

## Waltke, Psalms, Session 15, Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

### 1. Abstract of Waltke, Psalms, Session 15 David's Penitential Psalm, Psalm 51, [biblicalelearning.org](http://biblicalelearning.org), BeL

This lecture by Dr. Bruce Waltke **analyzes** Psalm 51, a **petition psalm** of David written after his sin with Bathsheba. Waltke **examines** the psalm's structure, **linguistic features**, and theological implications, **highlighting** David's confession, repentance, and plea for forgiveness. He **connects** David's actions and remorse to specific Old Testament laws and **discusses** the concepts of restitution and God's grace. Finally, he **applies** the psalm's themes to modern contexts, including the case of a convicted murderer.

**2. 19-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Waltke's, Psalms, Session 14 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the [Biblicalelearning.org](http://Biblicalelearning.org) [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms → Waltke).**



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### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Bruce Waltke's lecture on Psalm 51.

#### **Briefing Document: Dr. Bruce Waltke on Psalm 51**

**Source:** Excerpts from "Waltke\_Psalms\_EN\_Lecture15.pdf"

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**Overview:** This lecture focuses on Psalm 51, a famous petition psalm of David, which he wrote after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. Dr. Waltke delves into the historical context, the structure of the psalm, its theological significance, and its practical application for believers.

#### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. Historical Context and the Gravity of David's Sin:**

- Psalm 51 is David's confession after his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. It's categorized as a petition psalm, specifically for forgiveness of sin.
- David's sins are two-fold: the "sin of passion" (adultery with Bathsheba) and a coldly calculated, premeditated murder of Uriah to cover up the pregnancy.
- Waltke emphasizes the severity of David's actions, noting that Uriah was a loyal soldier and one of David's top warriors, highlighting the betrayal.
- David's attempt to cover up his sins involved multiple stages of deception and murder.
- David not only sinned against Uriah but also "despised the word of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:9) by breaking specific laws from the Torah.
- Numbers 35:16: Condemns murder
- Deuteronomy 22:22: Condemns adultery
- According to the Law, David is under a sentence of death for both adultery and murder.
- *Quote:* "There's a sin of passion and there's a sin of calculated cold-blooded murder... It's utterly, utterly wicked what David is doing. So under this coverup, as though it's just an accident of war, these things happen in war and so forth. Yet it is calculated murder."

## 1. The Nature of Repentance and Forgiveness:

- David's repentance is genuine and complete, accepting full responsibility for his sins without making excuses. He doesn't blame Bathsheba, even though she bathed where the King could see her.
- The Law, while requiring death for these offenses, is interpreted within the broader context of the Torah, where true repentance brings mercy and forgiveness.
- *Quote:* "That is part of Torah is the point I'm making. So, they're both under a sentence of death. And furthermore, they cannot change the situation. In other words, it's irredeemable."
- Confessing and renouncing sin is key to obtaining mercy (Proverbs 28:13).
- Forgiveness doesn't erase the historical consequences of sin (example: the death of David's son, even after his repentance).
- *Quote:* "Whoever conceals their sin does not prosper, but one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy. And what David does in this psalm, he confesses it. He comes with an absolutely clean break. He renounces it. He looks to blood for cleansing and he's forgiven. You will not die."
- God's grace is greater than even the most grievous sins. David's eventual forgiveness and the birth of Solomon illustrate God's grace in action.
- The case of Carla Faye Tucker, the serial killer, is used to exemplify the power of true repentance and transformation in the face of horrible deeds. Waltke notes, that like David's genuine repentance, her confession was also genuine, and feels she should have been pardoned.
- *Quote:* "The point of the story is no matter how great our sin is, God's grace is greater than our sin when there's true repentance, such as is expressed in this psalm."

## 1. The Structure of Psalm 51:

- **Introductory Petition/Address (v. 1-2):** A plea for God's mercy based on His unfailing love and compassion. It uses three primary words for sin: transgression (rebellion), iniquity (twisting of the standard), and sin (missing the mark).
- **Lament (v. 3-6):** David confesses his overt acts of sin and recognizes his inherent sinful nature ("original sin"). He knows his sins are against God's standard.

