

PSALM 51

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 51

*To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David,
when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba*

The occasion of this psalm was the sin of David with Bathsheba, signified by “going in to her”; an euphemism for “lying with her”; which sin was a very aggravated one, she being another man’s wife, and the wife of a servant and soldier of his, who was at the same time exposing his life for his king and country’s good; and David besides had many wives, and was also king of Israel, and should have set a better example to his subjects; and it was followed with other sins, as the murder of Uriah, and the death of several others; with scandal to religion, and with security and impenitence in him for a long time, until Nathan the prophet was sent to him of God, to awaken him to a sense of his sin; which he immediately acknowledged, and showed true repentance for it: upon which, either while Nathan was present, or after he was gone, he penned this psalm; that it might remain on record, as a testification of his repentance, and for the instruction of such as should fall into sin, how to behave, where to apply, and for their comfort. The history of all this may be seen in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the second book of Samuel.

Ver. 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God,* etc.] David, under a sense of sin, does not run away from God, but applies unto him, and casts himself at his feet, and upon his mercy; which shows the view he had of his miserable condition, and that he saw there was mercy in God, which gave him hope; and upon his bended knees, and in the exercise of faith, he asks for it;

according to thy lovingkindness; not according to his merits, nor according to the general mercy of God, which carnal men rely upon; but according to his everlasting and unchangeable love in Christ; from which as the source, and through whom as the medium, special mercy comes to the children of men. The acts of special mercy are according to the sovereign will of God: he is not moved to mercy neither by the merits nor misery of men, but by his free grace and favour; it is love that sets mercy to work: this is a most

glaring gleam of Gospel light, which none of the inspired writers besides, except the Apostle Paul, saw, (^{<4114>}Ephesians 2:4 ^{<5114>}Titus 3:4,5);

according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions; for his sin was complicated, attended with many others; and, besides, upon a view of this, he was led to observe all his other sins; and particularly the corruption of his nature, his original sin, which he mentions, (^{<5105>}Psalm 51:5). These he desires might be “blotted out”; out of the book of account, out of God’s debt book; that they might not stand against him, being debts he was not able to pay or make satisfaction for; and out of the table of his own heart and conscience, where they were ever before him, and seemed to be engraven; that they might be caused to pass from him, and he might have no more conscience of them; or that they might be blotted out, as a cloud by the clear shining of the sun of righteousness, with the healing of pardoning grace in his wings; or that they might be wiped away, as any faith is wiped from any person or thing: and all this “according to the multitude of [his] tender mercies”. The mercy of God is plenteous and abundant; he is rich in it, and various are the instances of it; and it is exceeding tender, like that of a father to his children, or like that of a mother to the son of her womb; and from this abundant and tender mercy springs the forgiveness of sin, (^{<4177>}Luke 1:77,78). The psalmist makes mention of the multitude of the mercies of God, because of the multitude of his sins, which required a multitude of mercy to forgive, and to encourage his hope of it.

Ver. 2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity*, etc.] Which supposes defilement by sin, and that very great, and such as none can remove but the Lord himself; who, when he takes it in hand, does it effectually and thoroughly; (see ^{<5125>}Ezekiel 36:25). David’s sin had long lain upon him, the faith of it had as it were eaten into him, and spread itself over him, and therefore he needed much washing: “wash me much”, all over, and thoroughly:

and cleanse me from my sin: which only the blood of Christ can do, (^{<4107>}1 John 1:7). The psalmist makes use of three words to express his sin by, in this verse (^{<5105>}Psalm 51:1); **ق**, which signifies “rebellion”, as all sin has in it rebellion against God the lawgiver, and a contempt of his commandments; **و**, “perverseness”, “crookedness”, sin being a going out of the plain way of God’s righteous law; and **ج**, “a missing the mark”; going besides it or not coming up to it: and these he makes rise of to set

forth the malignity of sin, and the deep sense he had of the exceeding sinfulness of it; and these are the three words used by the Lord in (^{<0347>}Exodus 34:7); when he declares himself to be a sin forgiving God; so that David's sin came within the reach of pardoning mercy.

