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Create in Me a Pure Heart: A Meditation on Psalm 51

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Create in Me a Pure Heart: A Meditation on Psalm 51

Abstract

"We *are* like David! No matter how much we love the Lord, we cannot save ourselves (or our world) from the evil within."

Posting about our sinful nature and Christ's redemptive grace from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/create-in-me-a-pure-heart-a-meditation-on-psalm-51/>

Keywords

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 [inallthings.org /create-in-me-a-pure-heart-a-meditation-on-psalm-51/](https://inallthings.org/create-in-me-a-pure-heart-a-meditation-on-psalm-51/)

Douglas De Boer

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 51](#)

[Jonah 3:1-10](#)

[Romans 1:1-7](#)

King David declared, “As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die!” (Samuel 2:12). Ouch! We know the story—David, who would mete out justice, is “the man.” Psalm 51, then, is David’s penitent response. Consider for a moment, who this person from history called King David might be.

David was the youngest son in his family. David rose in the ranks to become an armor-bearer to Saul on the basis of his ability to play the lute and soothe Saul’s spirit! He was also skillful in battle and wise of speech. When war came with the Philistines, David killed Goliath with just a measly sling shot! If that is not a story for the ages, what is? In a series of events, we see that David was chosen by God to eventually become King of Israel. After becoming king, David conquered various factions within Israel and united the nation as never before. He took Jerusalem as his capital city, transforming it into the “City of David” (2 Samuel 5:7). Along the way, David acquired eight wives. One, Mikal, was a daughter of Saul; another, Maakah, was a daughter of the king of Geshur; and so forth (1 Samuel 18:27, 1 Chronicles 3:1-5). These were marriages probably made with political ends in mind. And as if eight wives were not enough, David had concubines (2 Samuel 5:13, 2 Samuel 15:16, 2 Samuel 16:22). Finally, following the lineage of David, we eventually find Jesus Christ (Matthew 1).

Perhaps by modern standards of what constitutes a powerful nation, Israel at the time of David would have been just a tribe, and David just a chief. But by the standards of his era, David was a powerful and wealthy person. While he was king, he was the predominant leader in the area of Israel at that time. He had it good, and he was acknowledged as the ideal of goodness.

Probably, some of us would be tempted to aspire to the same importance if we were given the opportunity. Indeed, the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28) is a divine command to each of us to both replenish and subdue while ruling over all the earth. Most of us at some point in our lives dream of being important and doing important things—like David. We want to be like “a David”.

How then could King David have descended so far, scheming to have Uriah killed in battle so that he could marry Bathsheba? He saw her bathing and he lusted after her! Is that the kind of behavior to be associated with a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22)? If you read the Psalms, it is clear that David did indeed love the Lord and seek his ways. “The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?” (Psalm 27). “I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders” (Psalm 9). “I call to the Lord, who is worthy of Praise” (Psalm 18). How many other testimonies of David’s love for the Lord there are! How could King David then descend to such greed and treachery?

Alexsandr Solzhenitzen has a classic answer: “If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”

“In keeping silent about evil, in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are implanting it, and it will rise up a thousandfold in the future. When we neither punish nor reproach evildoers, we are not simply protecting their trivial old age, we are thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations.

“Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains...an unuprooted small corner of evil” (from *The Gulag Archipelago*).

We *are* like David! No matter how much we love the Lord, we cannot save ourselves (or our world) from the evil within. We all like sheep have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23).

Indeed, Lord, “Cleanse me with hyssop...blot out my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me” (Psalm 51).