



EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Psalms Sermon Series

Supports Session 10: God's Forgiveness

Sermon Title: "A Repentant Heart" (Psalm 51:1-19)

Connection to Session 10

David wrote Psalm 32 to detail the joy of experiencing God's forgiveness. A precursor to being able to enjoy the forgiveness God offers through Christ is a repentant heart. Because of his sin with Bathsheba, David knew well sin's consequences. Psalm 51 helps us understand what repentance looks like.

Introduction/Opening

Have you ever heard of the phrase, "Eat crow." Though the origin of the idiom is disputed, the phrase refers to a person having to admit they were wrong. When we are confronted about a wrong attitude or action, our typical response is defensiveness. We want to feel justified and do not enjoy the shame of being wrong. David knew what this was like. The prophet Nathan confronted David after his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah with the famous phrase, "You are the man!" (2 Sam. 12:7). David was made to acknowledge his sin before God. He wrote Psalm 51 out of his repentant heart to seek the forgiveness of God. In this sermon, we will examine several features of a repentant heart.

Outline

1. A Repentant Heart Sees Its Need for God's Grace (Ps. 51:1-5)

- a. David committed great sins. He not only took another man's wife, but he conspired to have the man, Uriah, murdered (2 Sam. 11). David, through Nathan's message, realized his guilt. If we have a genuinely repentant heart, we will acknowledge our sin. We will be conscious of our rebellion (Ps. 51:3) and acknowledge that we have strayed. Nothing is more difficult than a person who will not admit they were wrong; this is not the spirit of a repentant heart.
- b. If we have a genuinely repentant heart that acknowledges our sin, we will appeal for forgiveness based on the character of God. David appealed for grace according to God's faithful love and abundant compassion (v. 1). Only God has the ability to wash away our guilt and sin.
- c. Why should we appeal to God's character when we sin? Because ultimately, all sin is against God (v. 4). God sees all of our sinful attitudes and activities, because His watchful eye is always there—we cannot hide from his presence (Ps. 139:7-12). Even if we try to hide our sin in darkness, the darkness is not dark to God—He sees it all. And only God is able to forgive sin (Mark 2:7).
- d. If we truly seek forgiveness, God will be faithful to forgive (1 John 1:9).

2. A Repentant Heart Seeks Restoration (Ps. 51:6-12)

- a. At the center of David's request is a cry for restoration. He asked God to "restore the joy of your salvation" to him (Ps. 51:12). When we are at odds with those who are close to us, be it a spouse or family member or friend, we know the rift that sin and disunity cause in the relationship. We cannot enjoy the relationship with the other person fully as we ought. Only in pursuing restoration can we enjoy the relationship again.
- b. David sat with the effects of his sin—he had been dirty, crushed, unfaithful, and joyless because of his sin. This is the *modus operandi* of sin. It first promises us more (Gen. 3:5), then it leaves us to deal with the consequences of our actions. Sin often leaves us longing for earlier days before we reaped the consequences of our sin. But, the path to restoration is not backward—it is forward through seeking restoration with God.
- c. David realized that the ultimate problem was in his spirit. He asked God to give him a "willing spirit" (Ps. 51:12). When John Calvin highlighted the problem of sin, he famously identified the problem as the idol-making capacity of the heart. God must grant us a change of heart through repentance, which He leads us to in His kindness (Rom. 2:4).

3. A Repentant Heart Sounds Like a Broken Heart (Ps. 51:13-19)

- a. David's heart was utterly broken over his sin. So much so that he was not afraid to name his sin, which he said was "bloodshed" (Ps. 51:14). Remember, David had Uriah murdered to cover up his sin. When we are caught in sin, we often do not want to verbalize what we have done; it sounds too bad said out loud. But when we are more broken over our sin than we are concerned with our reputation, we will acknowledge our sin truthfully before God and not seek to minimize it.
- b. Conviction of sin and genuine repentance lead us to a place of humility (v. 17). God works in those who are poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3), granting them the kingdom of heaven. When we acknowledge our poverty of spirit, our utter need and dependence on the grace of God for forgiveness, God will restore the joy of our salvation.

Conclusion

Repentance is not something we should run from; it is something we should gladly pursue. Why? Because repentance is the pathway to restoration with God. When our relationship with God is most important to us, we will gladly embrace the opportunity to humble ourselves before God and repent of our sin so that He will restore to us the joy of our salvation.

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