

LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part eleven - Sunday, April 14th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

DAVID - WHEN THE JOY OF THE LORD STARTS TO FADE (Psalm 51)

- 1) **THE ROOTS OF DAVID'S SIN - THE CORRUPTING INFLUENCE OF POWER (2 Sam. 11:1-12:25)** David wanted another man's wife and used his authority as king to ***order her into his palace and into his bed***. As God's ordained king, he should have been the first to honor God's law. Instead, he put himself above the law. There's a terrible ***arrogance*** expressing itself here. David's ***first*** sin wasn't ***sexual***. It was ***pride***.

David then calls Bathsheba's husband home from battle, obviously hoping that Uriah would have sexual relations with her. Then no one would suspect that her child was really David's. Uriah's response must have cut David's heart like a knife - ***"How can anybody think of sex while the ark of the Lord is in the throws of battle?"*** - **2 Samuel 11:11** - "Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.'"

It is only after David has Uriah killed in battle that **Nathan confronts David with his terrible sin**. **Psalm 51** is David's **public** recorded response (“**To the choirmaster....**” 51:1) to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit through Nathan. This is instructive. Sin is more than just an apology to God. It is the Holy Spirit’s surgical knife to deal effectively with the nature of the sin committed. When the root sin is **pride** the confession must foster **humility**. Hence the need for **public** repentance.

- 2) **THE TRUE WICKEDNESS OF SIN - SEEING SIN IN ITS PROPER FOCUS - Psalm 51:3-4** - “For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. [4] Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.”

There is something easily missed in these well-known words. The way I repent - the **words** I bring to God - say a great deal about how I’ve come to view what sin **is** and **why** it’s so debilitating. When David says “**I know my transgressions**” it’s important to grasp what he means. David **isn’t** just saying he knows what he **did**. He’s not even saying he knows what he did was **bad**.

He's saying he has come to understand what **makes** sin so wicked. It is against a gracious holy God. This was made clear to David when Nathan revealed his sin - **2 Samuel 12:9, 14** - "**Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites....[14].... Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die.**"

This is the reason for David's response to his sin in **Psalms 51**. David shows a depth of repentance virtually unknown in the modern church. He mourns the **un-Godliness** of his actions, not the pain of their **consequences**. This is not a typical response to exposed sin. People tend to be far more concerned about the **pain** of their sinful acts than they are about the **broken heart of God**.

This is the first sign of true repentance. I am not primarily concerned about **my damaged reputation**, or with the **future of my ministry**, or the **inconvenience of some act of immorality**. As long as these are the focus of my concern I am not ready to come to terms with what I have really done. **"Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned!"**

- 3) **AFTER ACKNOWLEDGING HIS SIN, DAVID FOCUSES ON GOD'S MERCY - Psalm 51:1** - “To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”

"Mercy," "steadfast love," "abundant mercy." David highlights these attributes ***three times in one verse of his composition***. There is such important symmetry in David's repentance. ***First, David refuses to take God's absolute holiness for granted***. He is not white-washing his transgression. But ***second, David refuses to minimize the vastness of God's love and mercy***. Genuine repentance never tries to make sin ***smaller***. Rather, it ***magnifies God's mercy***. Repentance always makes much of God rather than us.

Also, David doesn't try to earn God's forgiveness by rubbing his own face in the dirt. That too is another form of spiritual pride. It keeps the emphasis on ***us*** rather than the glory of Christ's cross.

- 4) **DAVID PRAYS FOR A CLEAN HEART - Psalm 51:10** - “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Even the word “***wash***” in ***verse 2*** literally means to “***clean by beating and kneading***.” David doesn't just want ***forgiveness***. He wants this sin cleansed out of his system. He longs for the kind of inward purity that will ***change the disposition of his heart toward sin in the future***. Repentance always carries this future orientation with it. It's not just the one wicked act in the spotlight. It's the spiritual hunger for a new direction.

Notice the ***deep desire for purity here***. David is not just interested in "getting off the hook" with God. There's a burning passion ***not to be that kind of person anymore***.

- 5) **CLEANSING LEADS TO THE JOY OF THE LORD - Psalm 51:8, 12**
 - **“Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. [12] Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”**

Now we start to get the full picture. Sharpening the focus on the seriousness of sin doesn't end in misery. The dark side of repentance only serves to make true joy a genuine possibility. Acknowledging God's just wrath against sin is not the opposite of cherishing grace. Grace only functions half-strength when the ugliness of sin and the holiness of God is glossed over.

Also, notice that God's holiness doesn't mean He carries a grudge when we repent of sin. A huge burden rolled off David's back when God cleansed his heart. This is the most beautiful part of God's redeeming grace. He not only writes off our bad debts in His official books. He delights to bathe us afresh in his renewing presence. Again, David wants an inward disposition - a ***“willing spirit”*** that is anxious to perform God's bidding and revolt against sinful temptations.

- 6) **DAVID REFUSES TO HIDE BEHIND THE RITUALS OF RELIGION**
 - **Psalm 51:16-17** - **“For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. [17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”**

David could have gone on offering bulls on the altar for the rest of his life. He was the worship song writer of the Scriptures. He could have kept on writing his worship songs for the people as long as he lived. No one could have prevented the king from doing as he chose. But David ***chose not to let business go on as usual. Worship doesn't erase sin.*** To act like it does is to hollow out authentic worship and erase any sense of divine presence. No. David chose to stop and come to terms with his own guilt. He chose to make as major and humbling a change that would jolt the rest of his days.

But where did David's perception of sin and repentance come from? Perhaps David remembered seeing what happened to another famous king. Perhaps he recalled the painful disaster of phoney external religious activity in ***King Saul - 1 Samuel 15:22-23 - "And Samuel said [to Saul], 'Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. [23] For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.'"***

Saul tried to keep offering sacrifices while not doing quite everything he knew God had told him to do. David remembered that. He rightly feared that kind of hypocrisy. This understanding helps explain what was going on in David's mind when he composed these words, to be sung, don't forget, in front of all the people in their worship: ***Psalms 51:10-11 - "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. [11] Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me."***

David learned only **deep** cleansing keeps one safe. Presumptuous sins can take your whole being in a very self destructive direction under the severe hand of God - **1 Samuel 16:14** - “**Now *the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul,* and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.**”