- **Petition (v. 7-12):** A call for cleansing from sin, spiritual renewal, restoration of joy, and a steadfast spirit. There is an emphasis on a "new spirit" that can enable him to overcome his sin.
- **Praise (v. 13-19):** David commits to teaching transgressors about God's ways of mercy and grace. He speaks of God's righteousness as a restoration of rightness and declares he will sing God's praises, also declaring that his broken spirit is a true sacrifice.
- **Wish (v. 19):** A desire for God to prosper Zion, the Kingdom. This reflects the understanding that a right relationship with God as king will lead to a prosperous kingdom.

#### 1. Theological Insights:

- **God's Transcendence:** Psalm 51 is part of the Elohistic Psalter, which uses Elohim (God) in reference to God's transcendence and power as creator.
- **The Nature of Sin:** Sin is not just a violation of human standards but ultimately a rebellion against God and His divine standard.
- *Quote:* "Against you, you only, have I sinned. Because the standard is God's. When we sin, we're sinning against God's standard."
- *Quote:* "Every word for sin assumes an absolute standard."
- **God's Attributes:** The psalm emphasizes God's mercy, unfailing love, and compassion as the basis for forgiveness. He also notes that the "ways of God" are those ways.
- **The Need for Spiritual Transformation:** David's plea for a "new spirit" highlights the necessity for inner transformation, as well as legal forgiveness, to break free from the power of sin.
- **The Importance of Blood:** The use of "hyssop" implies the need for blood atonement, indicating that forgiveness comes through a sacrificial act.
- **The Meaning of Righteousness:** In the psalm, righteousness is directly tied to salvation as a restoration of rightness.

#### 1. Practical Application:

- The psalm provides a model for how to approach God in repentance and seek forgiveness.

- True repentance involves a complete break from sin, acknowledging the absolute standard of God.
- The ability to accept forgiveness is a gift from God.
- God's grace is greater than any sin when there's true repentance.
- The story reminds us how we ought to respond to those who are changed and transformed by God's grace.
- *Quote:* "My encouragement is that what if skeletons may be in our closet, however, deep that hole, you can see those stars of grace up there."
- The concept of Restitution, where it's possible to restore something to someone harmed, is an important aspect of a true turn away from sin.

### **Important Notes:**

- Dr. Waltke highlights the editorial process of the Psalms, noting that the Elohistic Psalter uses Elohim in preference to Yahweh.
- The number 42 is associated with premature death in the Bible.
- The lecture is structured around a detailed analysis of the psalm, its structure, and its individual lines. He takes a close look at the figures of speech used in the Psalm, such as "Let me hear joy and gladness". He notes that a figure of speech occurs when you put two words together that don't go together, or are unusual in their use. In this instance, an emotional state can't literally be heard.
- The interpretation of the Old Testament law and its relation to New Testament concepts are frequently touched upon.

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Waltke's lecture on Psalm 51 provides a deep dive into the heart of David's repentance and the nature of God's grace. It is a powerful reminder of the depth of sin and the greater depth of God's mercy, applicable to the life of the believer. The structure and motifs of a petition psalm are also explained in the lecture. This makes the psalm both a guide for our own prayers and an affirmation of God's unfailing love.

## 4. Psalms Study Guide: Waltke, Psalms, Session 14, David's Penitential Psalm, Psalm 51

### Psalm 51 Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. According to Waltke, what are the two main reasons Psalm 51 is important?
2. What are the two major sins David committed in the Bathsheba incident, as discussed by Waltke?
3. How does Waltke describe Uriah's character, and why is this important?
4. According to Waltke, how does David's actions violate God's word and specific laws from the Torah?
5. What does Waltke mean when he says restitution is not possible in David's case, and what does he say is necessary instead?
6. What are the three primary words for sin used in Psalm 51, and how does Waltke explain their nuances?
7. What are the three divine attributes David invokes in Psalm 51, and how do they relate to the message of the psalm?
8. How does Waltke explain the phrase, "Against you, you only have I sinned," in the context of David's actions?
9. According to Waltke, how does David's lament in Psalm 51 move from his actions to his nature?
10. How does Waltke explain the concept of "a broken spirit" as the sacrifice acceptable to God?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. Psalm 51 is important because it is one of the most famous psalms, similar to Psalm 23, and it is a petition psalm that exemplifies a plea for forgiveness. It is a psalm that demonstrates that God's grace is greater than our sin.

