

Psalm 51 — “Real Repentance”

This psalm gives us much insight into the nature of sin. It is a missing of the mark. It is transgression. It is rebellion. It is iniquity. It is evil, and only evil. It covers us with guilt and shame and filthiness. It is folly, the opposite of wisdom. It is a lie, the opposite of truth. It unmans a man. Left to itself it crushes him who indulges it... One sin naturally leads to another. It shuts the mouth. It opens hell. ... If we think lightly of sin, we shall not be much concerned to be rid of its guilt or defilement, nor be very watchful against its assaults, nor very thankful for supposed deliverance from its curse or its power” (William Plumer)

Repentance is being sorry enough to quit your sin. You will never know the forgiving mercy of God while you are still wedded to your sins. Repentance is the soul's divorce from sin, but it will always be joined to faith. Repentance that is not joined to faith is a legalistic repentance. Professed faith that is not joined to repentance is a spurious faith, for true faith is faith in Christ to save me not in but from my sin. Repentance and faith are inseparable, and 'unless you repent you will all likewise perish' (Luke 13:3). (Al Martin)

This psalm is the expression of a deep and unfeigned repentance. It is prayer for forgiveness, with a humble confession of sinful deeds springing from a sinful nature as their bitter root; and then for renewal and sanctification through the Holy Ghost; together with vows of thankfulness for God's great mercy to the sinner, and holy resolutions for the future” (JJ Stewart Perowne)

God Requires REAL REPENTANCE! It is absolutely essential, it is important, it is vital, and it must be present in our lives.

- Psalm 51 is called “*THE SINNER'S GUIDE*” — because sinners must *repent* and receive the *forgiveness* of God.

Background & Setting to Psalm 51

1. this is a PRAYER (note the 2p “you” - talking to God) = prayer
2. this is humilatingly HONEST. True confession is honest, open full laying out of sins to God.
3. true confession RECEIVES, rejoices in & relies on God's grace & forgiveness.

THESIS — what is real, true repentance? Ps 51 gives 4 FEATURES OF REAL REPENTANCE.

(1) desperate pleadings (2) honest confession (3) singular ambition (4) thoughtful replacement

I. DESPERATE PLEADINGS (1-3)

* key idea = CONTRITION!

a right view of SIN

a right view of GOD

II. HONEST CONFESSION (4-9)

* key word = CONFESSION!

- ✓ *John Flavel: It is easier to cry against one-thousand sins of others than to kill one of your own.*
- ✓ *As Jonathan Edwards put it: "repentance is humiliation of sin before God!"*
- ✓ *What you *uncover* in confession, God will cover in forgiveness!*

III. SINGULAR AMBITION (10-13)

* key word = COMMUNION!

IV. THOUGHTFUL REPLACEMENT (14-19)

* key word = CONSECRATION!

Sin forsaken is one of the best evidences of sin forgiven. (JC Ryle)

(1) What's the SIN in your life that you need to REPENT OF?

(2) You come to God – humbly, broken – God takes action:

(3) Listen carefully – you repent & come to God humbly, hear these words:

QUESTIONS

1. do I properly view myself and my sin nature?
2. do I spend time confessing sin to the LORD daily?
3. when confessing my sin, do I identify the specific sins that I am guilty of committing? not general, but specific?
4. do I praise God after having confessed my sins?

“If you would know the nature of true **repentance**, study *this* psalm. It is full of wisdom and sound doctrine” (William Plumer).

JC RYLE ON REPENTANCE — **Repentance, such as I have described, will be, in the main, the experience of every true believer.** Search, then, and see what you know of it in your own soul.

Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance. The devil knows too well the value of that precious grace not to dress up spurious imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin there will always be bad money. Wherever there is a valuable grace, the devil will put in circulation counterfeits and shams of that grace, and try to palm them off on men's souls. Make sure that you are not deceived.

(a) Take heed that your repentance be a business of your heart. It is not a grave face, or a sanctimonious countenance, or a round of self-imposed austerities; it is not this alone which makes up true repentance towards God. The real grace is something far deeper than a mere affair of face, and clothes, and days, and forms. Ahab could put on sackcloth when it served his turn. But Ahab never repented.

(b) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance wherein you turn to God. Roman Catholics can run to priests and confessionals, when they are frightened. Felix could tremble, when he heard the Apostle Paul preach. But all this is not true repentance. See that your repentance leads you unto God, and makes you flee to Him as your best Friend.

