

Praying with the Psalmist
“The Prayer of the Repentant”

Introduction: The focus of the message today—prayer of repentance

- ✓ Sadly—a rarely discussed topic
- ✓ 2 Hebrew words—shub (turn away)—naham—(turn to)
- ✓ Turning away from and toward something

There is no repentance where a man can talk lightly of sin, much less where he can speak tenderly and lovingly of it.—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Repentance must dig the foundations but holiness shall erect the structure, and bring forth the top-stone. Repentance is the clearing away of the rubbish of the past temple of sin; holiness builds the new temple which the Lord our God shall inherit. Repentance and desires after holiness never can be separated.—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Repentance is siding with God against self.—Todd Nibert

There is no Christianity unless first there is repentance. And it is not just, “Well I am guilty.” It is not just a conviction. It is a conviction plus a desire to turn away from those things.—Brian Richardson

*Jesus calls all sinners to repent. True repentance is not a nebulous response of sorrow; it requires definite actions. Repentance so transforms the mind that it results in a changed life. Repentance does not merely say “I’m sorry” (similar to what we say when we accidentally step on someone’s foot). Rather, true repentance says from the heart, “I’ve been wrong and grieve over my sin, but now I see the truth, and I will change my ways accordingly.—Joel R. Beeke, *Why Christ Came: 31 Meditations on the Incarnation**

I. The Backstory to David’s Psalm of Repentance (2 Samuel 11, 12)

A. David’s failure

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. 2 Samuel 11:1 NKJV

1. Entitlement?
2. Laziness?
3. Arrogance?
4. Pride?

B. David's sin

Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child." 2 Samuel 11:2-5 NKJV

C. David's attempted cover-up

Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. 8 And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?" 11 And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." 12 Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. 2 Samuel 11:6-13 NKJV

D. David's sin deepened

In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." 16 So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men. 17 Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. 2 Samuel 11:14-17 NKJV

E. David's sin hidden

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27 And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord. 2 Samuel 11:26-27 NKJV

F. David's sin exposed

Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3 But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. 4 And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 5 So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! 6 And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." 7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! 9 Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. 2 Samuel 12:1-9 NKJV

G. David's sin acknowledged

So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die." 2 Samuel 12:13-14 NKJV

This is the backstory to David's Psalm of Repentance

II. The Heart-Cry of David's Psalm of Repentance

NOTE: In other words—what does a true prayer of repentance ask God for?

Six Core Requests of True Repentance

A. To be treated by God with mercy

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Psalms 51:1 NKJV

1. No repentant sinner should ask for justice—would mean ruin and destruction.
2. Mercy is rooted in the character of God

a. It's what Moses appealed to

Then Moses said to the Lord, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' 13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people." Exodus 33:12-13 NKJV

b. It's what Jeremiah recognized

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" Lamentations 3:22-24 NKJV

c. It's what Jonah knew!

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the Lord, and said, "Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Jonah 4:1-2 NKJV

d. It's what we pray for.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV

B. To have our sins "blotted out"

- V. 2—Blot out my transgressions
- V. 9—Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities

1. Blot—machah—to wipe, smear, obliterate, utterly wipe away
2. Hide Thy face—paniyim (from before Thy face)
3. What He does for us!

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalms 103:12 NKJV

Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Colossians 2:14 NKJV

C. To be cleansed—not just forgiven—an inner cleansing

v. 2

“Wash me thoroughly from my sin.”

“Cleanse me from my sin”

v. 7

“Purge me with hyssop”

“Wash me and I will be whiter than snow”

1. Blotting out has to do with the sin
2. Cleansing has to do with the sinner

D. To restore intimacy with God

1. David’s unrepentant year was one of strained intimacy with God.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. 3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Psalms 32:1-4 NKJV

If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear. Psalms 66:18 NKJV

2. But his prayer was for intimacy with God

Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Psalms 51:8 NKJV

Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Psalms 51:11 NKJV

(ILL) The sense in God’s people that without His presence, we are nothing.

— Moses—“if Your presence doesn’t go...”

E. To experience transformation

Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Psalms 51:10 NKJV

1. Create “bara” (only used of God)
2. Only God can transform us

3. Repentant does not want to continue on in their sin—want to be transformed

F. To be used of God again

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You. 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. Psalms 51:13-15 NKJV

Summarize: True Repentance

(Not—sorry I got caught, not hope God will forgive me and I will go on!)

David—sinned big! Repented big!

- Pleads for mercy
- Wants sin blotted out
- Desires cleansing
- Longs for restored intimacy
- Submits to transformation
- Hopes to be used of God again

III. The Attitude of David's Psalm of Repentance

NOTE: when we approach God—reason he was a man after God's heart

A. Accepts personal responsibility for sin.

NOTE: No sense of blaming others and no complaint against God

For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight — That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Psalms 51:3-4 NKJV

1. God's character is just
2. He is right to judge my sins
3. Take responsibility for my personal sin

B. Approaches God with surrendered humility

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Psalms 51:1 NKJV

1. God must have mercy
2. He must create a clean heart
3. He must remain steadfast and good
4. I have nothing to bring—I must have Him

C. Understands spiritual reality

*What God desires of us

1. Heart integrity

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. Psalms 51:6 NKJV

- a. Truth in inward parts—what is unseen
- b. Desire to be godly—note that sometimes don't live that out
- c. Heart that longs to be holy

2. Heart brokenness/contrition

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise. Psalms 51:16-17 NKJV

a. God breaks us

Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. Psalms 51:8 NKJV

b. Because in brokenness He can use us

Conclusion: As a matter of fact it is brokenness that is at the heart of both repentance and usefulness.

1. It is when we feel the weakest that God is the strongest.
2. Gideon's army—trumpets in right honor—torches with pitchers in left—when broken, truth shown bright—Price of Repentance