Ver. 3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions*, etc.] Before God and man. Acknowledgment of sin is what the Lord requires, and promises forgiveness upon, and therefore is used here as a plea for it; and moreover the psalmist had done so before, and had succeeded in this way, which must encourage him to take the same course again; (see ^{<0315>}Psalm 32:5);

and my sin [is] ever before me; staring him in the face; gnawing upon his conscience, and filling him with remorse and distress; so that his life was a burden to him: for though God had put away sin out of his own sight, so that he would not condemn him for it, and he should not die; notwithstanding as yet it was not caused to pass from David, or the guilt of it removed from his conscience.

Ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*, etc.] All sin, though committed against a fellow creature, being a transgression of the law, is against the lawgiver; and, indeed, begins at the neglect or contempt of his commandment, as David's sin did, (^{<0029>}2 Samuel 12:9); and being committed against God, that had bestowed so many favours upon him, was a cutting consideration to him, which made his sorrow appear to be of a godly sort; wherefore he makes his humble and hearty confession to the Lord, and who only could forgive his sin;

and done [this] evil in thy sight; for with respect to men it was secretly done; and was only known to God, with whom the darkness and the light are both alike;

that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, [and] be clear when thou judgest; not that David committed this sin that God might be just, and pure, and holy; but this was the event and consequence of it: God, by taking notice of it, resenting it, and reproofing for it, appeared to be a righteous Being, and of purer eyes than to behold sin with pleasure; (see ^{<0327>}Exodus 9:27). Or these words may be connected with his acknowledgment and confession of sin; which were done to this end and purpose, to justify God in his charge of it upon him, and in threatening him with evils on account of it, by the mouth of Nathan the prophet: or with his petitions for pardoning grace and mercy; that so he might appear to be just

to his promise, of forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, to humble penitents; and particularly that he might appear to be just and faithful to his Son, in forgiving sin for his sake; whom he had set forth, in his purposes and promises, to be the propitiation for sin, to declare his righteousness, (<B25>Romans 3:25,26); (see <B24>Romans 3:4).

Ver. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity*, etc.] This cannot be understood of any personal iniquity of his immediate parents; since this respects his wonderful formation in the womb, in which both he and they were wholly passive, as the word here used is of that form; and is the amazing work of God himself, so much admired by the psalmist, (<D93>Psalm 139:13-16); and cannot design any sinfulness then infused into him by his Maker, seeing God cannot be the author of sin; but of original sin and corruption, derived to him by natural generation: and the sense is, that as soon as ever the mass of human nature was shaped and quickened, or as soon as soul and body were united together, sin was in him, and he was in sin, or became a sinful creature;

and in sin did my mother conceive me; by whom cannot be meant Eve; for though she is the mother of all living, and so of David, yet could not, with any propriety, be said to conceive him: this only could be said of his immediate parent, not even of his next grandmother, much less of Eve, at the distance of almost three thousand years. Nor does the sin in which he was conceived intend any sin of his parents, in begetting and conceiving him, being in lawful wedlock; which acts cannot be sinful, since the propagation of the human species by natural generation is a principle of nature implanted by God himself; and is agreeably to the first law of nature, given to man in a state of innocence, “increase and multiply”, (<O23>Genesis 1:28). Marriage is the institution of God in paradise; and in all ages has been accounted “honourable in all, [when] the bed is undefiled”, (<B34>Hebrews 13:4). Nor does it design his being conceived when his mother was in “profluviiis”, of which there is no proof, and is a mere imagination, and can answer no purpose; much less that he was conceived in adultery, as the contenders for the purity of human nature broadly intimate; which shows how much they are convicted by this text, to give into such an interpretation of it, at the expense of the character of an innocent person, of whom there is not the least suggestion of this kind in the Holy Scriptures; but on the contrary, she is represented as a religious woman, and David valued himself upon his relation to her as such, (<B36>Psalm 86:16 116:16). Besides, had this been the case, as David would

