

The Repentant Heart: A Confessing Heart, 1

The Repentant Heart

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Praise the Lord. Indeed, we bring You glory and praise and magnify Your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We thank You, Father, that You have planned and designed our great salvation. We thank You for commissioning Your Son to accomplish our redemption, carrying out and fulfilling all that You have planned. We thank You for the Holy Spirit that You have sent to apply that wonderful work of redemption to our hearts that we, Father, are recipients of this great redemption that is ours in Jesus Christ. We thank You for bringing us from death to life so that we this day may magnify Your name and praise You not only as the Creator King but as our Redeemer King who has saved us from the pit so that we may sing Your praise. Aid us by Your Spirit now to bring glory and praise to You. May You lift Christ high in our midst and draw all of our affection unto Him. For we pray this in His holy name. Amen.

Let us remain standing at this time and let us together open the word of life to the book of Psalms as we continue with our sermon series through Psalm 51. Psalm 51. We now begin the second section of this Psalm and our concentration this morning will particularly be on verses 3 and 4 but let us begin by reading from verse 1. This is the word of God.

1 To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. 3 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. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Thus ends the reading of God's word. Let us pray.

Our heavenly Father, we look to You now to take this text of Scripture and apply it by Your Spirit to each of our hearts. Father, You know each of us intimately, You know each of our journeys, You know each of our struggles with sin, and You know the sins of our hearts, the areas in which we are in great need of repentance. Father, we pray that You would teach us much, instruct us in the way of repentance. Above all, Father, we pray that You would grant it to us by Your Spirit that we might turn unto You in faith even this very morning and finding great joy in You. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

You may be seated.

We continue with our consideration of the Psalm of repentance which, as we have seen, has come after David being confronted by the prophet Nathan after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had had Bathsheba's husband murdered named Uriah, which provides us this dissection of the subject matter of repentance throughout chapter 51 of Psalms, hence the title of our sermon series, "The Repentant Heart." These past few weeks, we have seen that the repentant heart is a turning heart, the type of turning that we ought to mirror in our own hearts as we truly repent of our sins, but we proceed now to the second section of Psalm 51 which is verses 3 through 6 where we find that the repentant heart is not only a turning heart but the repentant heart is a confessing heart wherein we find in these few verses the confession of David to God and, indeed, the type of confession that ought to mirror our own if we are truly repentant. It's here that we're going to focus the concentration of our time this morning as well as next Lord's day morning.

As we have seen, an oversimplistic definition of the word "repentance" is that of "a change of mind," but certainly as we have seen, it's far more than just that yet there is that element of the change of one's perspective, the change of one's perception, the change of one's insight. Indeed, the root word of conviction is the word "convince." Repentance involves the element of having a radical change in what you're convinced of; what you once were convinced of, you now have a change and you have a different conviction for you have had a change of being convinced.

Now in this particular case, I think perhaps an appropriate illustration would be that of the famous optical illusion that probably many of us have seen. In 1915, W. E. Hill published this image that got a lot of recognition that he entitled "My wife and my mother-in-law," and it simply is an image that is an optical illusion. When you look at it at first, you may see a very young beautiful woman that is looking to the side, but if you were to look closer, you'll find that embedded within that same image is a very old woman who is the opposite of beautiful but is very ugly and does not have a nice appearance, both the same images that you find in this one picture, and that's what we kind of find taking place with the heart of David. It's what you find in the repentant heart. It is seeing the way that one may have once saw sin, he no longer sees it that way. That which he once was convinced of and just like one might be convinced that the only image in the picture is a young beautiful woman, there is a change of mind so as to be convinced that it also is something altogether different, indeed, it is a change of conviction, as it were.

So as we examine this text this morning closely, we're going to find that very thing taking place in David's heart. He's going to become convinced of something that he prior was not convinced of. He's going to see things differently than the way he had seen them and I'll communicate these three points that we'll consider this morning in our text in the first person just for our own benefit. In our text this morning, we're going to see this: I see the sin as mine; secondly, I see the sin as sin; thirdly, I see the sin as deserving justice. And I pray that we as we examine these verses will have a change of seeing just as David did.

