of Jesus Christ Study Manual” explains that, “The price of David’s sin of murder and adultery was high. He spent the rest of his life regretting it. In Psalm 51 he expressed his mental torment and pleaded for forgiveness.” Again the Church of Jesus Christ Study Manual quotes this:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me (Psalm 51:1–3, 10–11: The Church of Jesus Christ, Study Manual).

Eventually, David received the assurance that his soul would be “delivered . . . from the lowest hell” (Psalm 86:12–13: The Church of Jesus Christ, Study Manual). To analyze the effects of sin, Sattesahn (2008) recounts that, God was ready to forgive David’s sins, but He could not prevent those sins from “bringing forth-death (James 1:15). God’s grace forgives, but God’s government must allow sinners to reap what they sow. “He shall restore fourfold!” (2 Samuel 12:6) David had declared punishment concerning the man in Nathan’s story, so God accepted his sentence. The sword never did depart from David’s household: the baby died; Absalom killed Amnon, who had ruined (raped) Tamar (2 Samuel 13); then Joab killed Absalom (2 Samuel 18:9–17); and Adonijah was slain by Benaiah (1 Kings 2:24–25). Fourfold! Add to these trials the awful ruin of Tamar, the shameful treatment of David’s wives by Absalom (2 Samuel 12:11; 16:20–23), plus the rebellion of Absalom, and you can see that David paid dearly for a few moments of lustful pleasure. He sowed lust and reaped the same; he sowed murder and reaped murders, for “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). While we abhor David’s sin and all the trouble it brought, we thank God for this wonderful verse of assurance to sorrowing parents who have lost children

in death. As the late Evangelist Vance Havner said, “When you know where something is, you haven’t lost it” (Sattesahn, 2008, p.11).

To sum up all, from the above Biblical drama, “the historical superscriptions of Psalms 51 and 63 frame the story of David’s sin and downfall so that the fall of David is associated with miseries under the hands of Saul and Absalom” (Reddy, 2020, p.6). When Adam sinned, many effects of sin came in the world; each and every country in the world has been affected by this sin. Adam and Eve were not the only ones who suffered for the effects of their sin, the whole mankind and the whole creation has been affected by this sin. David is one, but the rest of human beings suffer too (Romans 5:12-21).

## **2.3 Restoration and Renewal of the Heart**

### **3.3.1 The Need for Divine Agency of God**

When reading Psalm 51, “The Spirit” in verses 10 through 12 from the Christian point of view means the Holy Spirit, another name for God. It is the part of God that he puts in us when we become Christians. The human heart can only be changed by a Divine agency (Sattesahn, 2008, p.11).

Verses 11- 12 reads, “Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your Holy Spirit from me.” If sin is unconfessed and rebellion persists, God will ultimately “cast away” the individual “from His presence.” ...After his sin with Bathsheba, David probably feared the same consequence. Sin aggrieves God’s Spirit and violates man’s relationship with him. ...The Spirit created a pure heart and a steadfast spirit in the psalmist; this led to a new relationship with Yahweh. Without the presence of the Spirit the relationship with God is not possible. The Spirit effects renewal and inner transformation, thus enabling man to live a life of obedience to God (Maré, 2008, p.102). In verse 12: “Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit.” Part of the business of the Holy Spirit is “restoration,” but only if the individual

meets God's conditions, as David did, and as we must do. With unconfessed sin, all "joy" is lost. With sin confessed, cleansed, and put away, the "joy of ... salvation" returns. A clean heart, a willing spirit, and a steadfast will are then given by the Holy Spirit (The Expositor's Study Bible, 2013, p.922-923).

Verse 13 shows how "David will change and will act as a positive agent for God" (Reddy, 2020, p.1). This means that, "Sinners can turn back to God if David teaches transgressors God's ways" (Psalm 51:13; Reddy, 2020, p.4). In other words, David vows to teach sinners God's ways upon being granted the restoration of the joy of his salvation.

### **3.3.2 Restoration of God's Praises**

Verses 14-17: As argued earlier, the request for a clean spirit forms the basis for the request to have one's mouth opened to praise God. One must recognize that the restoration of the soul is not the final goal. It is absolutely necessary, but the final goal of restoration is to restore to God the praise that is his due. Thus, a request for forgiveness and restoration must, according to biblical example, be followed by a request to have a tongue, lips, and mouth (verses 16b-17) to praise God (Barentsen, 1984, p.260). Now in practical sense let us see what it means when it refers to "The human requirement" (Sattesahn, 2008. p.19).