have been a bastard, he would not have been suffered to enter into the congregation of the Lord, according to the law in (^{<1671>}Deuteronomy 23:2); whereas he often did with great delight, (^{<1904>}Psalm 42:4 55:14). Moreover, it is beside his scope and design to expose the sins of others, much less his own parents, while he is confessing and lamenting his own iniquities: and to what purpose should he mention theirs, especially if he himself was not affected by them, and did not derive a corrupt nature from them? Nor is the sin he speaks of any actual sin of his own, and therefore he does not call it, as before, “my” iniquity and “my” sin; though it was so, he having sinned in Adam, and this being in his nature; but “iniquity” and “sin”, it being common to him with all mankind. Hence we learn the earliness of the corruption of nature; it is as soon as man is conceived and shapen; and that it is propagated from one to another by natural generation; and that it is the case of all men: for if this was the case of David, who was born of religious parents, was famous for his early piety, and from whose seed the Messiah sprung, it may well be concluded to be the case of all. And this corruption of nature is the fountain, source, and spring of all sin, secret and open, private and public; and is mentioned here not as an extenuation of David’s actual transgressions, but as an aggravation of them; he having been, from his conception and formation, nothing else but a mass of sin, a lump of iniquity; and, in his evangelical repentance for them, he is led to take notice of and mourn over the corruption of his nature, from whence they arose. The Heathens themselves affirm, that no man is born without sin^{f679}.

Ver. 6. *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts*, etc.] With delight and pleasure, as the word^{f680} signifies: meaning either Christ, the truth and the life, formed and dwelling in the hearts of his people; or the Gospel, the word of truth, which has a place there; and particularly that branch of it which proclaims pardon to sensible sinners, and is the ground of hope within them: or else a true and hearty confession of sin, which David now made; or rather internal holiness and purity of heart, in opposition to the corruption of nature before acknowledged: this is what is agreeable to the nature of God, is required by his holy law, and is wrought in the hearts of his people in regeneration; and this is “truth”, real, and not imaginary, genuine and unfeigned; where it is there is a true sense of sin, a right sight of Christ, unfeigned faith in him, sincere love to him, hope in him without hypocrisy, and a reverential fear of God upon the heart; the inward parts are the seat of all this, and in the exercise of it the Lord takes great delight and pleasure;

and in the hidden [part] thou shall make me to know wisdom; either Christ, the wisdom of God; or the Gospel, and particularly that part of it which concerns the pardon of sin; or a true knowledge of sin, and of the way of life and salvation by Christ, which is the truest and highest wisdom: and the phrase “hidden” or “secret” may either denote the nature of the wisdom made known, which is hidden wisdom, the wisdom of God in a mystery; or the manner in which it is made known; it is in a hidden way, privately, and secretly, and indiscernibly like the wind, by the Spirit and grace of God; or the seat and subject of it, “the hidden part”, as we supply it; the hidden man of the heart. David begins to rise in the exercise of his faith in the grace of God, “thou shall make me to know”, etc. unless the words should be rendered as a prayer, as they are by some, “make me to know”^{f681}, etc. and as are the following.

Ver. 7. *Purge me with hyssop*, etc.] Or “thou shalt purge me with hyssop”^{f682}; or “expiate me”; which was used in sprinkling the blood of the paschal lamb on the door posts of the Israelites in Egypt, that the destroying angel might pass over them, (^{<0222>}Exodus 12:22,23); and in the cleansing of the leper, (^{<0844>}Leviticus 14:4-7); and in the purification of one that was unclean by the touch of a dead body, etc. (^{<0196>}Numbers 19:6,18); which the Targum on the text has respect to; and this petition of the psalmist shows that he saw himself a guilty creature, and in danger of the destroying angel, and a filthy creature like the leper, and deserving to be excluded from the society of the saints, and the house of God; and that he had respect not hereby to ceremonial sprinklings and purifications, for them he would have applied to a priest; but to the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, typified thereby; and therefore he applies to God to purge his conscience with it; and, as Suidas^{f683} from Theodoret observes, hyssop did not procure remission of sins, but has a mystical signification, and refers to what was meant by the sprinkling of the blood of the passover; and then he says,

