

David: Coming Back to God

PSALM 51

David fell so far, so fast—he didn't even realize it until the dullness of his soul spread to every inch of his spiritual life.

Soon his cold heart was combined with his tormented soul and trapped in a painfully chastened body.

David was at the bottom, and he stayed there for almost a year.

Almost a year—did that length of time strike you?

AT THE BOTTOM

Think of who we are talking about, that fell so far away from the God he so passionately loved and served.

- A man that God talked to directly by way of inspiration;
- a man who knew the indwelling Presence of God the Spirit;
- a man who had the direct line to God's Throne by way of prophets;
- a man who could enter the very tent of God built to the specs God left;
- a man who had held perhaps the very scrolls Moses had written down;
- a man who may have seen the stone tablets of the law that were kept in the ark;
- a man who had seen God's supernatural protection month after month in hand to hand combat as David was never defeated on the battlefield—and as far as we know, never even wounded by arrow, sword, spear or sling stone, though there had been tens of thousands pointed at him and held by those who hated him and wanted him dead.

That man who knew God, experienced God's presence, loved God, sang scores of songs inspired by God, wrote chapters of the eternal Word of God—that man seemed to lose touch with God for a YEAR!

Now, think about yourself.

David knew the same God we know.

David wrote the same Bible we read.

David sang the same songs we sing.

David felt the same closeness we feel and probably even more so that many of us have ever felt.

Yet he stayed away from God for almost a whole year.

Maybe we shouldn't give up on people so fast. Maybe we shouldn't stop praying so easily. Maybe we shouldn't be so quick to write them off and erase them from the group. David spent as much as a year in absolute misery.

What is amazing is that David hid this so well. He went through the motions of being the king. He was God's leader, he was God's king. He was still the sweet psalmist of Israel. He still had the family line that would never end. He was still the one through whom the Christ would come.

But all those blessings and benefits meant nothing, like an engine without fuel, an electronic device with no power—David had walked away from God and stayed away for a long time.

But if you were just a casual observer, it looked as if David had gotten by with it.

But always remember one thing: David was God's man, and God would not let David get by with it. In reality, during the interval when he kept quiet, he was a tormented man. In Psalm 32 we saw what really went on in his heart. David says this: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long" (Ps. 32:3). If we could have visited the court of David during that nearly year of hidden sin—we would have literally seen David aging before our eyes. The self-inflicted stress of those months was completely debilitating. "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:4). This describes his feelings during that interval.

COMING BACK TO GOD

A hymn writer once wrote what David must have felt as he responded to God's heavy hand of chastisement and conviction and repented of his sin and came back to God.

Lord, I'm Coming Home (1898) #341
William Kirkpatrick (1838-1921)

I've wandered far away from God, Now I'm coming home;
The paths of sin too long I've trod, Lord, I'm coming home.

I've wasted many precious years, Now I'm coming home;
I now repent with bitter tears, Lord, I'm coming home.

I'm tired of sin and straying, Lord, Now I'm coming home;
I'll trust Thy love, believe Thy Word, Lord, I'm coming home.

My soul is sick, my heart is sore, Now I'm coming home;

My strength renew, my hope restore, Lord, I'm coming home.

I need His cleansing blood, I know, Now I'm coming home;
O wash me whiter than the snow, Lord, I'm coming home.

Refrain

Coming home, coming home, Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home.

This morning, if you have ever felt far away from God—you can relate to David.

If you have ever sinned deeply and paid a heavy price—you can relate to David.

If you are here this morning in body only, and your heart like David's had been, is cold, dull, burdened, and distant—then you can relate to David.

So now as we turn to Psalm 51 we find that it is all about David who went so far away--
Coming Back to God.

Psalm 51 stands as a paradigm of prayers for forgiveness of sins. Believers have been comforted by the fact that since David's sins were forgiven theirs can be too.

The 51st Psalm is a divinely inspired roadmap, clearer than any other map in the world, on the way back to God. David tells us how he found his way back from a cold, distant and tormented heart to immediate joy, relief, peace, and security. Only God offers and provides such a blessing. The power of God is present today to heal you today, if you will like David—come back to God.

To understand that way back to God, turn with me to the 4th Penitential Psalm, the 51st Psalm, and listen as David lays bare his soul and explains how he came back to God.

Just before I read this Psalm and you follow along, I want you to notice the 35 words that I will emphasize while reading this Psalm. Out of the 327 words in these 19 verses there are 35 that all say the same thing. David says "I, me, my" those many times to show that he is personally responsible for his sin.

ALL SIN IS AGAINST GOD

In fact the lesson of this Psalm and the lesson that will change your direction away from sin and towards God is that ALL SIN is AGAINST GOD, not merely a personal defeat. If you only think that sin is just a defeat you experienced--then sin is manageable, it is just something you learn to live with.

But David saw that sin was against God (v. 4) and David took personal responsibility for his sin (35 times he repeats that it is me, I am guilty)! That is David taking God's perspective. God says we are sinners.