### **3.3.3 Broken and Contrite Spirit**

Sattesahn (2008) teaches us that the brokenness began when David prayed, "Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." The question arises, why did David use the term "Holy Spirit" in this passage? Was there a special impartation to both him and Isaiah who again is the other individual who used that same term in his writings? We need care in expounding this verse, for both the context and the historical background must contribute to the understanding of it (Sattesahn, 2008, p.20). Note that: the researcher does not engage in any

argument; “the purpose ...is focused on applying God’s truths to our lives individually and corporately.”

Pondering on David’s prayer for the above questions, Sattesahn (2008) helps us understand that, first, this is not just a plea for strength to live a moral, religious life pleasing to God, but it is a prayer from a person who is in fear of his very life. The petition is followed with the view or thought that his character would become stabilized. This was a serious matter for a king (a public figure, *emphasis mine*), because people normally revered and followed him, and he did not want to be undependable to them. And with that thought, there rises before his mind, like a shadow or figure of Saul sitting uneasily on this throne, his fingers tightened about his javelin, his face clouded and glum as the evil spirit swept in to take command where once the Spirit of God had ruled. Again, Sattesahn (2008) expounds the following:

David knew something of the horror of rejection, for time and again he had summoned all the soothing charms of song and lyre in order to quiet the restless and unhappy Saul. Must he share Saul’s fate? Must he lose his favored position as the anointed of the Lord? It is an error to think of the removal of the Spirit as equivalent to the loss of salvation. The Spirit came upon David when he was anointed by Samuel (1 Samuel 16:13); but he knew the Lord before that, as a mere lad among the sheep. The taking away of the Spirit would indicate that God’s choice had fallen upon another.

Secondly, the language used by him, would denote some influence coming from God producing holiness. The language, however, is appropriate to be used in the higher and more definite sense in which it is now employed, as denoting that sacred Spirit, the Holy Spirit, by whom the heart is renewed, and by whom comfort is imparted to the soul. ... This power is available to anyone who cries out to God (Sattesahn, 2008, p.20).

There are five aspects worth mentioning that David wanted God to change in his life as he was given a new heart (Sattesahn, 2008):

**Pure heart, verse 10a:** The problem with David was not just his failure in sinning, but a problem of the heart that caused the sin. In Hebrew, the “heart” is a metaphor for the seat of the intellect, the center of will and decision-making. The “spirit” within a person carries out the motive or the intention of the heart. To pray for a newly created heart and for a new spirit is a confession that the heart, the will of the person, is the source of the problem (Sattesahn, 2008, pp.21-22). Jeremiah reminds us the human heart is evil (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Ezekiel 18:31 puts this clear, “Cast away from you all your transgressions and, where you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will you die, oh house of Israel.” In other words, conversion and regeneration can only be affected by the Holy Spirit. But the sinner is responsible to repent and to seek this new moral nature (The Expositor’s Study Bible, 2013, p.1399). Again Sattesahn expounds this, saying, “It is an admission that the hidden motives and intentions of the psalmist are so perverted and unstable that nothing short of a new creation from God will bring any significant change in who he is. And he has already confessed ten times in the first nine verses that he needs to change by the use of three nouns for sin: transgressions, iniquities and sin”(Sattesahn, 2008, p.22).

**Steadfast spirit, Verse 10b:** It is also significant that the prayer is for a “steadfast” spirit. It is impossible for any individual to have a “right spirit” if there is unconfessed sin (The Expositor’s Study Bible, 2013, p.922).

**Empowered life:** In this Sattesahn (2008) teaches us that, having undergone a transformation in the heart and of the spirit, the psalmist can now hope to be sustained by the lasting experience of the presence of Yahweh. The continued empowerment of the divine Holy Spirit and the renewed assurance of deliverance combine to provide a sustainable hope. Sin, however, has definite consequences. Confession does not always erase the effects of our sins or wrongs. Even forgiveness does not necessarily remove the pain. The psalmist indicates this by his statement,

“Let the bones you [God] have crushed rejoice” (51:8). Crushed bones may “rejoice,” but they may never be whole again. The effects of sinful choices and evil living may never fully depart from us, any more than the effects of long-term alcoholism or drug addiction or of AIDS contracted from an uncontrolled life of sexual addiction. Unless God in His sovereignty touches us with His mighty power and heals us, our rejoicing may have to be expressed alongside the lasting consequences of our sin. David experienced this mighty power and prayed that the Holy Spirit not be taken from him. Jesus in the New Testament taught about effective prayer and said, “If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give you the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Luke 11:13). No doubt David experienced the Holy Spirit that produced holiness and was committed to living an empowered life (Sattesahn, 2008, pp.22-23).