and I shall be clean; thoroughly clean; for the blood sprinkled on the heart by the spirit clears it from an evil conscience, purges the conscience from dead works, and cleanses from all sin;

wash me; or “thou shall wash me”^{f684}; alluding to the washing at the cleansing of a leper, and the purification of an unclean person, (^{<0848>}Leviticus 14:8 ^{<0199>}Numbers 19:19); but had in view the fountain of Christ’s blood, in which believers are washed from all their sins, (^{<0300>}Zechariah 13:1 ^{<0106>}Revelation 1:5);

and I shall be whiter than snow; who was black with original corruption, and actual transgressions; but the blood of Christ makes not only the conversation garments white that are washed in it; but even crimson and scarlet sins as white as wool, as white as snow, and the persons of the saints without spot or blemish, (⁶⁶⁷⁴Revelation 7:14 ²³⁰⁸Isaiah 1:18) (⁴⁸²⁵Ephesians 5:25-27); “whiter than the snow” is a phrase used by Homer ^{f685}, and others, to describe what is exceeding white.

Ver. 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness*, etc.] Which he had not heard for some time; sin had sadly broke in upon and interrupted his spiritual peace and joy; for though the love and favour of God cannot be lost, yet his sensible presence, which puts joy and gladness into the heart, may; and though an interest in Christ ever continues, and union to him is always the same; yet a view of interest in him, which fills with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and communion with him, may not be had for a time: and though justification by his righteousness, from whence flows much peace, is an invariable blessing; yet the comfortable perception of it may be taken away: and though salvation by Christ is a certain thing, yet the joy of it may be lost for a season; which was now the case of the psalmist: and when he desires that God would cause him to hear joy and gladness, his meaning is, that he might have that made known unto him; namely, the forgiveness of his sins, which would give him joy: not by an articulate voice from heaven, which he did not expect; nor by an angel from thence, which was not usual; but by the prophet, who as yet might not have declared to him that God had put away his sin; or, if he had, he might desire to have it repeated, for his fuller assurance, and greater joy; or by his Spirit, in an impulse on his mind, saying to him, thy sins are forgiven thee; which would give him great joy, fulness of it, even what is inconceivable and inexpressible, signified by these two words, “joy” and “gladness”;

[that] the bones [which] thou hast broken may rejoice: a backsliding believer is not only like a bone out of joint, (⁴⁸⁰¹Galatians 6:1); but his falls are sometimes both to the bruising of him, and to the breaking of his bones; of which when he is sensible, the quick sense of his sin is as the pain of a broken bone; (see ¹⁹⁸⁰Psalm 38:3,6,8,9); and here the breaking of them is ascribed to God; not that he is the cause or occasion of falling into sin, which breaks the bones, (³⁰¹³James 1:13); but of afflictions, corrections, and chastisements for sin, which are sometimes expressed by this phrase, (²³⁸³Isaiah 38:13 ²³⁰⁴Lamentations 3:4,16); and which David was threatened with, and gave him great uneasiness; and of the menaces and

threatenings of the law, which being let into his conscience, worked wrath and terror there; and also of that true contrition of heart, and brokenness of spirit, which the Lord produces, and can only cure, by the discoveries of pardoning grace; which affects the whole frame of nature, the report of which makes the bones fat, and all of them to say, who is a God like unto thee? (^{<150>}Proverbs 15:30 ^{<150>}Psalm 35:9,10).

Ver. 9. *Hide thy face from my sins*, etc.] In whose sight they were committed, being now ashamed of them himself, and ashamed that any should see them, and especially his God; and being filthy and nauseous, he knew they must be abominable to him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and being breaches of his law, must be offensive to him, and provoke the eyes of his glory; and were such that he knew would not bear the examination of justice; and that if God was strict to mark them, he could not stand before him: moreover, in this petition the psalmist deprecates a severe chastisement of them, which is sometimes expressed by setting sins before him, (^{<90>}Psalm 90:8); and entreats the pardon of them, or oblivion and non-remembrance of them, that they might be cast behind his back, and into the depths of the sea;

and blot out all mine iniquities; as in (^{<51>}Psalm 51:1); here repeated, to show his deep sense of them, and his great importunity for the forgiveness of them; and adds the word all, including all his other sins, with those he had lately committed; for he knew that, if anyone, was left unpardoned, he could never answer for it.