2. The two major sins David committed were a sin of passion, which was his adultery with Bathsheba, and a sin of calculated, cold-blooded murder, which was the orchestration of Uriah's death.
3. Uriah is described as a loyal, converted Hittite soldier who is part of the covenant community and is one of David's top 30 warriors, underscoring that David murdered a righteous man who exemplified covenant values.
4. David violates God's word by committing adultery, which is forbidden by Deuteronomy 22:22, and by arranging Uriah's murder, which is a violation of Numbers 35:16, both of which are capital offenses under the law.
5. Waltke explains that restitution is impossible because David cannot restore life to Uriah or purity to Bathsheba; therefore, confession, renunciation, and repentance, leading to God's mercy, are necessary for forgiveness.
6. The three words for sin are "transgression," meaning to rebel, "iniquity," meaning to twist or deviate from a standard with associated guilt, and "sin" itself, meaning to miss the mark, each implying a violation of God's standard.
7. David invokes "mercy," "unfailing love," and "compassion," which are attributes of God that show His favor, pity, and covenantal loyalty, respectively; these show that God's nature is to forgive.
8. The phrase "Against you, you only have I sinned" means that while David's actions affected others, ultimately, all sin is a violation of God's standard, and only God can offer true judgment and forgiveness.
9. David's lament first focuses on his overt actions, taking personal responsibility, but then moves to his acknowledgment of his inherent sinful nature, the idea of original sin, and his moral impotence, which he sees as the root of his actions.
10. A "broken spirit" is not about a rejection of the sacrificial system, but rather it is the appropriate attitude in the face of egregious sin. It is the confession of a sinner. It is a heart that admits its dependence on God.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each of the following questions using a standard essay format (introduction, supporting paragraphs, conclusion).

1. Analyze the structure of Psalm 51 as outlined by Waltke, explaining how the different sections contribute to the overall message of the psalm. Include examples and demonstrate how motifs in petition psalms are evident.
2. Discuss the significance of David's confession of sin in Psalm 51. How does he take responsibility for his actions, and what does this teach about repentance? Include references to laws violated and David's reaction to Nathan's accusation.
3. Explain the interplay between God's justice and mercy as presented in Psalm 51 and in Waltke's analysis of it. How does David's experience with forgiveness and punishment demonstrate these attributes of God, and how are the historical consequences of his sin relevant?
4. Analyze the significance of the use of the words for sin and the divine attributes that are used in the first part of the psalm. How does this contribute to a deeper understanding of God's nature and how humans relate to God?
5. Discuss how Waltke's lecture illustrates proper application of ancient law, specifically using the example of Deuteronomy's parapet law and the application of this law by Waltke's son. How can understanding principles behind ancient laws help us today?

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Petition Psalm:** A type of psalm characterized by a direct address to God, expressions of lament, requests for help or forgiveness, and often ending with praise.
- **Elohistic Psalter:** A portion of the Book of Psalms (Psalms 42-83) that predominantly uses the name "Elohim" (God) rather than "Yahweh" (the Lord), possibly indicating an editorial preference.
- **Transgression:** A word for sin signifying a rebellion against God's law or standard, often involving a deliberate act of defiance.
- **Iniquity:** A word for sin suggesting a twisting or deviation from a standard, often implying guilt and perversion of what is right.
- **Sin:** In general, the failure to meet a standard; particularly, falling short of God's moral standard, often referred to as "missing the mark."
- **Mercy:** A divine attribute characterized by God's favor and willingness to meet the needs of those in distress or deserving punishment.



- **Compassion:** God's quality of having pity and understanding toward human weakness, often shown when someone is facing suffering.
- **Unfailing Love:** The concept of God's loyal and covenantal love that persists regardless of human failures.
- **Hyssop:** A hairy plant used in ancient Israel for ceremonial cleansing, symbolizing the application of blood and water for purification and transition from death to life.
- **Forensic Forgiveness:** Legal forgiveness; the removal of guilt and the cancellation of the penalty for sin, as if wiped from a slate.
- **Liturgical Cleansing:** Ritual cleansing; the removal of defilement or uncleanness, often associated with temple worship and feeling worthy to be in God's presence.
- **Original Sin:** The theological concept that all humans are born with a sinful nature inherited from the first sin of Adam and Eve.
- **Lex Talionis:** The law of retaliation. Commonly known as "eye for eye, tooth for tooth."
- **Restitution:** The act of making amends for a wrong or injury by restoring what was lost or damaged, especially as required by law.
- **Metonymy:** A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.
- **Chiasm:** A literary structure in which elements are arranged in an "A-B-B-A" pattern, often used for emphasis or to highlight relationships between concepts.