**Joyful heart:** It is not enough to enjoy the satisfaction of forgiveness wrought by the Spirit of God. Others must be brought to know that same satisfaction. Having experienced forgiveness, the psalmist vows to do three things: teach, sing, and praise the Lord. One can understand that having experienced forgiveness, the one forgiven will want to tell, or more precisely, to sing the story of what God has done. That one will praise God and ask that God help him in praising. The psalmist devotion will not express itself in offering sacrifices but in offering himself to God.

Sattesahn, 2008, p.23) elucidates that, the whole context of Psalm 51:13-15 is comprised of the psalmist looking forward to returning to the temple to give testimony to God’s deliverance. It is of the essence of this public testimony that Yahweh is acknowledged before the people or perhaps it is thought of as speaking to all the nations. In this particular psalm, David’s restoration, in the context of his confession of sin, will be evidence that God does forgive, as his chastisement has been evidence that God punishes. His public testimony will thus be at the same time a challenge and an invitation to other sinners to return to God (verse 13). To give this testimony, he needs

God's own help. His voice has been silenced by his sin and chastisement, and God must open his lips again by restoring him (verse 15). Thus God will enable him to give praise to the one who has restored him, and thereby to be delivered from the possibility of incurring bloodguilt by not warning other sinners to turn from their evil way (verse 14). It is in this sense that he prays, "deliver me from incurring bloodguilt." He prays to be kept from becoming answerable for the death of other sinners by failing to challenge and invite them to return to God (Sattesahn, 2008, p.23).

After being forgiven, the one praying hopes to be happy again and to be right with God once more. David asked God to restore to him the joy of His salvation. There is no joy in sin, but how great is the joy that comes with forgiveness, cleansing, and reconciliation. "He went on his way rejoicing" is recorded of the Ethiopian, after he came up from the waters of baptism at the hands of Philip (Acts 8:34-39), and his experience of joy has been that of millions since. David makes no attempt to evade the truth when Nathan the prophet confronts David of the sin of adultery and murder. The blood of Uriah is on his hands. He pleads that he be spared the death penalty for committing such a crime. David carried this sin in his heart for some time. If he had attempted to praise God with the unconfessed and unrepented sin resting on his conscience, it would have been sheer hypocrisy. Evil in the heart and life keeps our lips from proclaiming praises unto God. But when God in His mercy forgives the sin, the lips are opened. David could not remain silent any longer. "My mouth shall declare your praise" (Verse Psalm 51:15b). True happiness is to be found in the presence of God, and to remain exiled from Him would be a life of misery (Sattesahn, 2008, p.23).

David would once more dance before the Lord for sheer joy. In fact, he has already prayed that such gladness may be his portion that the bones which the Lord has broken may rejoice (verse 8). Bone is the strength of the human body. When the bone structure is crushed, the body is crippled and helpless. So real has been the chastening through which David had passed that he cannot rise



up to praise and adore his God. But he has hoped that when the Lord has freed him from the dreadful sense of guilt, his soul will be released to do service for God. When one is under a cloud, it is far better to be still than to venture upon a praise that must be only half-hearted. But let God release the prisoner from the toils of his groaning, and there will be a new song ascending to heaven. And this song of praise is pleasing to God, for it glorifies Him (Psalm 50:23; Sattesahn, 2008, pp.23-24). Such praise, rising up out of a contrite heart, means more than any amount of sacrifice which is offered in cold detachment as a formal religious duty. It was the joy of salvation for which David's heart yearned, and in order that he might never again lose it, he asked one more thing of God: Grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. It is the sustaining presence of God's Spirit that David desires and asks for (Sattesahn, 2008, pp.23-24).