But when the church has a superficial view of sin, this attitude affects everything the church believes and does. If men and women are basically good and not sinners under the wrath of God, then why preach the Gospel? Why send out missionaries? For that matter, why did Jesus even die on the cross? If people are good, then what they need is counseling and consoling, not convicting; we should give them encouragement, not evangelism. 1

So as we read, get those two truths firmly planted in your mind.

**All sin is against God.
Take personal responsibility for sin.**

Read Psalm 51 and pray.

Psalm 51 was designed primarily for public reading and worship. It was part of the regular songs of the Tabernacle and then Temple and now the church. The structuring like this was intended for effective communication in public assembly and worship. Note the emphasis and how it changes.

DAVID TOOK THE BLAME

David's responsibility for sin is emphasized in the first half. Sin and sinner occur eight times and God by Name is not mentioned one time in vv. 3-9.

Psalm 51:3-9 3 For I acknowledge **my transgressions (1)**, And **my sin (2)** is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have **I sinned (3)**, And **done this evil (4)** in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth **in iniquity (5)**, And in **sin (6)** my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from **my sins (7)**, And blot out all **my iniquities (8)**.

GOD WAS HIS DESIRE

The Holy God against whom David sinned is emphasized in the second half. But sin and sinner are only mentioned one time and God twenty times in vv. 10-19.

Psalm 51:10-19 10 Create in me a clean heart, **O God (1)**, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from **Your presence (2)**, And do not take **Your Holy Spirit (3)** from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of **Your salvation (4)**, And uphold me by **Your generous Spirit (5)**. 13 Then I will teach transgressors **Your ways (6)**, And **sinners*** shall be converted **to You (7)**. 14

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1994.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, **O God (8)**, The **God of my salvation (9)**, And my tongue shall sing aloud of **Your righteousness (10)**. 15 **O Lord (11)**, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth **Your praise (12)**. 16 For **You (13)** do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; **You (14)** do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of **God (15)** are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, **O God (16)**, **You (17)** will not despise. 18 Do good in **Your good pleasure (18)** to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then **You shall be pleased (19)** with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on **Your altar (20)**.

How do we get back on the track?
How do we come back to God?

THE PATHWAY BACK

God's Word gives us a pathway, we can follow David. When you have been defeated by sin, David is inspired of God to tell us four steps we can take to come back to God.

#1 Understand that all Sin is Against God. (Psalm 51:1-4)

- The Lord can RENEW OUR RELATIONSHIP v. 1
- The Lord can WASH US CLEAN v. 2
- The Lord can REMOVE THE ROADBLOCK v. 3
- The Lord can UTTERLY FORGIVE v. 4

#2 Take Personal Responsibility for your Sin. (Psalm 51:5-9)

- As Sinners we show our nature, our choice and confirm God's declaration. v. 5
- As Sinners we need truthfulness v. 6
- As sinners we need cleansing v. 7
- As sinners we need joyfulness v. 8
- As sinners we need fellowship with our God v. 9

#3 Believe that Only God can cleanse and restore us. (Psalm 51:10-13)

- God is washing our hearts v. 10 [Heb 9.14; 10.22]
- God is restoring our walk in the Spirit v. 11
- God is renewing the fruit of the Spirit v. 12
- God is preparing us for further ministry v. 13

#4 Seek God and repent. (Psalm 51:14-19)

- Call sin what it is v. 14 (David murdered Uriah)
- Talk to God v. 15 (Psalm 32 David had dried up spiritually)
- Experience true contrition not mere externalism v. 16-17
- Begin zealous worship anew and afresh v. 18-19

Now let's begin an in depth look at each of these four sections. First we need to--

Understand that all Sin is Against God. (Psalm 51:1-4)

David starts this first section by saying—

I AM GUILTY

PSALM 51:1 David begins at quite a different reference point from that of modern psychotherapists or the social workers today. They usually begin with *“our inner experience. They invite us to try to face up to our moral problems, to recognize how our misdeeds affect society for the worse or how we have even broken society's laws”*.²

But David sweeps beyond all these human and moral considerations and looks straight at the Almighty and Holy God he had sinned against.

- By confessing that he was guilty, David was coming back to God who alone can RENEW OUR RELATIONSHIP broken by sin. v. 1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

David appealed to God's love and compassion as he petitioned the Lord to forgive him by grace and cleanse him from sin. Mercy is to not get what we deserve and grace is to get what we don't deserve. Mercy withholds, grace outpours.

*God's attributes of **unfailing love (chesed)** for His servant and His **compassion** for the helpless, were the basis for David's appeal for mercy. Even the verb **have mercy** was a prayer for **God** to act in accord with His nature. It is also a recognition that David did not deserve forgiveness. God's forgiveness is by His grace alone.* ³

If you want swift, immediate and relationship restoring help from God, start with that simple guilty plea. If you want to see a David type of response to God in the NT open with me to Luke 18:9-14.

Do you know what God just can't resist? This type of heart cry to Him. The Greek tenses tell us that the publican couldn't stop saying this, he was an ongoing longing on his heart.

Luke 18:13 “And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, [kept on present active

² Knight, George A. F., *Daily Study Bible Series: Psalms, Volume 1*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2001, c1984.
³ Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

participle] saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

Like the publican who wouldn't even lift his face towards God but just said God be merciful to me, we can also come back to God.

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