Ver. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God*, etc.] Which was now defiled with sin, and of which being convinced, he was led more and more to see the impurity of his heart and nature, from which all his evil actions flowed; and being sensible that he could not make his heart clean himself, and that this was the work of God, and a work which required creating power, he entreats it of him: for as the first work of conversion is no other than a creation, or a production of something new, which was not before; so the restoring of a backslider, as it goes by the same name, it requires the same power; and as the implantation of grace at first, and particularly of faith, is a work of almighty power; so the same power must be put forth to bring it into exercise, after falls into sin; that it may afresh deal with the heart purifying blood of Christ, which only can make it clean, and is what is here meant;

and renew a right spirit within me; by which is designed, not the Holy Spirit of God ^{f686}; for he is the renewer; nor the spirit or soul of man as to its essence; but with respect to the qualities of it; and here it signifies a renewing of the inward man, or an increase of grace, and causing it to abound in act and exercise; and intends a spirit of uprightness and integrity, in opposition to dissimulation and hypocrisy; a spirit “prepared [and] ready” ^{f687} to every good work, (~~4054~~ Matthew 26:41); “one firm” ^{f688} and unmoved from obedience to the Lord, by sin, temptations, and snares; a heart fixed, trusting in the Lord, and comfortably assured of an interest in pardoning grace and mercy.

Ver. 11. *Cast me not away from thy presence*, etc.] As abominable; as a vessel in which he had no pleasure; with indignation and wrath; as one that is angry with another, cannot bear him in his sight, but bids him be gone from him. Nothing is more desirable to a child of God than the presence of God; and nothing gives him more sensible pain than his absence; and even to be deprived of or denied the means of enjoying his presence the word and ordinances, makes them very uneasy: to be utterly, and for ever deprived of it, is the case of the damned in hell, and is the punishment of loss they sustain; and, on the other hand, the happiness of the saints in heaven is to enjoy it without interruption. The people of God are never cast away from his favour, or out of his heart’s love; but they may for a while be without his gracious presence, or not see his face, nor have the light of his countenance, nor sensible communion with him, which is here deprecated. David might call to mind the case of Cain, (~~0044~~ Genesis 4:14,16); or rather the more recent one of Saul, whom the Lord rejected, and from whom he departed upon his sinning, and which he might fear would be his case, (~~0285~~ 1 Samuel 28:15);

and take not thy Holy Spirit from me; or “the Spirit of thine holiness”; the third Person in the Trinity; so called, not because this epithet of “holy” is peculiar to him; for it is used also of the Father, and of the Son, (~~4371~~ John 17:11 ~~0160~~ Psalm 16:10); but because he is equally holy with them, and is the author of holiness in his people, which is therefore called the sanctification of the Spirit, (~~4002~~ 1 Peter 1:2); and without whom David knew that purity and holiness of heart and spirit he had desired could not be renewed and increased in him; and therefore deprecates the taking of him away; which shows that he was not as yet removed from him, not with standing he had fallen into great sins; and his sense of sin, and confession of it, and his fervent application for pardoning grace, and purity of heart, abundantly

prove it. The Spirit of God is a gift of his, which is without repentance, and where he once is as a spirit of regeneration and sanctification, he ever abides: his external gifts may be taken away; but internal grace is an incorruptible seed, and always continues. By sin the Spirit of God may be grieved, so as to withdraw his gracious influences, and his powerful operations may not be felt; and this is what is here deprecated. The Targum interprets this of the spirit of prophecy which David had, by which he composed psalms and songs prophetic of Christ, and of Gospel times, and which was not taken away from him; (see ^{<403>}2 Samuel 23:1,2).

Ver. 12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*, etc.] Not temporal, but spiritual and eternal; and designs either Christ himself, who is God's salvation, of his appointing and providing, in the view of whom, as such, David had much spiritual joy; or the salvation he was to work out, which God the Father had contrived the scheme of in him, had covenanted with him to do, and had appointed his people to: salvation itself is a sure thing, and can never fail, being founded upon the purpose and counsel of God, which shall ever stand; and is secured in the covenant of grace, which can never be removed; and is now completely wrought out by Christ, and is applied by his Spirit to the heirs of it, who shall certainly and fully enjoy it; otherwise the glory of all the three Persons in it would be lost: but the joy of it may be interrupted and discontinued for a while, through falls into sin, as this case of David, and the case of Peter, show; and therefore a restoration of it is desired, by showing a fresh interest in this salvation; and particularly by an application of pardoning grace and mercy; (see ^{<438B>}Psalms 35:3,9 51:8);

and uphold me [with thy] free Spirit: or "let thy free Spirit uphold me" ^{f689}; the same with the Holy Spirit of God; called "free", because he is a most free and munificent giver: he gives his grace, and bestows his gifts severally, as he pleases, and liberally, and upbraids not; and because he is freely given of God; his graces are freely given, as faith, hope, love, etc. and because he frees them to whom he is given from the bondage of sin and corruption, and makes them Christ's free men, and delivers them into the liberty of the children of God; and so is a spirit of adoption, in opposition to a spirit of bondage, by which they have freedom and boldness to call God their Father; and by whom also they have liberty of soul at the throne of grace, and can freely make known their requests, and spread their cases before God; (see ^{<4185>}Romans 8:15,16 ^{<4487>}2 Corinthians 3:17); also he may be so called, because he makes the saints ready and

willing to obey the will of God, and to run with cheerfulness the way of his commandments; and is moreover “a princely spirit”^{f690}, or beneficent, as some choose to render the words; and which becomes such who are set among princes, and are made kings and priests unto God: and with this spirit the psalmist desires to be “upheld”, to be strengthened by it, to do the will and work of God, that so he might not stumble and fall into sin as he had done; that he might be stayed, supported, and comforted with it, as the Holy Spirit of promise; that so he might not faint and sink under his present sense of sin, and the guilt of it; and that he would be not only a guide unto him in the ways of God, but that he would hold up his goings in them, that so he might walk both at liberty and in safety. The Targum interprets this also of the spirit of prophecy.

Ver. 13. [*Then will I teach transgressors thy ways*, etc.] David was a prophet as well as a king; (see ^{<4123>}Acts 2:30); and taught men the fear of the Lord, (^{<4341>}Psalm 34:11), and instructed them in his ways, as he here promises he would; by which are meant, either the ways which God prescribes and directs men to walk in, as the paths of faith, holiness, and truth, and the ways of his commandments; or which he himself has walked in; meaning not the ways of his providence, which are sometimes past finding out; but the ways of his grace, the steps and methods he has taken in the salvation of men, by forming the scheme of it, by choosing unto it, by making a covenant with his Son, and appointing him to effect it; and particularly his ways and methods in receiving and pardoning backsliders, when returned by repentance to him; and who may be meant by “transgressors” here: and then the sense is, that David, upon his being received and pardoned, would teach others like himself how graciously God had dealt with him; how plenteous he is in mercy; how ready to forgive, and how faithful to his promises; and so encourage them to go to him, and acknowledge their transgressions, and seek pardoning grace at his hands, who does abundantly pardon, and whose ways are not as theirs; (see ^{<3517>}Isaiah 55:7-9);

and sinners shall be converted unto thee: or “that sinners may be converted unto thee”^{f691,1}; this being the end of teaching by the word, and the means of the conversion of profane and unregenerate sinners, through the power of divine grace; though rather this seems to be understood of the conversion of God’s own people after backslidings, and not of first conversion; (see ^{<4023>}Luke 22:32 ^{<3159>}James 5:19,20).

Ver. 14. *Deliver me from blood guiltiness*, etc.] Or “from bloods”^{f692}; meaning not the corruption of nature; (see ^{<51616>}Ezekiel 16:6); though to be rid of that, and to be free from the guilt and condemnation of it, is very desirable, (^{<60724>}Romans 7:24); but either from capital punishment in his family, the effusion of blood and slaughter in it, threatened him on account of his sin, (^{<10120>}2 Samuel 12:10). So the Targum is,

“deliver me from the judgment of slaying or killing;”

or rather from the guilt of the blood of Uriah, and other servants of his, he had been the occasion of shedding, and was chargeable with, being accessory thereunto, (^{<10115>}2 Samuel 11:15-17 12:9); which lay heavy upon his conscience, pressed him on every side, as if he was in prison, and brought upon him a spirit of bondage to fear; and therefore he prays to be delivered from it, by the application of pardoning grace, which would be like proclaiming liberty to the captive;

O God, thou God of my salvation; who has contrived it for his people, chosen them to it, secured it for them in covenant, and provided his Son to be the author of it, and sends his Spirit to apply it. The psalmist knew, that being God he could pardon his sin, remove his guilt, and free him from obligation to punishment, which none else could; and being the “God of [his] salvation”, and his covenant God, he had reason to hope and believe he would;

[and] my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness; goodness, grace, and mercy, in forgiving sin; for “righteousness” sometimes designs clemency, goodness, and mercy; (see ^{<19301>}Psalm 31:1); and faithfulness in making good the divine promise to forgive such who are sensible of sin, and repent of it, acknowledge it, and ask for mercy; or the righteousness of Christ, well known to David, (^{<60406>}Romans 4:6); which justifies from all sin, removes the guilt of it, and fills the soul with joy and gladness, (^{<29310>}Isaiah 61:10).

Ver. 15. *O Lord, open thou my lips*, etc.] The Targum adds, “in the late”; which were shut with a sense of sin, with shame of it, and sorrow for it; and though they were in some measure opened in prayer to God for the forgiveness of it, as appears by various petitions in this psalm, yet he still wanted a free spirit and boldness at the throne of grace, which the believer has when his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Christ; and especially his lips were shut as to praise and thanksgiving; the

guilt of sin had sealed up his lips, that he could not sing the praises of God as he had formerly done; and only a discovery of pardoning grace could open them, and for this he prays:

and my mouth shall show forth thy praise: the praise of his mercy, grace, goodness, truth, and faithfulness, in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; (see ^{<1937>}Psalm 103:1-3).

Ver. 16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice*, etc.] Legal sacrifice; for there was no sacrifice appointed under the law for murder and adultery;

else would I give [it]; he would gladly have offered it up;

thou delightest not in burnt offering; at least such kind of sacrifices, though they were of divine appointment, and at that time in full force and use; yet they were not the only and principal sacrifices God desired and delighted in; nor were they at all acceptable to him without faith in Christ, and an humble sense of sin; and when offered in the best manner, yet spiritual obedience, acts of mercy, and sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, were more pleasing to him, (^{<1915>}1 Samuel 15:15,22 ^{<2006>}Hosea 6:6 ^{<1980>}Psalm 69:30,31); wherefore the psalmist proposed to offer praise in (^{<1515>}Psalm 51:15), and adds what follows.

Ver. 17. *The sacrifices of God [are] a broken spirit*, etc.] That is humbled under a sense of sin; has true repentance for it; is smitten, wounded, and broken with it, by the word of God in the hand of the Spirit, which is a hammer to break the rock in pieces; and that not merely in a legal, but in an evangelical way; grieving for sin as committed against a God of love; broken and melted down under a sense of it, in a view of pardoning grace; and mourning for it, while beholding a pierced and wounded Saviour: the sacrifices of such a broken heart and contrite spirit are the sacrifices God desires, approves, accepts of, and delights in;

a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise; but regard, and receive with pleasure; (see ^{<1927>}Psalm 102:17); the Lord binds up and heals such broken hearts and spirits, (^{<1970>}Psalm 147:3 ^{<2000>}Isaiah 61:1); he is nigh to such persons, looks upon them, has respect unto them, and comes and dwells among them, (^{<1948>}Psalm 34:18 ^{<2000>}Isaiah 66:1,2 57:15).

Ver. 18. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion*, etc.] This verse, and (^{<1519>}Psalm 51:19), are thought, by a Spanish Rabbi mentioned by Aben Ezra, to have been added by one of the holy men that lived in the time of

the Babylonish captivity; though rather it is thought, by the latter, to be written by David, under a spirit of prophecy, concerning, times to come; and so Kimchi thinks they are prophetic of future things; of the destruction of the first and second temple, and of the acceptableness of sacrifices in the times of the Messiah: and by Zion is meant the church, under the Gospel dispensation, (^{<3822>}Hebrews 12:22 ^{<640>}Revelation 14:1); and the “good” prayed for includes all the good and glorious things spoken of the church of Christ in the latter day; such as an increase of its numbers, the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, the conversion of the Jews, and the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; the spread of the Gospel all over the world, the purity of Gospel doctrine, worship, and ordinances, the spirituality of religion, the power of godliness, and an abounding of brotherly love, and the like. The “good pleasure” of God, in which this is desired to be done, may denote either ִּוְצֵר־ט , “the acceptable time”; or “time of good pleasure”; the Gospel dispensation, so called (^{<2308>}Isaiah 49:8 ^{<4002>}2 Corinthians 6:2), in which it has been foretold, and may be expected these things shall be done; or else the cause, source, and spring of them, which is the sovereign good will and pleasure of God, from whence flow all the blessings of grace and goodness;

build thou the walls of Jerusalem; not literally taken; for these do not appear to have stood in need of being repaired or rebuilt in David’s time; but the church of God, which is a spiritual house, built up of lively stones, true believers; which may be said to be more and more built up by an addition of such unto it: it is as a city compact together, whose walls are salvation, and its gates praise, (^{<2301>}Isaiah 26:1 60:18); of the wall of the new Jerusalem, (see ^{<6212>}Revelation 21:12,18,19).

Ver. 19. *Then shall thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness*, etc.] Which must be different from the legal ones he desired not, and did not delight in, (^{<3516>}Psalm 51:16); but design sacrifices under the Gospel dispensation, as the word “then” shows, which connects this verse with (^{<3518>}Psalm 51:18): and in the first place intend the sacrifice of Christ, which is of a sweet smelling savour to God; and his righteousness, with which he is well pleased, because the law is magnified and made honourable by it; and next the saints themselves, who present their bodies to him a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice, they being accepted with him in Christ the beloved; as also their good works, particularly acts of charity and beneficence, with which sacrifices God is well pleased; and especially the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, which are acceptable to him

through Jesus Christ; as all are that are offered in faith through him, and from love, and with a view to the glory of God; (see ^{<4482>}Ephesians 5:2) (^{<6121>}Romans 12:1 ^{<8135>}Hebrews 13:15,16);

with burnt offering, and whole burnt offering; the difference between these two, according to Aben Ezra and Kimchi, was, that the **hl w[**, “olah”, or “burnt offering”, was the daily sacrifice; and the additional ones, which were of beasts and birds, (^{<8100>}Leviticus 1:1-17), and the **l yl k**, “calil”, was the meat offering of the priests, which was wholly consumed, (^{<8162>}Leviticus 6:22,23); though this also is sometimes used of beasts, (^{<0070>}1 Samuel 7:9); and both may signify love to God, and to our neighbour; or a man’s devoting himself to the Lord in the flames of love, as a whole burnt offering to him, and which is better than all burnt offerings, (^{<4123>}Mark 12:33);

then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar; or “calves”^{f693}; meaning the calves of the lips, (^{<2842>}Hosea 14:2); interpreted the fruit of the lips, even giving thanks to the name of God, (^{<8116>}Hebrews 13:16); which sacrifices of praise being offered up on the altar Christ, come with acceptance before God, (^{<8130>}Hebrews 13:10,16 ^{<2807>}Isaiah 56:7).