**Submissive will:** Lasting restoration and recovery can only be achieved on the basis of a renewed spiritual relationship with God. We cannot recreate a "clean heart" within ourselves. Only God can regenerate a heart and renew a spirit. The psalmist is right in saying, "Grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me" (51:12b). Even the power to desire restoration and utter the words of confession that begins this process of renewal - that power comes from God, not ourselves. The Hebrew word rendered "free" Spirit (Psalm 51:12) "nadib" means willing, voluntary, or prompt. It would seem to mean "a willing spirit," that God would sustain David's own mind or spirit, in which he would be willing and ready to obey all the commands of God and to serve Him faithfully. What he prayed for was grace and strength that his life would be constant and firm, in which he would be always found willing and ready to keep the commandments of God. It is a prayer that should be prayed by all in which they will be willing to do what God requires of them and to bear all that may be laid on them. This work of the Holy Spirit produced holiness and joy in David's life (Sattesahn, 2008, p.24).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### APPLICATION

#### 4.0 Application

One of the specific goals/objectives is *“to encourage our people/the readers to analyze David’s experience of sin, its causes and effects on his life, family and public state, and the need for David’s life.”* The key concept in Psalm 51 is that we see the problems, the needs, and the solutions for David’s life. As Sattesahn (2008) noted, “The problems in his life that are mentioned were rebellion, waywardness, and failure. The needs were to ask God to wipe away, wash, and purify David of these problems or the sin. The solution was for God to be gracious, demonstrate faithfulness, and to show abundant mercies toward David.” And furthermore, “the overall solution is for someone and not something to work in David’s life. The holiness of God was hallowed and there was a deep contrition of past sins whereas David then experienced the holiness of God’s Spirit. David experienced God in a different way than he possibly did before” (Sattesahn (2008, p.3). But what are the further theological lessons that can we draw from Psalm 51? There so many theological teachings that we can derive and learn from Psalm 51.

Learning from Fox’s life experience on her article describing *“5 Important Things We Can Learn about Repentance from Psalm 51,”* each one of us can sense some painful acts that ever separated him/her from the family or society. Fox (2021) teaches us that, our emotions reveal the turbulence broiling in our hearts. The excruciating pain in David’s life was telling him something was wrong. Our emotions function in a similar way for us. They also tell us something is wrong. Whether we are angry at an injustice, fearful of the unknown future, or grieving a loss, our emotions reveal the turbulence broiling in our hearts. One of the ways our emotions tell us something is wrong is in the case of our sin. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, we feel the weight of it. It makes us grieve and feel sorrow. We feel anger toward

ourselves for what we've done. We feel a nagging disquiet in our souls that won't let go. We feel broken and realize anew the utter depths of our sinfulness. David's joy was gone-all he felt was pain and sorrow over his sin (Ps.51:8; Fox, 2021). Such conviction led him to repentance. Paul refers to this sorrow as godly sorrow. "For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it-though I did regret it, for I see that, that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice ...you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief ... for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death" (2 Cor. 7:8-10; Fox, 2021).

Ultimately our sin is against a holy and righteous God. There is more we can learn from David's psalm about repentance. Though David's sin was against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, it was ultimately a sin against a holy and righteous God. "Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge" (Psalm 51:4). As Fox quoting Sproul (*The Holiness of God*), she cited: "Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One to whom we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself" (Fox, 2021). In addition, Fox (2021) mentions five important things we can learn about repentance from Psalm 51:

***You need to trust in God's steadfast love and mercy.*** When we sin, we have to turn to God in humble reliance upon his steadfast love and mercy. This is a characteristic of God found throughout the Bible, and one which the Lord announced to Moses: The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"(Exodus 34:6-7). It was this truth that David rested in as he cried out to the Lord for forgiveness (Psalm 51:1).

**Salvation and forgiveness come from God alone.** We can turn nowhere else but to God for forgiveness; he alone can cleanse us from our sin, and his salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. As David wrote, “Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior (Psalm 51:2, 7, 14). First John 1:9 assures us about this repentance.

**Our sin creates a barrier.** All sin creates a barrier between us and God. Jesus came to tear down that dividing wall through his perfect life, atoning death, and triumphant resurrection. David refers to this barrier in Psalm 51, “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me” (Psalms 51:11-12).

**We have to be cleansed by God to be restored.** Our sin requires cleansing. We have to be made right before we can come into God’s presence. Christ has accomplished that cleansing for us when he bore the weight of all our sins at the cross. We have been made new: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2corinthians 5:17). This is what David asked for in his lament: “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

**God accepts our pleas for forgiveness.** Because of Jesus, God accepts our broken and contrite hearts: “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” (Psalm 51: 16-17; Fox, 2021).

Scott (2015) in his famous article of “*The Significance and Application of Psalm 51*” adds, “God’s love is unfailing; obedience to God is what God wants (and we should too), and God has power to forgive and restore” (Scott, 2015).

