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The Ingredients of True Repentance; Psalm 51  
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Introduction – The superscription of Psalm 51 gives us the historical context of this psalm. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and as a result she became pregnant. After several attempts to cover up his sin failed, David finally arranged for Bathsheba's husband to be killed in battle and then took her as his wife. Sin covered. Problem solved. Now just get back to living your life, so David thought.

Then comes the prophet Nathan. David had tried to remove his sin by covering it up, concealing it, hiding it. But that doesn't remove sin. We might put sin out of our sight but it is never out of God's sight. David belonged to God. God would discipline David and force David to properly deal with his sin because God loves His children!

And so Nathan confronts David regarding his sin. And finally, knowing his coverup is blown, knowing God knows, David earnestly repents. He recorded his thoughts and feelings and prayer of repentance in the form of a psalm and provided a song of repentance for every believer. David is not the only saint who has ever sinned. He's not the only saint who has ever tried to cover up and hide and forget his sin. We all sin, even as saints, and fall short of the glory of God.

The mark of a true believer is that he continues to repent when faced with his sin. So what would true repentance look like? Repentance is very different from being sorry that you got caught. Repentance is different than lying or making up another cover story or pretending to confess or finding someone or something to blame for your sin. True repentance is different from all those other ways of dealing with our sin. Only true repentance brings true forgiveness. So let's see together the ingredients of David's true repentance.

- I. A Plea for Mercy (vv1-2)
  - a. First David calls on the mercy of God. David realizes the justice and righteousness and wrath of God would deal with his sin in a very different light. But the mercy of God – if God would extend mercy David could find forgiveness and healing.

- b. Crying for mercy indicates David is aware of his guilt. He's admitting his guilt. He speaks of his transgressions, his iniquity, his sin.
- c. Crying for mercy indicates David is aware of what he deserves as a sinner and that he is fully relying on God's mercy. It indicates a humble brokenness and godly sorrow and grieving over the sin he has committed.
- d. It also indicates David knows God is merciful. God has steadfast love for His children. And God, and God alone, in mercy, could blot out his transgression, wash his iniquity and cleanse his sin. God can do for David what David could never do on his own. David could only cover up his sin; God can remove it.
- e. Repentance begins with an understanding of our need of God's mercy. And that leads us to confession.

## II. A Confession of Sin (vv3-6)

- a. Confession is to own up to our sin, to admit our guilt, to take responsibility for our ungodly actions. Confession is not an attempt to place blame anywhere else other than ourselves. It is not an attempt to justify or rationalize our behavior. It is not an attempt to convince God to condone or look over our sin.
- b. V3 – David comes to the realization that no matter what lengths he goes to in order to cover up his sin, it's not going to go away. It is ever before him. Just because it's been swept under the rug doesn't mean it vanishes.
- c. V4 – David's confession realizes that of all the people he has offended and wronged in his sin, the ultimate offense is against God. When we sin, yes we hurt and harm ourselves and everyone around us, but even more fundamentally we assault the grace and will and character of God. Every time we sin we are choosing sin over God. We are violently and volitionally violating the goodness of God. David was king. God had given him everything, and his sin was not satisfied. God put Adam and Eve in paradise, and in their sin they were not satisfied. We do the same when we sin. Our sin declares to God that He is not enough.
- d. In vv5-6 David's confession admits that he has responded to God in sin while God has only given him good things. Now he desperately needs God to mercifully do one more good thing for him, to forgive

and restore, to take away the ugliness of his sin and make him whole again.

### III. The Process of Restoration (vv7-12)

- a. David needs God to purge and to wash him. Notice the gentle nature of purging with hyssop and washing. God, in mercy, is willing and ready to remove our stain and guilt of our heinous and corrupt sin with soothing measures. He can wash it away.
- b. And once God has removed our sin finally and totally, our joy in the Lord returns. Sin promises pleasure but delivers misery. God promises joy and gladness and delivers joy and gladness.
- c. But in order to experience full restoration, we not only need our sin removed and return to joyful communion with God, we need God to restore in us what our sin has robbed from us.
- d. V10 - Only God can remove our sin, and only God can renew our soul that has been bent and broken with sin. God takes the broken pieces and creates something new.
- e. Vv11-12 – If we can't be restored, if God doesn't remove our sin and renew our soul and make us once again in right standing and full fellowship with Him, we would be as those who know not His presence and have not His Spirit. If God doesn't make us right with Him, we are left in the misery of our sin.
- f. Now we see why David begins repentance with a cry for God to have mercy. Now the cloak of sin's deception is removed. A few moments of pleasure with Bathsheba is not worth a life of misery apart from God.
- g. But when God in His mercy restores our fellowship with Him, sin is gone and joy returns.
- h. Then note the final step of restoration is God's grace of bestowing a willing spirit. That is, a spirit that is now determined to never touch that sin again. That's when we know true repentance has occurred. It not only includes genuine confession; it also includes a genuine turning from that sin that so horribly mangles our relationship with God. Sin says to God, "You're not enough." A willing spirit says to God, "You're all I need."

### IV. The Result of Restoration (vv13-17)

- a. An example to others of sin's destruction, God's mercy, and the joy of following the Lord.
  - b. A soul released from the guilt of sin can once again sing the praises of God. A great sinner pardoned makes a great singer!
  - c. Forgiveness and restoration make a genuine worshipper. We don't really know worship until we can't worship. We don't really know the emptiness of ritual until we feel the emptiness of soul. But when sin has been removed and the soul has been renewed, we learn the true nature of worship.
  - d. True repentance yields true worship.
- V. A Prayer for All (vv18-19)
- a. Vv18-19 reveal to us why David was moved to make his sin public in the form of a song that would be sung and studied for all time!
  - b. It is because David knew he was not the only sinner among God's people. He was not the only one who needed to cry for mercy, to confess guilt, and to experience the forgiveness and restoration of God. Jerusalem was filled with sinners who needed repentance. And with sweeping repentance would come wholesale revival. God would build up His people and the fuel and fire of genuine worship would once again ring out to the Lord.
  - c. What was true for Jerusalem in Psalm 51 is true for Grassy Pond in 2020. True repentance not only restores the soul, it restores the church, and you can tell it by how the people worship!

Conclusion