

Whiter Than Snow: Meditations on Sin and Mercy

by

Paul David Tripp



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Synopsis

What do you do when you've really blown it? Is sin really as dangerous and is grace really as powerful as the Bible says they are? Is there such a thing as a new beginning? Sin and grace—these are the two themes of our lives. We all blow it and we all need to start over again. In Psalm 51, David tells his story of moral failure, personal awareness, grief, confession, repentance, commitment, and hope. And because David's story is every believer's story, Psalm 51 is every believer's psalm. It tells how we, as broken sinners, can be brutally honest with God and yet stand before him without fear. *Whiter Than Snow* unpacks this powerful little psalm in fifty-two meditations, reminding readers that by God's grace there is mercy for every wrong and grace for every new beginning. Designed for busy believers, these brief and engaging meditations are made practical by the reflection questions that conclude each chapter.

Sort review

"*Whiter Than Snow* is music for the sinner's soul. In fifty-two personal, creative, and sometimes poetic devotionals, Paul Tripp responds to Psalm 51 the way a jazz musician improvises on a familiar tune. In making this sweet music, Dr. Tripp makes King David's confession our own, helping us get honest about our sin and opening our hearts to the mercy of Jesus."—Philip Graham Ryken, President, Wheaton College

"Convicting and encouraging, cutting and healing. Paul Tripp delves into the misery of sin and the goodness of grace with insight and inspiration. This book wonderfully blessed me, and I pray for its widest possible reading."—Daniel L. Akin, President, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

About the Author Paul David Tripp (DMin, Westminster Theological Seminary) is a pastor, award-winning author, and international conference speaker. He has written numerous books, including the bestselling daily devotional *New Morning Mercies*. His nonprofit ministry exists to connect the transforming power of Jesus Christ to everyday life. Tripp lives in Philadelphia with his wife, Luella, and they have four grown children.

President, Paul Tripp Ministries; author, *New Morning Mercies* and *My Heart Cries Out*

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Whiter Than Snow

Meditations on Sin and Mercy

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the Walls,³⁴ Enough,³⁵ What Does It Have to Do with Me?,³⁶ Immanuel,³⁷ Hoping for a Broken Heart,³⁸ Wisdom Is a Person,³⁹ The Hardening of the Heart,⁴⁰ The Grace of a Clean Heart,⁴¹ Righteous Judgment,⁴² God's Pleasure,⁴³ Sermon on the Mount,⁴⁴ Appealing to God's Glory,⁴⁵ Sacrifices,⁴⁶ The Amazing Grace of Self-knowledge,⁴⁷ Forgiveness,⁴⁸ Grace That Hides,⁴⁹ Broken Bones,⁵⁰ Ready, Willing, and Waiting,⁵¹ Reductionism,⁵² Celebrating Redemption, CHAPTER 1 Mercy Me: Psalm 51 and Everyday Life Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. PSALM 51:1 It was one of those moments you want to take back. It was one of those times when you go where your desires and emotions are leading you. It was one of those situations when you know you should stop or walk away but feel you can't. And it was one of those moments when afterward you are confronted with the sin that still lives inside of you. Yes, it was one of those moments. It wasn't a big deal in one way. Just a small conversation that had turned a bit ugly. It wasn't a dramatic life-altering moment. It was in the privacy of my home with one of my family members. But maybe that's the point. Perhaps it's very important because that's where I live every day. You see, you and I don't live in a series of big, dramatic moments. We don't careen from big decision to big decision. We all live in an endless series of little moments. The character of a life isn't set in ten big moments. The character of a life is set in ten thousand little moments of everyday life. It's the themes of struggles that emerge from those little moments that reveal what's really going on in our hearts. So, I knew I couldn't back away from this little moment. I knew I had to own my sin. The minute I thought this, an inner struggle began. "I wasn't the only one at fault. If he hadn't said what he said, I wouldn't have become angry. I was actually pretty patient for much of the conversation." These were some of the arguments I was giving myself. Isn't this interesting. Rather than appealing to the mercy of the Lord in the face of my sin, what I actually do instead is function as my own defense lawyer and present a list of arguments for my own righteousness. The theology behind the defense is that my greatest problem is outside of me, not inside of me. In so arguing, I'm telling myself that I don't really need to be rescued by the Lord's mercy. No, I'm telling myself that what I need to be rescued from is that sinner in the room who caused me to respond as I did. Here's the point. Before you can ever make a clean and unamended confession of your sin, you have to first begin by confessing your righteousness. It's not just your sin that separates you from God; your righteousness does as well. Because, when you are convinced you are righteous, you don't seek the forgiving, rescuing, and restoring mercy that can be found only in Jesus Christ. What's actually true is that when I come to the Lord after I've blown it, I've only one argument to make. It's not the argument of the difficulty of the environment that I am in. It's not the argument of the difficult people that I'm near. It's not the argument of good intentions that were thwarted in some way. No, I have only one argument. It's right there in the first verse of Psalm 51, as David confesses his sin with Bathsheba. I come to the Lord with only one appeal, his mercy. I've no other defense. I've no other standing. I've no other hope. I can't escape the reality of my biggest problem — me! So I appeal to the one thing in my life that's sure and will never fail. I appeal to the one thing that