Christ now sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us, pointing to his very own royal robes of righteousness which we now wear. Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance and one from which we can learn and even use to model our own confessions. When we feel the pain of conviction—a crushing weight that feels like broken bones—we can run to our Father and cry out to him in repentance. And we can do so in complete confidence, knowing that our loving, merciful God forgives us through the cleansing and atoning blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ (Fox, 2021).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Conclusion

Barentsen (1984), in his article journal titled *“Restoration and Its Blessings: A Theological Analysis of Psalms 51 and 32,”* in his “conclusion” and his perspectives, summarizes the four propositions of the main theological points drawn from these two psalms as: (1) Man is utterly, always, from conception, and in every aspect of his relationship to God, sinful. (2) Man is wholly dependent on God for forgiveness and restoration before he can enjoy an undisturbed relationship with God. (3) Man’s responsibility is humbly and in faith to confess his sins to God and to acknowledge that his judgments are just. (4) Man, once forgiven and restored, is to be happy about what the Lord has done for him, and to extol his virtues (Barentsen, 1984, p.268). This is also to say, the acknowledgement of sin is the condition of divine forgiveness. Apostle John declares to us that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1John 1:9).

Sattesahn (2008) comments that, most of us think of our sin as being utterly bereft of worth. That is one reason why we hesitate to confess our sin or acknowledge our struggles to others. But confession of sin can be the foundation of teaching and example (Psalm 51:13). Denying sin or covering it up prevents any others from drinking at the well of our experience and gaining the life-giving insights we have to offer (Sattesahn, 2008, p.24).

This psalm celebrates the redemption of sin and that man will be made whiter than snow and be able to rejoice in salvation. However, if sin is not dealt with, the longer it goes on, people can become so distanced from it that they will more likely yawn at needing confession rather than experiencing joy and rejoicing in their lives. There are three areas that a person encounters with the Holy Spirit in looking at Psalm 51; sin, sacrifice, and salvation. Sin speaks of the broken

relationship with God. ...If we equate sin with bad habits, it is comparable to a physician who encourages a cancer patient in the self-deception that a probable tumor is just “a little bump” that will go away by itself. This deceit will prevent healing and could hasten the course of the disease. Secondly, sacrifice speaks of a broken spirit not to destroy an individual, but rather to become true selves, for God’s sake. Thirdly, salvation that David asked for is not only about being saved from sin but also saved for a specific purpose. David experienced this for the remainder of his life. When we know ourselves to be forgiven, praise pours out of our lives not once, but always, because our joy overflows (Sattesahn, 2008, pp.24-25).

One more thing that needs to be said is that God wants a contrite spirit rather than a multitude of sacrifices being offered to Him in trying to find forgiveness. When we then receive that forgiveness, we can promise to change our lives and be of good example to others. It is after reconciliation with God that we can be at peace. One need not live in guilt and shame forever. In other words, Christians do not need to fear failure (Sattesahn, 2008, p.25). Taking a further step of confessing our sin will make us alive to God, walking with him, engaging with him, having our hearts enlarged by him, building our intimacy-relationship with him, and it will finally help us live with him forever. Amen!

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **THE NEED FOR STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS**

Human thought is structured; the human mind cannot function in utter chaos or at random—although admittedly it is not always flawlessly organized. It follows that human writings will usually evidence a certain structure, which will vary according to the language and culture of the writer. The exegete should consider such structure in his interpretation of the Bible.

Part of this task can be accomplished by grammatical and syntactical observation. But since writings consist of more than a random series of grammatical or syntactical phrases, there is a wider field of analysis. This wider field may be called “paragraph” or “section,” depending on the size, but if a whole document is analyzed it is convenient to speak about a discourse (a more technical title for a larger unit of communication, not for the common concept of dialogue). Analyzing the structure of such a discourse may be called “structural analysis.” Thus structural analysis accomplishes on a broader level what grammatical and syntactical analysis accomplishes on a more detailed level.

The concerns of this method are to reconstruct the flow of the argument by an objective methodology which recognizes structural devices such as chiasm, repetition of key terms, and important structural markers. Unfortunately, the importance of discourse structure for the understanding of the Bible has not been as fully understood and used by exegetes as it might be. Thus, help on the structure of a passage is rarely available in the standard exegetical and critical commentaries, though the value of the method is being increasingly recognized.