(c) Take heed that your repentance be a repentance attended by a thorough forsaking of sin. Sentimental people can cry when they hear moving sermons on Sundays, and yet return to the ball, the theater, and the opera in the week after. Herod liked to hear John the Baptist preach, and heard him gladly, "and did many things." But feelings in religion are worse than worthless, unless they are accompanied by practice. Mere sentimental excitement, without thorough breaking off from sin, is not the repentance which God approves. (Mark 6:20.)

(d) Take heed, above all things, that your repentance is closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See that your convictions are convictions which never rest except at the foot of the cross whereon Jesus Christ died. Judas Iscariot could say, "I have sinned," but Judas never turned to Jesus. Judas never looked by faith to Jesus, and therefore Judas died in his sins. Give me that conviction of sin which makes a man flee to Christ, and mourn, because by his sins he has pierced the Lord who bought him. Give me that contrition of soul under which a man feels much about Christ, and grieves to think of the despite he has done to so gracious a Savior. Going to Sinai, hearing about the ten commandments, looking at hell, thinking about the terrors of damnation—all this may make people afraid, and has its use. But no repentance ever lasts in which a man does not look at Calvary more than at Sinai, and see in a bleeding Jesus the strongest motive for contrition. Such repentance comes down from heaven. Such repentance is planted in man's heart by God the Holy Spirit.

REPENTANCE:

What To Repent Of?

Geoffrey R. Kirkland

1. Repent of your public, known sins.

Make it your ambition to come before the Lord and ask for His mercy for your public and known sins. That is, make known the sins that you've committed in public, that you know about, that others know about.

2. Repent of your hidden, private sins.

Uncover the hidden, deep, dark recesses of your private sins to the Lord. He sees it all and knows them all anyway. Uncover the deep blackness in the well of your heart. Bring it to light. Let the blackness of sin be cleansed by the crimson blood of Christ. Uncover and repent of these.

3. Repent of that ‘pet/darling/favorite’ sin that you won’t let go of.

Come to the Lord and earnestly beseech God’s mercy for *that* one sin that you repent of often. That ‘darling’ (pet, cherished) sin that you have, that you fight against, that you repent of often, and that you are most afraid of — or unwilling — to give up. Repent and surrender that to Christ.

4. Repent of your lack of serving family members at home.

True religion is lived at home. What you really are is evidenced by the pattern of conduct that you have with the family. Repent of the friction, the impatience, the lack of serving others, the selfishness, and the lack of compassion that you have demonstrated toward others.

5. Repent of your coldness of love toward the Father, Son & the Spirit.

God yearns that His elect Bride would passionately love Him with a blazing hot zeal. Sadly, many things distract us and cool our passion for God. Confess and turn from the coldness of your love to each of the members of the Trinity — the Father for His sovereign love, the Son for His glorious redemption and sufficient righteousness, and the Spirit for His regenerative power and His transforming work.

6. Repent of the littleness of your faith in fervent, ongoing, daily prayer.

Pray and repent of the littleness of your prayer. O that God’s people would increase in fervent prayer. Repent of the infrequency of your outbursts of prayer. Confess the redundancy and tendency of your prayers to become rote and heartless. Repent of this and seek to bring about change.

7. Repent of your laziness in bible-reading, bible-memorization, and bible-meditation each day.

To feast upon the Word of God is the greatest duty in which a Christian can engage. Repent of and expose to the Lord the laziness in Bible reading. Confess that there have been other entertainments, other distractions, and other circumstances that have crowded out and taken priority over your time communing with God in His precious Book.

8. Repent of failing to redeem the time because the days of evil.

Come to the Lord on your knees and beg for His grace and mercy because of the frequent ways in which time is wasted each day. Repent and ask for God’s help to manage your time better, to be more evangelistic at heart, to be more eternal in focus, and to live more Christocentrically in life.

9. Repent of your missed opportunities to call sinners to repent & escape hellfire.

Come to the Lord and loathe the many missed opportunities that God has granted you to proclaim Christ and His saving gospel to the lost. Whether it be at a park, with a neighbor, to a complete stranger, to a homeless man on a corner, or to a coworker in the next cubicle, repent to the Lord and seek for his grace to forgive and for His power to equip you to make changes.

10. Repent of your complaining, mumbling & grumbling.

Christians battle the ongoing desire in our hearts to rule sovereignly. And when we do not get what we want, what we think we deserve, or how things suit our preferences, we tend to complain, mumble and grumble — verbally or silently. It may be a loud bawling to others or a silent mumbling in the innermost sector of your heart. Repent of this sin and turn from it.