Note that David writes, "I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is ever before me, against You and You only have I sinned." David makes it very clear that there is no one to blame for his sin than David. Truly the repentant person has no one else in their purview except themselves, this sin is my sin, and the truly repentant heart brings no excuses to the table. The repentant heart does not say, "Yes, but. Yes, but you kinda have to understand the circumstances that I was under. Yes, but you need to understand that's just my personality. Yes, but you need to take into consideration all the others that were involved in this situation as well." There is no, "Yes, but," that we find in Psalm 51. The repentant heart says, "I see the sin as my own and no one else's and there is no excuses whatsoever. The sin is mine."

But the repentant heart says much more than just, "I see that the sin is mine and there are no excuses," but the repentant heart says, "I see the sin as sin." It's a lot more profound than maybe first hits the ears. Notice the language that David has used to make this point all the way up to this point. Just look at verse 1, he says, "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions." He then moves to verse 2, "my iniquities." The end of verse 2, "my sin." And then you come into our passage this morning and what do you find in verse 3? He says, "I acknowledge my transgressions, my sin is ever before me. Against You, and You only have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight." You see what he's naming that that he is engaged in: sin, iniquity, evil, transgression. In other words, David does not call it a bad choice. He doesn't say, "Oh, you know what? I've made a bad decision." He doesn't say, "You know, I've stumbled a bit in such a way that it's actually injurious to me." He doesn't call it a shortcoming. He doesn't call it a flawed action nor does he call it a moral failure. He doesn't say, "Boy, I've really gotten myself into some trouble," or "I've done something that's proven not only injurious to me but it's injurious to someone else. What I've done is injurious to even my relatives, the closest of kin."

Do you hear all of those labels? And we have probably all heard at least one or two of those. Where are they oriented? All those labels are oriented to me and to others. I've done something that's kind of messed me up or has caused some consequences to come my way or consequences to come someone else's way. In this view, the action indeed ends in sorrow. There's no doubt that when one has, what is this, a shortcoming, a bad decision, yeah, there's definitely sorrow that is yielded from such things but from that vantage point, it is sorrow that is rooted in regret for the consequences that that action has for me or for others and that's where the sorrow ends. "I'm just regretful that I did it because of the consequences that it has resulted in."

Well, you see, repentance, brothers and sisters, brings such a change of conviction. Where you once were convinced that the situation you were in looked beautiful, it looked okay like the beautiful woman that you see in the image without any reference at all to the ugly figure there, but now the change comes and you're convinced of something else that you now see that you didn't see before. You now see the old hag. It's now something that is ugly. It's detestable. My heart now has an aversion to it. You see sin for the first time perhaps for what it really is and what is it? It's treason against Almighty God.

We will never see sin aright until we see it as against God. What does David say? "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned. Have I sinned against Bathsheba? Absolutely. Have I sinned against Uriah? Absolutely." But where is the depth of David's conviction that's led him to see, "Ultimately my sin is against the Lord." He sees what he has done in light of the offended party. His eyes are affixed upon the offended. "Has my action led to sorrow?" David would say, "Absolutely, it's sorrow. But it's not a sorrow that's just rooted in regret for the consequences that it's yielded for me and for others, rather the sorrow is rooted in my grief over the God that I have offended." You see, this doesn't give less weight to what one has done to others, it actually yields more weight to what we have done to others in light of the one whom we ultimately have sinned against.

You see, the repentant heart confesses sin as sin. How does the Bible define sin? There's an interesting passage in 1 John 3 where you find the Apostle John writing, "Sin is blank." He writes, "Sin is lawlessness." Lawlessness. But whose law? God's law. Sin is ultimately a violation of God. Though the violation may result in injury to myself and to others, it ultimately is against God and that's what David sees here.

Brethren, sin is always against the Lord ever before it is against ourselves or others. Take lying, for instance. Can it cut one's own heart? Can it cut somebody else's heart? Absolutely, but it does so because it first cuts the Lord's heart, the one who is truth itself and has created you and me to image him who is true. That's why lying is a sin. It is not mirroring and imaging the one who is truth itself and we were created to image him.