This method can be very useful. It gives the exegete a more objective tool to help the person understand the flow of thought in a particular document. Such an objective tool in the writer’s judgment is sorely needed since the task of contextual analysis is often approached rather intuitively. And even though our intuitions may sometimes be right, a more objective method is

needed to bridge the linguistic, cultural, and religious chasm between the ancient world and our own, and to make certain that our reconstruction of the meaning is extracted from the text, not imposed upon it (Barentsen, 1984, pp. 268-269; Callow, Second Thessalonians, p. 15).

APPENDIX B

BARENTSEN’S CONSTITUENT ORGANIZATION OF PSALM 51

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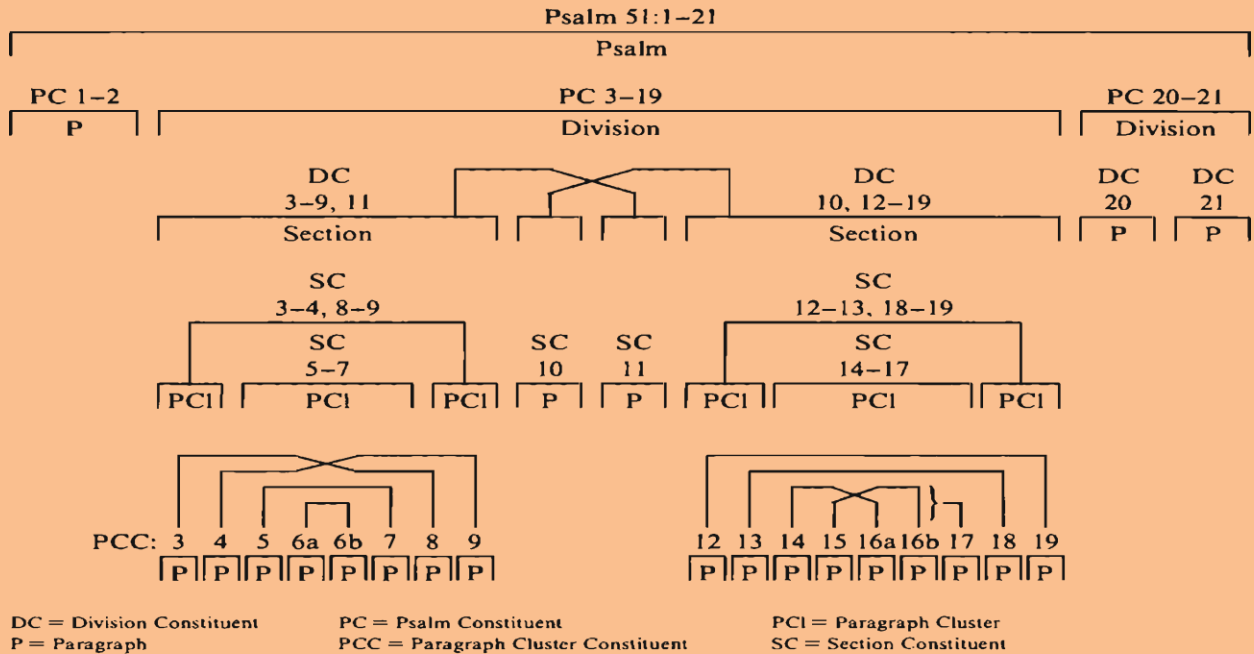


CHART I: Overview of Psalm 51

person by way of transition).<sup>15</sup> The structure here is chiastic in an a-b-b-a pattern. A key to distinguishing the transition from vv 3-4 to vv 5ff. is the use of כִּי, which is often an indicator of the transition from introduction to body. Here כִּי answers the question “Why?”—that is, why the forgiveness is necessary.<sup>16</sup>

The basis of unity in the second section is similar. Vv 12 and 19 have רוּחַ and לֵב in common, while רוּחַ reoccurs in v 13, and v 18 introduces זִכָּר, which also occurs in v 19. Thus, vv 12-13, 18-19 form a unit and are arranged chiastically (a-b-b-a).

Vv 14 and 16a share יָשַׁע, while v 15, with פָּשַׁע and חָטָא, uses antonyms of צָדִיק found in 16b, thus showing a parallel arrangement (a-b-b-a).<sup>17</sup>

These structures with their parallel and chiastic patterns are shown in Chart I.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>16</sup>Dalglish, *Psalm Fifty-One*, 104.

<sup>17</sup>Auffret, “Note,” 143-44.