

Today we're going to read Psalm 51, which is a Psalm of lament we mentioned last week. Psalm 51 is often called a Psalm of repentance because it is a prayer by David to God for forgiveness of sins in his life.

What makes Psalm 51 unique is that we know exactly when it was written. With the other Psalms we know certain ranges when they were written, but with Psalm 51 we know exactly when and what was happening in David's life when he wrote these words.

If you have a Bible above Psalm 51 it tells you what happened, "For the choir director: A Psalm of David regarding the time Nathan the prophet came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba."

So before we read the Psalm let's recount that story, so we get the full grasp of what David was writing about in Psalm 51.

You can read the story in 2 Samuel 11 if you want, but David was the king and one night while he was hanging out on his roof he saw a beautiful woman named Bathsheba taking a shower. David felt frisky so he invite her over and slept with her. There were several problems with this, one being that Bathsheba was married to a man named Uriah, well talk about him in a second.

As far as David is concerned it was a one time thing, a moment of weakness, but then Bathsheba sent him word that she is pregnant, so David panicked and tried to think of a way to cover up what he had done, so he called Uriah back from the battlefield and tried to trick him into sleeping with Bathsheba so she could claim that the baby was his, but Uriah wouldn't go home, so David scrambled again to try and cover up what he did and this time he had Uriah moved to the front line of battle so he was killed. Once Uriah is killed David married Bathsheba to try and make it appear that the baby was conceived in marriage.

Now if we stop for a second and process this story, it's another reminder to us that sin always takes us farther than we want to go, it always gets darker than we thought it would get, and the damage is always greater than we assumed it would, and that's exactly what happened to David. He just wanted a one night fling, and it it turned into murder. David was a very spiritual man who did some really stupid things, because he kept trying to figure out how to cover his tracks, and he just kept going deeper and deeper, because that's the way sin always works.

So a few months went by, and David had gotten away with it, until one day the prophet Nathaniel, the spokesman for God, showed up to confront David, and eventually David confessed what he did to Nathaniel. For everyone keeping score at home we've got an affair, murder, and a cover up.

So sometime after Nathaniel left the palace David wrote the words to Psalm 51.

It's worth pointing out that it took someone else to help David really see his sin. That sounds impossible to believe when you hear what he did, but it took another voice, another perspective

for him to repent. It's important that you have voices in your life who confront you about your sin. I'm not talking about judgmental or mean people, I'm talking about people who love you, but they will call you out when we're headed the wrong direction or doing the wrong things, because they love you too much to let you destroy your life.

Now let me tell you why we chose this Psalm out of all the other Psalms that we could've talked about. I chose Psalm 51 because it's going to teach us how to repent, and this is important because we talk a lot about forgiveness and rightfully so. God forgives us of our sins, we can be forgiven no matter what we've ever done. We have to be forgiven in order to have eternal life. All these things are true and why we talk so much about forgiveness, but you can't have forgiveness without repentance, so we have to make sure we know what it means to repent.

This Psalm is also very personal for me, because it was the Psalm I read right before I committed my life to God. It's a longer story than we have time for, but I read the words of this Psalm and knew that my life was not headed in the right direction and I needed God to forgive me and save me, so I kneeled down right where I was asked for forgiveness and committed my life to God.

Repentance is more than just saying your sorry. It's more than just stopping whatever your doing. Repentance means to regret your sin so much that you turn from it because you are convinced it is evil. Yikes! Let's make sure we understand that.

Let me read you a bible verse from 2 Corinthians 7 to explain this...

### **2 Corinthians 7:10**

For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.

According to this verse, God wants us to experience sorrow, because Godly sorrow leads us away from sin and results in salvation, but there is also another kind of sorrow, the Bible calls it "worldly sorrow" which lacks repentance. There's that word again.

So let's see if we can piece this together. When we sin we feel bad, but WHY do we feel bad. Do we feel bad because we got found out, or because we're having face consequences, or do we feel bad because we have sinned against God.

To repent for our sin, means that we realize whatever it is we did was wrong and not only was it wrong but it was offensive to God, because Jesus died for our sin and we chose sin over him. Most all of this is happening at a subconscious level by the way, you're not sitting down making out a list of all the reasons you feel bad. In the moment you swear you're sorry and never want to do it again, but that's not always true, right?

So to repent of our sin means to not only confess it, but to turn from it not because we have to but because we want to. Make sense?

So don't think of this as God in heaven making sure you're sorry and if you're not he withholds it. That's not what we're talking about. There's no need to ask for forgiveness if you don't believe you need or don't want it. So when we talk about being truly sorry, we're just talking about asking for forgiveness because we genuinely believe we need it, not because we have to, or because we're trying to escape punishment, make sense?

Psalm 51 is going to show us what a truly repentant person sounds like, and it's going to give us a chance to assess where we are spiritually. Are we sad because whatever we were doing didn't work out, or are we sad because sin is putting we've distance between us and God.

We're going to read through Psalm 51 together, and because we get to read it in hindsight we know that David was truly repentant. So we can read this and learn what it means to repent, and how to repent for our sin.

Let's start reading at verse 1 and read David's words at the lowest point in his life...

#### **Psalm 51:1-4**

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight.

#### **1. Stop Making Excuses**

Notice how David starts this Psalm... Have mercy. He's pleading guilty. The only chance he has is mercy.

But look at verses 3-4. I recognize my rebellion and against you and you alone have I sinned. David doesn't make any excuses or justify anything that he is doing.

Remember David was a king, so he could've easily gotten away with it. Made up an excuse or a reason and nobody would have confronted him, but David was repenting because of consequences he was repenting because he believed he had done wrong against God.

You can't ask for forgiveness if you don't think it's your fault.

Let's keep reading...

#### **2. Believe You Are A Sinner**

#### **Psalm 51:5-6**

For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there.

This is so huge! I don't want to spend too much time on this but this is such a crucial issue. David says, I was born a sinner, and he is talking about how all of us because of Adam and Eve are born sinners.

Don't just think of sin as actions, think of sin as a nature. It's in your DNA. We're not sinner because we sin, we sin because we're sinners. Make sense?

We are born with a condition that self sabotages our attempt to live the life we want to live. David had it all, he didn't need Bathsheba, but we have a condition of sin in our heart that will find a way to screw up our life, specifically to separate us from God.

David was not saying, I'm a good guy I just made a mistake. He wasn't saying, I'm not as bad as those guys... no David was saying "I am a sinner"

Why is this so important, because you can not ask God to save you if you don't believe you need to be saved? Jesus makes us right with God, only Jesus can cover our sinful condition and make us right with God, so if you don't think you are a sinner, not just someone who sins but a sinner unfixable, you cannot ask Jesus to be your savior.

Let me say it like this: I am the worst sinner that I know. My sinful nature is capable of anything and it's only by the grace of God that I am not spiraling out of control somewhere in my life right now. There is nothing my sinful nature cannot mess up in my life. I need Jesus because I am the worst sinner I know.

If as I'm saying this you feel bad. You feel like, "dang Jason, you're being a little rough aren't you? Encourage us a little bit." You're supposed to feel that way. The moment you realize how broken you are is the moment you can be truly be grateful for the grace of God. The only reason I'm able to be a good husband today, the only reason I'm able to be a good dad, the only reason I don't give into my addictive behaviors and cravings, the only reason I'm not angry enough to do something terrible is the grace of God.

To the degree I am ashamed of myself is the degree I am thankful for God's saving grace.

### **3. Be Willing To Obey**

#### **Psalm 51:12**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.

The next step is obedience. I think it's interesting that David said, "Make Me" willing to obey you. Because I am a sinner I'm always tempted to want forgiveness but not leave my life of sin, but David says, "make me willing to obey you." which raises the question, do I think my sin is disgusting that I am willing to whatever I need to do to remove it from my life?

It would be great if we would just do the right things because we want to but some times God has to make us be willing to obey. It took a whale for Jonah to be willing to obey. It took a bush on fire for Moses to agree to go back to Egypt. Saul had to go blind. Sometimes because God loves us so much he will allow the consequences of our sin turn us back to him.

If you say you want forgiveness for your sin, but you're unwilling to do what it takes to separate yourself from that sin you don't believe that the sin is wrong or bad.

#### **4. Stop Trying To Earn Forgiveness**

##### **Psalm 51:16-17**

You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.

Here's what David is saying. God I feel so awful about what i've done that if I could give you all my money or make it up to you I would but that's not what you want. What you want is a broken repentant heart.

Because of our guilt we feel this need to earn forgiveness. We want to "make it right." God doesn't want you to try and make it right, he wants to be broken and repent.