

## Genuine Repentance of Sin

Psalm 51: 1-4

We have read a portion of a familiar psalm – David’s psalm of repentance regarding his sin with Bathsheba. Most agree David had been dealing with this sin for almost a year. While others may not have been aware of his transgression, God was aware and sent Nathan, the prophet, to confront David with his sin. Realizing he could no longer ignore his sin, David came broken before the Lord in genuine repentance.

The Bible reveals in [Acts 13:22](#) that David was a man after God’s own heart. If David could succumb to sin and failure, and we know he did, we know that we are capable of such failure as well. I suppose that is why this psalm is so well known and loved. No one walking with the Lord feels good about their sin, but David’s honest confession provides wisdom and encouragement as we face failures in our lives. While God is never pleased with our sin, He stands ready to forgive and restore those who willingly repent of sin and seek fellowship with Him.

As we consider the [appeals](#) of David recorded in the text, I want to discuss: [Genuine Repentance of Sin](#).

**I. The Cry for Mercy** (1-2) – Having been confronted with his sin, and knowing God had sent Nathan to challenge him, David cried out unto the Lord for mercy. Although David had sinned, he remained aware of the divine attributes of God. We see that David appealed to particular attributes. He was aware of:

**A. The Character of God** (1) – [Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions](#). Having committed a great sin, David fell under the weight of his sin. He knew he was guilty before God and had no way to justify his actions. At this moment, his only recourse was to appeal to the mercy and lovingkindness of God – both attributes of His divine nature.

- David appealed to God’s mercy. We know that mercy withholds what one truly deserves. Mercy practices restraint where judgment is warranted. It has been defined as “*a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need. It describes an action from a superior to an inferior who has no real claim for gracious treatment.*”<sup>i</sup>
- David pled for mercy according to God’s lovingkindness. This speaks of “*God’s unfailing, steadfast love.*” David realized that God’s love for him was not dictated by his actions. His spiritual

successes would not cause God to love him more, and his failures would not cause God to love him less. God's love was steadfast and unwavering, even when David failed miserably.

➤ Finally, David appealed to the multitude of God's tender mercies. This comes from the Hebrew word (*rachamim*,) *signifying the deep, tender love a mother has for her helpless newborn baby. It is deep compassion, intensely emotional pity and affection felt from the most inward parts of one's being.* <sup>ii</sup>

**B. The Compassion of God** (1) – *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Knowing the divine character of God, David also appealed to His compassion. Rather than dealing with him in the way he deserved, David cried out for the Lord to deal with him in mercy and compassion.

▪ I am certainly thankful that we serve a God of mercy and compassion. Knowing His lovingkindness and long-suffering toward us should never be viewed as a license to sin, but it is comforting to know that He loves us with an everlasting love. There have been many times in my life when I deserved to face His judgment and yet He dealt with me in mercy and love. I would never want to take advantage of His love, but I rejoice to know He loves me!

**C. The Capability of God** (2) – *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

While David had been continually aware of his sin from the moment it happened, until now he had been reluctant to deal with it. Having been confronted, David knew the time had come for repentance, and he must deal with his sin. David also knew he was unable to cleanse himself. He had committed the sin against God, and God alone had the ability to wash away his iniquity and cleanse his sin.

➤ Transgression (*pesha*) is willful rebellion against God that results in disobeying His holy commandments and breaking His laws. David's transgression needed to be blotted out, wiped away, fully erased.

➤ Iniquity (*avown*) is from a root word meaning bent or twisted and speaks of the perverseness of sin. It describes acts that stem from the depravity of our human nature, which is "warped, bent, and twisted, instead of being straight, perfect, and true."

➤ Sin (*chata'ah*) is an act that, literally, misses the mark. Therefore, a sin is a thought, word, or deed that falls short of God's perfect standard of righteousness. <sup>iii</sup> Such iniquity could only be cleansed by a holy and sovereign God.