guaranteed not only my acceptance with God, but the hope of new beginnings and fresh starts. I appeal on the basis of the greatest gift I ever have or ever will be given. I leave the courtroom of my own defense, I come out of hiding, and I admit who I am. But I'm not afraid, because I've been personally and eternally blessed. Because of what Jesus did, God looks on me with mercy. It's my only appeal; it's the source of my hope; it's my life. Mercy, mercy me!

Take a Moment

1. When you go to God in prayer, do you go as your own defense lawyer or as the guilty party (see Luke 18:9–14)? Do you tend to stack up arguments for your acceptability before God?

2. If you more quickly rested in God's mercy and, because of this, more readily admitted your sin, what practical changes in your life would result?

CHAPTER 2 On Being Sustained

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

PSALM 51:12 It's a curious phrase: "and uphold me with a willing spirit." What does it mean to be upheld with a willing spirit? What is it that David prays for here and how does it fit with the confession that makes up the rest of this remarkable psalm?

Human beings are simply not self-sustaining, and we were never designed to live as if we are. The doctrine of creation confronts us with the reality that we are neither physically nor spiritually self-sustaining. We were created to be dependent. Dependency is not therefore a sign of weakness. Rather it is a universal indicator of our humanity. Humans are dependent beings. Yet we do not like to be dependent. It is the legacy of our fallenness to do everything we can to conceptually and functionally repudiate the doctrine of human dependency. So, all fallen human beings tend to buy into two attractive but dangerous lies. These are the lies that were on the tongue of the serpent on that fateful day of manipulation and disobedience in the garden. The first lie is the lie of autonomy, which tells me that I am an independent human being with the right to invest my life however I choose. The second lie is the lie of self-sufficiency, which declares that I have everything I need within myself to be what I am supposed to be and do what I am supposed to do. Because we do not want to live for God, but for ourselves, we are easily seduced, at the mundane, everyday level, by these lies. But David now has his eyes open. He sees the lies for what they are. He had wanted his own way. He had opted for independence. He had stepped outside of God's boundaries. He had used his power in the service of his own kingdom rather than God's. And it had all been exposed and came crashing down around his feet. David had tried the path of independent self-sustenance. Psalm 51 is his prayer of repentance.

God has promised to sustain us by his grace. He has promised us the sustaining grace of forgiveness, so that we can stand before him unafraid. He has promised the sustaining grace of enablement, giving us the strength to do what he calls us to do. He has promised us the sustaining grace of protection, delivering us from evil. He has promised us the sustaining grace of wisdom, protecting us from our own foolishness. He has promised us the sustaining grace of perseverance, keeping us until the final enemy has been defeated. He has promised the sustaining grace of eternity, giving us the hope of a day when the struggle will be over. It is a willing heart that causes us to seek the grace that has been promised. When we turn from our own way and recognize our inability to live his way, we begin to seek the full range of resources that he has promised us in his Son. Grace is for the willing and we only become

willing when we confess not only the gravity of our sin, but our inability to deliver ourselves from it. Then our willingness opens to us all the sustenance of heart that can only be found in the Son.

Take a Moment 1. Where in your life have you opted for independence? In what ways are you not taking advantage of God's resources of help?

2. In what places do you need to rely more on the grace of Christ and the resources of help he has placed in your life (receiving loving confrontation well, seeking more honest fellowship in the body of Christ, more willingness to confess need to God and others)?