## 5. FAQ on Themes from Dr. Bruce Waltke's Psalms Lecture

### FAQ on Psalm 51

- **What is the historical context of Psalm 51, and why is it significant?** Psalm 51 is traditionally attributed to David and is understood to be a confession after his adultery with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah. It is significant as it is a powerful and honest expression of repentance for sin. The Psalm also reveals the depth of David's depravity in the carefully calculated nature of his actions and his violation of God's word. It also acts as a lens through which we can understand God's immense grace and forgiveness when there is true repentance. It's a psalm that has resonated throughout history, recited frequently in monastic traditions and in Jewish traditions on the day of atonement because of the way it expresses both the severity of sin and the hope of God's forgiveness.
- **What are the key elements that Dr. Waltke identifies in the structure of Psalm 51?** Dr. Waltke identifies a pattern that is common to petition psalms in Psalm 51: an address to God, followed by an introductory petition for mercy, a lament for sin, a full petition for forgiveness and renewal, and finally, praise and a wish. This structure helps to understand the flow of David's thoughts and emotions, moving from a recognition of sin to seeking God's grace, and finally, to offering praise.
- **How does David describe his sin and its impact in Psalm 51?** David uses three primary words for sin - transgression, iniquity, and sin, all of which assume a standard that he has violated. He acknowledges both his overt acts of sin, like adultery and murder, and his inherent sinfulness, his original sin, "sinful from the time my mother conceived me". He understands that his actions were fundamentally against God, whose standard he has violated and for which he bears full responsibility, not making excuses by trying to shift blame. He describes the sin as being constantly before him and causing him intense internal struggle. Ultimately, he sees these actions as defiance against God and His word.
- **What does David request from God in his petition within the psalm?** David asks for both legal forgiveness ("blot out my transgressions") and liturgical cleansing ("wash away all my iniquity"). He also asks for a new heart and a steadfast spirit (referring to the Spirit of God) to overcome his moral impotence, to have the Holy Spirit not be taken away from him, and to have the joy of salvation restored. He desires not just forgiveness, but also transformation and the ability to live

righteously. Essentially, he is asking for God to recreate him from the inside out, creating in him a clean heart.

- **How does Dr. Waltke explain the phrase, “Against you, you only, have I sinned?”** Dr. Waltke explains that although David’s actions hurt others, his sin is fundamentally against God because sin is a violation of God's standard, not just human standards. He illustrates this point by sharing a story about breaking his mother's rule and how, even though the consequence was to a neighbor, the sin was against his mother for violating her standard. This indicates that sin has a vertical dimension, not just a horizontal one. This also sets the stage for God being the only one who can truly pronounce a judgment on him.
- **How does Psalm 51 relate to the concepts of grace and repentance?** Psalm 51 is a prime example of God's grace and forgiveness when there is true repentance. Though David committed terrible sins, and was under a death sentence because of them, the psalm demonstrates that God's mercy is available to all who confess their sins with a broken spirit and contrite heart. David renounces his sin and seeks God's mercy, as stated in Proverbs 28:13, and receives complete forgiveness. This underscores that God's grace is more powerful than any sin, and the historical consequences cannot take away the divine forgiveness.
- **What does Psalm 51 teach us about the balance between justice, repentance, and forgiveness?** The Psalm highlights that while there are consequences for sin, both historical and in the realm of justice (a baby dies in this case), genuine repentance leads to forgiveness from God. This illustrates that although restitution and restoration can sometimes be impossible on a human level, the mercy and grace of God extends to those who truly repent and turn back to Him, and it is greater than the sin. The law itself and how the law was applied throughout the history of Israel provides insight into the process of repentance and forgiveness.
- **What is the significance of the sacrificial language used in Psalm 51, particularly "a broken spirit" and "a contrite heart"?** While the Psalm mentions sacrifice, it also declares that God does not delight in burnt offerings in and of themselves (in the current state with David in sin). The true sacrifice God desires, according to David, is "a broken spirit" and "a contrite heart". These represent a deep sense of sorrow and humility before God, and they are what God will not despise. In the context of the praise section of the psalm, David is showing how, because of his position, he cannot celebrate and feast before God, but a proper sacrifice for the

occasion is the broken spirit. This means that David is not dismissing the sacrificial system, but showing the posture and heart that is needed alongside it.

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