

Templates of Truth with Rick Smith
Audio Script – October 7, 2009

Have you ever blown it in life? A serious, consequential kind of failure? King David did, and the words he writes in the Psalm 51 express his grave remorse and heart-felt desire to experience true forgiveness. The Scripture reveals these three expressions of forgiveness in today's Templates of Truth.

Psalm 51 was written by King David of Israel after the confrontation with the prophet Nathan following David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah. It is a Psalm expressing sincere and genuine remorse, confession and repentance – all the necessary elements for experiencing true forgiveness. There are, however, three different kinds of forgiveness that we need, and David's words convey his experience with all three.

First and foremost, we need God's forgiveness. David's plea was: *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin* (Psalm 51:1-2). In an Old Testament setting, David met the New Testament conditions for forgiveness: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (I John 1:9). David's confession was clear and sincere. He did not argue with God or try to justify his behavior: *For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before Thee. Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight* (Psalm 51:4). Once we have come to God in sincere confession and repentance, the promise of Scripture is unconditional and complete forgiveness: *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us* (Psalm 103:12). Not only that, Isaiah assures us: *(God) is the one who wipes out your transgressions for (His) own sake; and will not remember your sins* (Isaiah 43:25). No matter what the sin, we cannot sin beyond the grace and mercy of God to forgive. No forgiveness is more total and complete than that which we can experience from God Himself.

Even though confession and repentance must be sincere and genuine, receiving God's forgiveness is the easiest of the three. We, secondly, must forgive ourselves. That is not so easy with many people. We can truly feel forgiven by God, but the human awareness of our shame and guilt while living with the suffering consequences of our sin, serve to constantly remind us of our failures. If we refuse to forgive ourselves, we paralyze our life in uselessness with an overwhelming sense of unworthiness and discredit. We also rob ourselves of the joy of our relationship with God, for we burden it down with unwarranted guilt. In this Psalm, we see indication that David had forgiven himself of these dreadful failures: *Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice...renew a steadfast spirit within me...restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit* (Psalm 51:8,10,12). With God's help and strength, David desired to forgive himself and allow the Spirit of God to wash away his shame and guilt, and bathe him once again with rejoicing and gladness. We must experience God's forgiveness, but we can never move forward in His will, plan and purpose for our lives until we also get to the point that we can genuinely and sincerely forgive ourselves.

There is one more form of forgiveness that is also necessary to experience, but it is the hardest of the three simply because it is one we cannot control – the forgiveness of others. The first two kinds of forgiveness are a very private matter. This third kind of forgiveness is a very public matter. We can initiate public forgiveness through appropriate confession and acts of restitution, but the decision to forgive rests with each individual person(s) affected by our sin. You can ask someone to forgive you, and you can demonstrate a changed life before them, but you cannot make them forgive you. David desired to have a future ministry of help, compassion, support and encouragement to others who fail in life that was born out of his own failure and what God was able to accomplish in his life as a result. He said, *Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will be converted to Thee...then my tongue will joyfully sing of Thy righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Thy praise* (Psalm 51:13-15). David could have never had ministry opportunity or audience to express such things, had people not forgiven him and received him in a renewed and restorative relationship. Paul admonished the Galatians: *If a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness* (Galatians 6:1). God will always have spiritually mature believers, filled with the presence, power and fruit of the Holy Spirit, who will be divinely empowered to extend this kind of forgiveness. Be patient and wait for Him to lead you into the paths of their lives, and leave the others to Him.

You may have failed and failed miserably in life, but you are not a failure. You can be freed totally and completely of the shame, humiliation, guilt and many of the consequences of your failure when you experience the kind of forgiveness that David paints into the words of this beautiful Psalm. Claim them today, live in the freedom God wants you to know, and get on with serving Him fervently by putting the past behind and eternity in view.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.