CHAPTER 3 Something in My Hands I Bring

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

PSALM 51:17 God doesn't want you to come to Him empty-handed. No, you can't come to Him full of yourself, And you can't come to Him based on your track record And you can't use your performance as a recommendation. No, you can't come to Him based on your family, Your personality, Your education, Your position in life, The successes you've had, The possessions you've accumulated, Or the human acceptance you've gained. But God requires you to come with your hands full. He requires you to bring to Him the sweetest of sacrifices, The sacrifice of words, He calls you to bring Hosea's offering. "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you And return to the LORD. Say to Him 'Forgive all our sins And receive us graciously, That we may offer our lips as the sacrifice of bulls.'" God doesn't want you to come to him empty-handed. He asks of you a sacrifice. Not a grain offering, Not a lamb or a bull. No, that requirement has been satisfied By the blood of the Lamb. Yet God asks of you a sacrifice It is the offering of words, Words of humility, Words of honesty, Words of moral courage, Words of moral candor, Words that could only be spoken, By one who rests in grace. Words of confession are what you must bring. Place words, Free of negotiation or excuse, On His altar of grace, And receive forgiveness and cleansing. Uncover your heart, Exposed by words, and say: "We will never again say, 'Our gods' To what our own hands have made, For in You the fatherless find compassion." What David willingly did He requires of you, Come with words, It is the way of grace, It is the way of freedom, It is the way to God.

Take a Moment 1. What "word" sacrifice is God calling you to bring to him? Where do you need to seek the grace of forgiveness?

2. Is there a place where you are saying "our gods" to what your hands have made? What thing(s) in the creation tend to compete in your heart with the place that the Creator alone should occupy (a possession, position, person, circumstance, relationship, personal dream)?

CHAPTER 4 Big Grace

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

PSALM 51:5 What a devastating and hard-to-swallow description! Maybe you had it happen to you? A friend tells you he wants to talk to you, and when you get together, you realize that what he really wanted to do was confront you. You're not really excited about being told bad things about yourself, but this is your friend, so you're willing to listen. As he begins to lay out his concerns, you begin to feel pain inside. You can't believe what you're being told about yourself. Silently and inwardly you begin to rise to your own defense. You marshal arguments that you're a better person than the one being described. You want to believe that what you're hearing is a distortion, lacking in accuracy and love, but you know you can't. You're

devastated because deep down you know it's true. Deep down you know that God has brought this person your way. Deep down you know what you're being required to consider is an accurate description of yourself. Such a description is found in Genesis 6:5, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." What a devastating description! It's hard to swallow, isn't it? You want to think that this biblical description is of the people who are more sinful sinners than you and I are. But this verse is not describing a super-sinner class. No, it's a mirror into which every human being is meant to look and see himself. It is capturing in a few powerful words what theologians call "total depravity." Now, total depravity doesn't mean that as sinners we are as bad as we could possibly be. No, what it actually means is that sin reaches to every aspect of our personhood. Its damage of us is total. Physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, motivationally, socially, we have been damaged by sin. Its ravages are inescapable and comprehensive. No one has dodged its scourge, and no one has been partially affected. We are all sinners. It reaches to every aspect of what makes us us. Sadly, when each of us looks into the mirror of Genesis 6:5, we see an accurate description of ourselves. Now, you have to ask yourself: Why is Genesis 6:5 so hard to accept? Why do we spontaneously rise to our own defense? Why are you and I devastated when our weakness, sin, and failure are pointed out? Why do we find confrontation and rebuke painful even when they are done in love? Why do we want to believe that we are in the good class of sinners? Why do we want to believe that we are deprived, but not depraved? Or that we are depraved, but not totally? Why do we find comfort in pointing to people who appear to be worse sinners than we are? Why do we make up self-atoning revisions of our own history? Why do we erect self-justifying arguments for what we have said or done? Why do we turn the tables when someone points out a wrong, making sure that they know that we know that we're not the only sinner in the room? Why do we line up all the good things we've done as a counter-balance for the wrong that is being highlighted? Why is this all so hard to accept? There's only one answer to all of these questions. There's only one conclusion that fits. We find this all so hard to accept because we studiously hold onto the possibility that we're more righteous than the Bible describes us to be. When we look into the mirror of self-appraisal, the person we tend to see is a person who is more righteous than any of us actually is!

We were at the end of a wonderful service at Tenth Presbyterian Church that had been punctuated by a powerful sermon from the Ten Commandments. I immediately turned to my wife at the end of the service and said, "I am so glad our children were here to hear that sermon!" She didn't even have to say anything to me. She simply gave me that look. You know, the one that says, "I can't believe you are actually saying what you are saying." Immediately I felt embarrassed and grieved. It had happened to me so subtly and quickly. I had placed myself outside of the circle of the sermon's diagnosis. I had accepted the fact that whatever Exodus and Phil Ryken were describing did not include me. And I was glad that the people in my family who really needed the diagnosis had been in attendance. "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also

obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1–2). If the Bible's description is accurate, then God's grace is our only hope. Thank God that he has given us big grace! Each one of us needs grace that's not only big enough to forgive our sin, but also powerful enough to free us from the self-atoning prison of our own righteousness. We're not only held captive by our sin, but also by the delusion of our righteousness. Resting in God's grace isn't just about confessing your sin; it's about forsaking your righteousness as well. So we all need the big grace that's found only in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must all, with humility, say to the God of big grace, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ... Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (Psalm 51:5, 2). And then rest in his righteousness alone. Take a Moment¹. Is there a possibility that you are not resting in the righteousness you have been given in Christ because you are seeing yourself as more righteous than you actually are? Where in your life do you tend to take too much pride in your wisdom, maturity, and performance rather than resting in the big grace you have found in Jesus?² How do you typically respond when personal sin, weakness, failure, foolishness, or immaturity is pointed out to you? Where do you tend to erect self-justifying arguments for your words or behavior? (Continues...) Excerpted from *Whiter Than Snow* by Paul David Tripp. Copyright © 2008 Paul David Tripp. Excerpted by permission of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher. Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. solely for the personal use of visitors to this web site. Read more

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New Morning Mercies: A Daily Gospel Devotional Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change (Resources for Changing Lives)

What people say about this book

Anthony V, "Great book. Great book for devotional purposes or to use for a small group for discussion, which is what we are using it for. Some good material to get you thinking and convicted. Also the short questions at each 2 page chapter helps with discussion. We are using this in a men's group and we meet for about an hour, it's just the right amount of material. Highly recommend"

Ms. Hill, "Convicting and informative.. Clear and easy to understand More depth on Psalm 51 than I've ever had So much application A must read"

Brian Sherman, "Meditation on a great Psalm. This book is 52 small chapters (most are 3 pages) from an author who has obviously spent a lot of time thinking about this psalm and his position before God. Its introspective nature is reflective of what comes to the mind of a man when he understands his depravity and is unable to change unless God supernaturally changes his heart. The 51st Psalm is David's prayers of repentance and want of God's mercy for his sinful nature, the author here goes after the same aspects of sin in our lives, showing on many occasions how we assume we are better than we are, he takes many of the verses that make up the 51st psalm and shows examples of how we can go to God with these things to receive forgiveness, mercy, healing and spiritual growth. There are in the book what I would gather as prayers, from the author to God, that are very moving and useful for our own meditation. It is very easy reading but that doesn't discount the depth of importance of the lessons to be learned. I'd be surprised if laymen or scholar didn't benefit from this work."

Ronbro C., "Walking with the Lord for over 18 years, I Walking with the Lord for over 18 years , I have either read, purchased or glanced at several devotionals. Many have sat on a shelf, either through boredom or being miles over my head. This one however is next to my recliner, battered and dog eared from being a constant in my life. The 1- 2 page devotionals and the prayer & reflections keep me moving forward, in conformity , towards Christ likeness. Since buying my 1st copy, I've now bought several as it is a faithful & reliable gift for friends & graduation gifts. Dr. Tripp has a gift for pointing towards the Glory of GOD, the drag on our hearts of sin and conviction & tools to honor the Lord."

Ebook Library Reader, "Very good read. Come into reading the book with an Very good read. Come into reading the book with an open mind and allow God to work in your life. I think too often, we as Christians, and I do it too, take the approach of what can God do for me and don't like this or that if things don't meet our expectations, that we miss out on the maybe small things that we don't expect that God has for us. So just use this book as a supplement to your normal prayer and study and it would be a good supplement. It's not going to fix anything in your life though, so don't expect that. That's God's job and yours to listen and steward the responsibilities

you're given.”

T. E. Antis, “Meditating on mercy. Haven't finished it yet, but I find each meditation really thought provoking. I think it is good to reflect regularly on sin, grace and redemption, and I am reading it as my lunch-time devotional. I kind of wish I bought the paperback because the devotionals suggest ideas I would like to notate on the page, something I prefer in ink on paper over the digital kind in Kindle.”

Rico, “King David has always been a bible superhero to me King David has always been a bible superhero to me growing up. Now as adult I have face many questions about my life and sins. This book offers a detailed description about the situation David got himself into and how the spiritual experience of his son ultimately leads him toward the heart of God.”

davideunice, “good book. great news for everyone about sins being washed away. Easy to read. I would recommend it to everyone. A help for time and eternity”

lorlabear, “Four Stars. Enjoying reading this thought provoking book!”

Tyrone, “Five Stars. Excellent”

Declan, “Ein Andachtsbuch zu Psalm 51. Sehr hilfreich, wenn man sich täglich ein Bisschen mit dem Thema Buße beschäftigen will.”

Selvaraj IA, “Good for Nominal Christians. Staying 52 days in a Psalm is more exciting and difficult experience. The whole book concern about me and my inner man happy.”

The book by Paul David Tripp has a rating of 5 out of 4.7. 148 people have provided feedback.

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