**II. The Confession of Iniquity** (3-4) – Here David confessed His iniquity to God. Notice:

**A. David's Repentance** (3a) – *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* God had been aware of David's sin all along, but as of yet, he had been unwilling to admit his sin unto the Lord. Once confronted with his sin, he then had to admit his transgressions before the Lord. His sin was now out in the open, and he could ignore it no more.

- This reveals a fundamental truth that we all need reminded of. We know that God is always aware of the lives we live and the sins we commit. There is nothing hidden from Him. However, at times we are like David, refusing to admit our sin, confessing it before God. The Spirit always brings conviction when we sin, and we must deal with our conviction, being willing to admit our need and confess our sin. Restoration will never happen apart from genuine repentance. This involves more than a feeling of guilt or shame – genuine repentance demands confession of sin and a willful turning away from that sin, back toward God.

**B. David's Remembrance** (3b) – *and my sin is ever before me.* Sin had brought pleasure for a moment, but the shame and guilt associated with David's sin outlasted the temporary physical satisfaction. David was unable to escape the guilt of his sin. It was always before him, night and day. No doubt, David fell asleep at night dealing with his guilt, and woke to find it remained in the morning. Throughout the day, his sin was continually on his mind. He was a child of God, and there was no peace with unconfessed sin in his life.

- While our God is merciful and loving, He will never allow us to escape our sin. The Spirit will continue to convict our hearts regarding our transgressions, leading us to a state of repentance before the Lord, seeking forgiveness and restoration. Those are certainly not comfortable moments, but I am thankful the Lord loves us too much to allow us to continue in sin apart from the conviction of the Spirit. If you can sin and never feel conviction, I would urge you to ensure your salvation. The Lord always chastens those He loves!

**C. David's Realization** (4a) – *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*

David finally came to a profound realization – his sin had been committed against God. Clearly, he had sinned against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, causing great harm – but ultimately his sin had been committed against the true and living God. David realized that all sin, no matter the context, is committed against God. Although his sin would have ramifications upon his life, his family, and even the nation, he had sinned against God in a greater way than he had against others.

- This is quite sobering when we pause to consider its truth. The text does not minimize the effects of sin, the pain it causes others, or the consequences it brings, but it does amplify the truth that all sin is committed against God. Every sin we commit, regardless of how it is perceived by us

or others, is ultimately a sin against God. That fact alone should cause us to hate sin in our lives and seek to avoid sin as much as possible. When we do engage in sin, and we all do, we must be willing to admit that we have transgressed against our Lord, repent of sin and seek restoration unto Him in fellowship.

**D. David's Resignation** (4b) – *that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.* This statement reveals that David's character had not been entirely ruined by his sin. Knowing he had sinned against God, he revealed concern for the honor of God. He submitted to the authority of God, being willing to accept whatever punishment God deemed necessary in order to preserve His good name. At this moment, David was more concerned with how God would be perceived through all of this than he was with the punishment he might receive.

- This revealed a genuine repentance of sin. Many times, we feel guilty, and are sorry our sin has been made known, but we lack genuine concern for the good name of our Lord. Sin always reaches beyond the one who engaged in the sinful act. As believers, our sin brings reproach on our Savior. That alone should be reason enough to strive to live upright before the Lord and others. I do not want to be a reproach upon the Lord or His church. Although it may be difficult to desire, we should long for the Lord to deal with us in a way that brings honor to Himself, even if it brings chastisement for our sin.

**Conclusion:** There is much more that we could consider in this profound psalm. We have considered the path to genuine repentance of sin. God is merciful and willing to forgive and restore, but we must be willing to acknowledge our sin and genuinely repent. The Lord cannot and will not fellowship with sin. We must be willing to confess our sin and truly repent if we desire fellowship with Him. If there is unconfessed sin in your life, I urge you to heed the leading of the Spirit and deal with it today. If you are yet unsaved, the Lord desires to save you, but you must come before Him in repentance and faith!

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<sup>i</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Psalms

II.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid