

REMORSE, REPENTANCE & RESTORATION

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Scripture: Psalm 51

Before going through the whole Psalm, I want to lay some context, because you can't pick up Psalm 51 unless you're just looking at it as David's remorse. But I think we need to also look at it from a deeper perspective and ask the question: Why is he in this position? What is he responding to? I think the context will give us a little more appreciation for this particular psalm. We will be looking at 2 Samuel 11 and 12, which had to do with David's sin with Bathsheba. Psalm 51 is actually David's response after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan, that he was guilty of much wrongdoing.

2 Samuel

David sins with Bathsheba and then he compounds that sin by having Uriah, her husband, killed in battle. But God was so displeased because what David had done was "evil in His sight." So He sent Nathan the prophet to David with a message. The prophet Nathan stands before David and he tells them a story.

There were two men; one was a rich man who had many flocks, a lot of herds. Then there was a poor man and all he had was one ewe lamb, and he loved this ewe lamb. He would hold it in his arms, they would sleep in the bed together, they would feed the little one. His children loved this lamb too. Yet, one day when a traveler came to the rich man's house, instead of looking for an animal from his own herd, he cast his eyes on the ewe lamb and took that, and made it a meal for this traveler. When David heard this, he was incensed and said that this man had to die. Nathan, the prophet, then looked at David and said, "You are that man." What a sobering moment for David! And David's response is captured in Psalm 51.

But before we get to the psalm and David's repentance, I want us to see the downward slope and trajectory that sin takes us on. Because all of us deal with sin and the temptations that come to us, it would be good for us, as we look at what happened with David, to see what are the steps that take place when we get caught up in sin. So briefly, I'd like for us to look at that, and then look at David's remorse and repentance through Psalm 51.

PATH TOWARDS SIN

I. WE ARE TEMPTED.

Temptation, or allurements, is always the first thing. We are tempted. However, temptation by itself is not sin; yielding to temptation is. David, we're told, in the spring of the year when kings go out for fighting and for fame, David sent Joab and he stayed at home. The bible tells us that he went up onto the terrace. He saw Bathsheba, and then he sent for her, he slept with her, and it ended with him getting Uriah killed. And that was how temptation got fulfilled. The first thing that got him was seeing Bathsheba. He could very easily have turned around and gone back downstairs; but he didn't.

What does the bible offer us on temptation? 1 Corinthians 10:13 has two or three wonderful nuggets of truth that we need to trust and believe and appropriate in our lives when we are faced with temptation. What does it say? "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience." In other words, what you are tempted with, what David was tempted with, everybody is tempted with the same thing. There's nothing new about the temptations.

Satan would like us to keep that temptation to ourselves and say, "You're the only one who is being tempted in it," because then we begin to feel guilty. We begin to look at ourselves and begin to chastise ourselves. However, if we had turned to somebody else and said, "Hey, would you help me? I'm going through this temptation," they would say, "You know! I suffer from that same temptation. I am also in a position where that temptation comes to me. So let's pray for each other."

The bible says, "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience, and God is faithful." Beloved, that is something that you need to hold on to. Our God is a faithful God; you and I belong to Him. He is our Father, and if He is a faithful Father, a faithful God, then he will help us navigate through these difficult challenges in our lives.

How does He do that? He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. What does that mean? It means that He looks at you and me, and He sees the temptation that is coming to us and He weighs the temptation against what He knows about you and me. And He says, "Ah, that's okay! I believe Cecil can handle that." And only then does the temptation come to me. Therefore, every temptation that you and I are faced with, we need to have the confidence to say: I can face this temptation is coming to me because if it has come to me, then God has allowed it.

When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure. There's always a way out from temptation. That's God's promise for us. He will always show you and me a way out. Maybe God told David, "David, turn around and go downstairs." David didn't listen; he stayed up there. God gives you and me, at every stage when we are tempted, a way of escape. That's the way we need to handle temptations.

That's the first thing that happens when sin comes lurking at our door – we are tempted.

II. CAPITULATION OR YIELDING TO SIN

What happened with David? He sees, he summons, he sleeps with Bathsheba and sin has now become full. Sin has happened. No longer is it in the realm of temptation, now it's in the area of sin. Psalm 7:14 says, "Whoever is pregnant with evil, it only brings trouble and disillusionment." So true! The nature of sin is such that it looks so alluring but once you get there, it's not satisfying at all.

James 1:15 says, "These desires, these lustful behaviors or thoughts give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death."

Romans 6:23 "The wages of sin is death."

III. THE COVER-UP

So, temptation is followed by capitulation or a yielding to sin, which leads us to the third area which is a cover-up or a denial or just a brazen attitude towards it. What does David do? He tries to get Uriah to sleep with Bathsheba – brings him back from the war that he's engaged with and sends him home. But Uriah will not, not when his men are in battle. So he sleeps outside, and David can't get him to do that. Finally, he sends him to the front – tells Joab to let Uriah go to the front. Anybody in those days understood that if you got too close to the front, the arrows could get you. The stones that were thrown from the top could get you. The idea always was to stand beyond the scope of the arrows. And yet, he was told to send Uriah in front. And Uriah died.

The cover-up! That's what happens when sin is now full-blown. We see how can we cover? How can we keep it a secret? How can we just let it reside in some corner of our heart and continue to go through?

Isiah 29:15 says, "Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, and whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they say, 'Who sees us?' or 'Who knows us?'" God sees, beloved. And God knows.

Romans 1:18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

We're drawn into this place – temptation, capitulation and then, a cover-up. That's a terrible place to be, because now we are embracing the sin and holding it in our lives, and that is fair ground for Satan to work in. Satan works in the area of darkness, and sin is an area of darkness.

IV. CONFRONTATION

God used the prophet Nathan who went to David and told him a story; and it pricked him. But he still couldn't relate that this had anything to do with him. This is a dark and dangerous place to be in – to have what we are doing in our lives and yet, not see the injustice of it; to let both coexist. The reason I say that this is a very, very dangerous place to be is because, as we continue to then go on with our lives, there's a part of us that has been called by God to be Christians. We are Christians; we bear His name. And yet, while we continue to do those things that are 'Christian', there is sin that is in our hearts.

Sin and ministry: Hear me clearly – I am using the word ministry for everybody; all of us are called into ministry once we become sons and daughters of God. It is not just the full-time workers, the clergy, the pastors, the priests. No. It's everybody. Peter talks about the priesthood of all believers, you and I. Sin and ministry then begin to coexist. Initially our moral compass, (or for us the Holy Spirit) tells us that we're doing wrong. But as we continue doing what we're doing, or hiding what we're doing, then every time the Holy Spirit speaks, we shut Him up. We don't listen, until there is no voice that we are hearing. He keeps speaking but we are not listening anymore. And Satan encourages it because he knows what the bible says, "Be sure your sin will find you out," will happen at some point. Then it can do such grave harm to your life and the ministry that you have.

It's a false sense of security. Why does that happen? I think Romans 11:29 is a good verse for us to bring into this discussion. "For the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable." God never takes back the gifts and the calling of God. I've often used the second half – the calling – to remind people who say, "Yeah, that was a long time ago. I missed the bus there. That's over." To remind them that God's calling is still there. It's irrevocable.

But the gifts of God are also irrevocable. So maybe you're a good preacher, and you continue to preach well, because that's a gift from God. Or maybe you're a good bible teacher, and you continue to expound, exposit the bible, because it's a gift from God. Maybe you're a good writer, or a good prayer warrior. You love to pray and you do it because being called to prayer is a gift as well. Or maybe a good administrator, a compassionate person who deals with people around with great compassion, a merciful person. All of these gifts that God has given to us continue to flow out. And yet, that sin is coexisting along with it. And we get lulled into this false sense of security saying, "I think I can manage. I think that's okay. Why? Because I look at what's happening and I see the effects of the gift that God is using through me and I think everything is okay, when it is not.

V. ACCEPTANCE OF SIN

David accepts his sin. In Psalm 51 that we just read, he says, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight." When we accept the confrontation of the Holy Spirit and accept our sin, then we own up to wrongdoing. We take onus for our sins. We acknowledge that we are a sinner.

VI. REPENTANCE

What does repentance look like? 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* But this is the point beloved, where Psalm 51 comes in. What does a repentant heart look like? Are we at a point where we need to be repentant? Where are we in this temptation, capitulation, cover-up, confrontation, acceptance, repentance path? Are we caught up in cover-up and denial, in just a brazen attitude that says: I can manage this? Maybe that's where you are. Maybe that's what you're saying, "I am in that place of brazen denial. I am allowing evil to coexist with me. I am in this dangerous gap between knowledge and behavior, knowing that something is right, and then doing that thing. I know what I'm doing is wrong, but I'm still doing it.

Paul, writing in Romans 7:14-15 kind of outlines the dilemma for us as Christians when we face temptation and sin. *"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh and sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing I do not understand; but I am not practicing what I would like to do, but doing the very thing that I hate"*

Does that resonate with you?

Romans 7:17 *"So now no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."* And sin continues to perpetuate because now it is sitting within me, with my will allowing it. Then, *"for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not."* In other words, I want to do good; I'm willing to do good. But the good is not happening because of the bad that I have allowed to sit in my heart. *"For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want."*

Does that resonate, beloved? Are you caught up in that dilemma? Then he says in vs 20, *"But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."* Vs. 24, *"Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*

Who can set you free from this dilemma that you are in? Jesus can, beloved. Maybe you're saying: Till now I believe I'm just caught in it I can't get out of it. I see some of the things of ministry happening, and they're good. But this thing has taken away my joy. I can resonate with those words 'O wretched man that I am!' Lord Jesus, will You help me? What do I need to do at this point? Let me pick up with King David in Psalm 51 and let me walk you and me down this path of repentance and remorse, and then see where that leads us.

PSALM 51

1. 51:1-2 We turn to God.

That's what David did. Only He can help.

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness;

According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.

We turn to God; we bank on His gracious loving attitude, His trait, His character – loving kindness, great compassion, and the only One who can wash us and blot out our iniquity and cleanse us.

2. 51:3-4 We acknowledge our sin with honesty.

*For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is every before me.
Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in Your sight.*

We acknowledge our sin, and we recognize that even as we have sinned, we have sinned against God. I always say that sin not only infects; it affects. In other words, sometimes we say, “I’m the one who’s sinning. It’s not going to affect anybody else.” It does affect people. It does affect loved ones around you.

3. 51:17. To have regret over what has been done, to be sorrowful about it.

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.*

To be broken about what we have got into. So we come to Him with brokenness and contriteness.

4. 51:7-12 We cry out, confess and ask for cleansing.

*Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness,
Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.
Hide Your face from my sins
And blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.*

That’s where we need to come in terms of confession – to cry out to Him, to ask Him to create a clean heart, a steadfast spirit that will not waver and be taken away, not to be cast away from His presence, to let the Holy Spirit begin to have reign in us again and to restore joy back into our lives. To cry out to Him and ask for these things.

5. 51:13-15 Our response to His forgiveness.

*Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation;
Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.
O Lord, open my lips,*

That my mouth may declare Your praise.

Out of God's forgiveness must flow such inexpressible joy that we share it with people around us. Look what the Lord has done! Look what kind of a God we have. You too have got to get to know Him. That should be on our lips as we enjoy the beautiful forgiveness that He gives to us.

That's the path, beloved. Turn to God; acknowledge our sin with honesty; regret – a contrite heart, cry out, confess, ask for cleansing; and then we must have a response to what God has done that we are able to share who God is, to people around us.

Temptation is lurking everywhere, and yet, we are called to stay strong, to not yield, to not give in, to live with endurance this race that we are in. Not to give in, not to give up, and not to fall into the trap that the evil one has. In fact, Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with endurance the race set out for us, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

O wretched one, who can save me from where I am? Jesus can, the One to whom you have entrusted your life. And if you haven't, the One that you ought to entrust your life to. He can, beloved, and today as you look at your life, as you look at it honestly and say, "I have sin that is in my heart. I have a lifestyle that is contrary to the lifestyle God wants me to live in. it's secret. I'm just living it. Beloved, would you stop? Would you hear the Holy Spirit pleading and saying, "Don't go on like this. Deal with it"? confess it and enjoy forgiveness and a restoration of joy, that effervescent joy that comes from being in perfect alignment and a beautiful harmonious relationship and fellowship with God.

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus
Just to take Him at His Word
Just to rest upon His promise
Just to know, thus saith the Lord.

Amen.