



### **Psalm 51:1-10 New Revised Standard Version**

- <sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy,  
blot out my transgressions.
- <sup>2</sup> Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,  
and cleanse me from my sin.
- <sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me.
- <sup>4</sup> Against you, you alone, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight,  
so that you are justified in your sentence  
and blameless when you pass judgment.
- <sup>5</sup> Indeed, I was born guilty,  
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- <sup>6</sup> You desire truth in the inward being;  
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
- <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;  
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- <sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
- <sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins,  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.



**Hyssop**

A clean heart. For the Psalmist, in this instance David, that was not only what he wanted; it was also that for which he had a great need. Most of us would settle for a clean house or car, or perhaps a “clean bill of health” when we visit with a doctor. The Psalmist’s plea challenges us to think of things of a deeper nature. Psalm 51 is categorized as a “penitential psalm” which receives most of its attention during the Lenten season. It speaks of sin, brokenness, and separation from God. Not exactly our favorite topics for discussion!

The subtitle supplied to the Psalm indicates that it originated in response to David’s affair with Bathsheba and Nathan’s confrontation with the king concerning his sin. It expresses not a gentle “I’m sorry; please forgive me,” but rather communicates the ugliness of sin and the toll it had taken upon David and his relationship with God. While the king had done much to try to cover over his sin, he soon realized there was no fooling God.

David knew his hope for forgiveness was to be found in the nature of who God is. We can almost hear David as he cried out before God confessing his purposeful wrongdoing and appealing to God’s love, mercy, and compassion to supply the cleansing of which his life was in need. Our lives may be much different from that of King David, but, as David reminds us here, we all have a sin nature. We all have dirt and grime which stain our lives. The reality of his sin was such that it caused David to cry out in despair. What does our sin do to us? It should evoke a similar response from us as well. Sin is nasty, filthy, and a host of other terms and it distorts the image of God in each of us when it is not handled properly.

1. Divine cleansing calls for acknowledgement and acceptance.
2. Divine cleansing must deal with the seen and the secret.
3. Divine cleansing is a work of removal and replacement.

**Prayer Pebble:** Lord, make all that I am fully clean.