

What True Repentance Looks Like

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Psalm 51:1-4 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

- I. This Psalm gives us a clear picture of what true repentance looks like.
 - A. The prophet of God has delivered the Word of God to the transgressor.
 - B. The message has thrown the covers off his sin and he knows that God and other people know all about it.
 - C. All sinners are hiding.
 - D. The covers have been removed and he is exposed – and this will happen to ALL eventually.
 1. You don't know what sin is going to be uncovered in your future – your own, as well as the sins of your loved ones.
 - E. It is only when this happens that the sinner begins to see himself as God and others see him.
 1. Up until he is uncovered his twisted mind entertains a proud view of himself and what he has done.
 2. He is not viewing his sin as others do.
 - F. Now there are only two involved – God and David are alone together – the prophet is not guiding the conversation or the prayer of the sinner.
 - G. Both God and David are looking at David's sin – this is true conviction.
 - H. It is God, David, and the sin – and the question is: What is going to be done about it?

- II. David owns his sin.
 - A. It is “my transgressions,” “mine iniquity,” “my sin,” “my transgressions,” “my sin,” and “I have sinned and done this evil in thy sight.”
 - B. No mention of anyone else; no blame cast or insinuated toward anyone else.
 1. Like Adam and Eve did.
 2. Like ALL sinners do until they come to a place of true repentance.
 - C. David truly recognizes that God is kind and loving and merciful and good – and has always shown himself good to David. – “...thy lovingkindness...thy tender mercies.”
 - D. David recognizes that God is always right and always does right by others, and that if he got what he deserved right now he would die for his sin.
 - E. David casts his guilt before God and begs for mercy

- III. David's sorrow for his sin is not based upon his fear of punishment.
 - A. There is not one mention of punishment for his sin.
 - B. His only words of petition in that realm are:

Psalm 51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

- C. His greatest concern is not what will happen to him because of his sin, but that he might be cast away from God and never have the presence of his Spirit any more.
- D. David's sorrow for his sin also is focused upon the damage he has done to God's name and God's kingdom.

Psalm 51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

IV. David asks for four things in the opening of his prayer.

- A. He asks for mercy from God – not based upon any merit of his own, but upon the lovingkindness and tender mercies of God.
 - 1. He casts no blame and takes complete responsibility for what he has done.
 - 2. He makes no kind of excuse for what he has done, but owns the fact that he has done evil and it was all because of his own lust and foolishness, and the fact that he forgot God.
- B. He asks for his transgressions to be blotted out.

Psalm 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

- 1. What can a person do with their sin when it has been exposed and they now see it for what it really is in God's sight?
- 2. It truly is "ever before" them; Oh, that it would just go away, or be as if it never happened.
- 3. Will I ever be able to live with this in my life?
- 4. We cannot escape the thoughts of our guilt, the shame, the knowledge that others know, and the realization in our heart that it is not only before us, but it is before God, also.
- 5. David was not asking God to do something that He was unwilling to do.

Isaiah 44:22-23 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

- 6. God DOES blot out transgressions, and God DOES forgive sin.

Psalm 32:1-2 A Psalm of David, Maschil. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Micah 7:18-19 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

- C. He asks to be washed from his iniquity.
 - 1. This refers to the way others see him.
 - 2. He has ruined his own name and reputation and it now stinks in the sight of his fellow men.
 - 3. His loyal mighty men, his children, his other wives, his counselor Ahithophel, who was Bathsheba's grandfather.
 - 4. Somehow, some way, please make people see that I am not that person any more.
- D. He asks to be cleansed from his sin.

1. This refers to his own inward self – his heart and mind that has been defiled and corrupted and changed because of his sin.
2. This is one of the surprises that sin delivers to those who fall into its snare.
3. You never expect to feel about yourself the way you do when you see your sin as God and others see it.
4. Now they call it, “forgiving yourself.”
5. But David is praying for God to do this for him and cleanse his heart of the guilt and the corruption that he has allowed into it.

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

E. David is looking for complete restoration in his soul.

Psalm 51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

1. He is desiring true peace with God and full forgiveness for his sin.
2. He is looking to be happy again and experience joy and gladness.
3. Right now it is darkness and sorrow and all looks hopeless unless God does something.
4. He has made a terrible mess and completely destroyed his life, the lives of those around him, the kingdom, the work of God, and the testimony of God, not only in Israel, but in all the heathen nations around them that knew all about David and now this mess.
5. David is holding out hope in God that sin can be forgiven and a guilty sinner can be restored to favor and life and joy and happiness.
6. David is not praying or hoping in vain.

Psalm 86:12-13 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Psalm 116:1-19 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.