11. Repent of your frustrations, selfishness and lofty thoughts of self.

The sinful heart is an idol factory. Repeatedly, the Lord commands His people to humble themselves and to abstain from all pride. Come before the Lord with humility and carefully and specifically expose the selfishness, pride, and exalted thoughts of self. Seek God's grace and forgiveness.

12. Repent of your refusal to stand up for truth when others mock your Savior.

In the cultural context that now prevails, many blaspheme God, take His name in vain, and speak ill of God's Word and of God's truth. Repent and bemoan the times that you stood silently and remained unwilling to boldly open your mouth to proclaim the truth of Christ and His gospel to the nonbelievers. Seek God's grace and endeavor to turn from this sin from here on out.

13. Repent of your shallow repentance.

Come before the Lord and repent of your repentance. Repent of the shallowness of lip service. Repent of the mediocrity of heart-sorrow. Repent of the fear of consequences rather than a healthy fear of God. Repent of the littleness and infrequency of genuine, fervent, committed repentance. Seek God's grace and His empowering to change.

14. Repent of the infrequent meditations on Christ, His beauty, His worth & His atonement on your behalf.

Come to God in shame at the infrequency of your meditations upon Christ. See the glory of Christ and the sufficiency of His death. Claim the righteousness of Christ and the propitiation that He won. Cling to the atonement of Christ and His spotless blood that was shed. Trust in the redemption that He accomplished and the eternal victory in His bodily resurrection. Repent that Christ has consumed so little of your thoughts, affections, delights, passions, and longings. Come to Him in repentance and plead for His mercy, grace, and help to change!

Concluding Note

In coming to God through Christ by the enabling grace of the Spirit, when you repent you will find God as a loving Father passionately tender in His forgiveness, incessantly flowing in His compassions, and ever-embracing with His mercies. Repent of your sins and resolve to put them to death by trusting in Christ more, seeking His glory more, and feeling the all-surpassing worth and splendor of His person and cross-work. God lavishly forgives. He generously pardons. He tenderly embraces. He loves to drown penitent sinners in the ocean of His cleansing and in the fountain of His delights. Come to God in repentance and faith and turn from your sins resolvedly, decisively and diligently and look to Christ in faith to put sin to death, to gaze upon His warm delights and strive to be holy for His glory!

Psalm 51 — "Real Repentance"

COME THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing
 Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
 Streams of mercy never ceasing
 Call for songs of loudest praise
 Teach me some melodious sonnet
 Sung by flaming tongues above
 Praise the name! I'm fixed upon it
 Name of Thy redeeming love

Hitherto Thy love has blessed me
 Thou hast brought me to this place
 And I know Thy hand will bring me
 Safely home by Thy good grace
 Jesus sought me when a stranger
 Wandering from the fold of God
 He, to rescue me from danger
 Interposed His precious blood

Oh to grace how great a debtor
 Daily I'm constrained to be
 Let Thy goodness, like a fetter
 Bind my wandering heart to Thee
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it
 Prone to leave the God I love
 Here's my heart, oh take and seal it
 Seal it for Thy courts above

Oh that day when freed from sinning
 I shall see Thy lovely face
 Full arrayed in blood-washed linen
 How I'll sing Thy sovereign grace
 Come, my Lord, no longer tarry
 Bring Thy promises to pass
 For I know Thy pow'r will keep me
 Till I'm home with Thee at last

GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME (Psalm 51)

God, be merciful to me;
 On Thy grace I rest my plea
 Plenteous in compassion Thou,
 Blot out my transgressions now;
 Wash me, make me pure within;
 Cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

My transgressions I confess;
 Grief and guilt my soul oppress.
 I have sinned against Thy grace,
 And provoked Thee to Thy face.
 I confess Thy judgement just;
 Speechless, I Thy mercy trust.

I am evil, born in sin;
 Thou desirest truth within.
 Thou alone my Savior art,
 Teach Thy wisdom to my heart;
 Make me pure, Thy grace bestow,
 Wash me whiter than the snow.

Broken, humbled to the dust
 By Thy wrath and judgment just,
 Let my contrite heart rejoice,
 And in gladness hear Thy voice;
 From my sins O hide Thy face,
 Blot them out in boundless grace.

Gracious God, my heart renew,
 Make my spirit right and true.
 Cast me not away from Thee,
 Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;
 Thy salvation's joy impart,
 Steadfast make my willing heart.

Sinners then shall learn from me,
 And return, O God, to Thee
 Savior all my guilt remove,
 And my tongue shall sing Thy love
 Touch my silent lips, O Lord,
 And my mouth shall praise accord