Take adultery, for instance. Can it cut one's own heart? Can it cut someone else's heart? Absolutely, but it does so because first it cuts the Lord's heart, the one who says, "Your body is not your own but it's Mine."

Sin is always against the Lord ever before it is against ourselves or others for sin is treason against God who made you and me for himself, and the law that is broken is not some universal principle as the world would often talk about such mishaps in one's life. You're not violating some universal principle. No, it is a violation of God's will for God's creatures. That's what defines sin.

Let us look closely at what has happened to David's heart for a moment. David has committed adultery with Bathsheba, or as many have pointed out over the centuries, it could probably be likened more closely to rape. How did Nathan describe Bathsheba and Uriah her husband's relationship? Do you remember that in 2 Samuel 12? Bathsheba was

to Uriah, the Scripture says, like a female lamb whom he fed from his own plate and allowed to drink from his own cup, and welcomed the female lamb into his lap so as to comfort and protect that lamb with his arms. Uriah loved Bathsheba. Remember that language in 2 Samuel 12? It says that Bathsheba was to Uriah like a daughter, a woman so cherished, a woman so loved. We can only imagine the affection that Bathsheba would have for this man Uriah which is why she lamented and mourned so greatly when she heard that Uriah had been killed. And we have no reason at all from the text of Scripture to presume that the bath that Bathsheba was taking had any intention whatsoever to be seen by David or to serve as any temptation towards him for adultery, yet David, the king of Israel in all of his power, in all of his esteem, the man after God's own heart "sent messengers and took her and she came to him and he lay with her." Who is going to refuse the will of the king whom would be looked upon by any Israelite as the king of kings? It appears that David severely abused his power.

So when he finds out that Bathsheba is pregnant, what does he do? He has her husband whom she so deeply loves murdered. Why? To cover up what he had done in secret. But what do we find in Psalm 51? What do we find? What do we find about the repentant heart of David? He goes from asking, "How can I cover my tracks?" To asking, "How could I treat God so? How could I treat God this way?" Do you see the turn in the heart of this man? He's no longer interested in the covering of the tracks. He is obsessed in deep grief over having offended God. Wow.

This is a man who sees sin as sin. You see the conviction. He was convinced that he had done a small thing, he was convinced that it was just something to fix and move on, it was something that only really affected Bathsheba and, yeah, it certainly affected Uriah and perhaps a little bit of his own conscience, but he's not too torn up about it. We don't see David torn up about much at all at the beginning of 2 Samuel 12. David was prepared to skate on ahead through life without much thought of Uriah, but when the word of God comes through the mouth of Nathan and confronts David, it penetrates his soul and he moves from being convinced of one thing to being convinced of another. His conception of what he had done he found was a misconception. He now sees his sin as sin and he sees his sin as an offense against the King of all kings. That's the heart that we see in David.

Now King Saul that preceded David, he had said on many occasions if you've read the passages on King Saul, there's many times he spoke, "I have sinned. I have sinned." But what marked the heart of King Saul in relation to all of his confessions is that none of them were sincere. He was not a man of honesty. His "confessions of sin" were found to be filled with dishonesty. But this king, King David, what we find is that there is truly a repentant heart in King David because we find here King David as a man who is honest. He is sincere before God. That's what we find here in this passage.

Notice that David doesn't just have a knowledge of his sin, he acknowledges his sin. He's bringing his sin before God in all of his sorrow and grief with true real repentance, and he is honest before God, laying himself bare, "I have truly sinned against Thee." You know, brothers and sisters, there is just something about owning up to our own sin in total and

complete honesty before God. There is a relief and a calm that comes with raw honesty before the throne of Almighty God for the repentant heart has a sorrow that is a godly sorrow that turns with David toward God and says, "I have sinned. I have sinned against You and done this evil in Your sight even though I pretended that it was done in secret."

The repentant heart not only says that sin is mine and the repentant heart not only sees sin for what it is in all of its ugliness, but it also sees sin as ultimately against God, and here we turn to our final point, we find that David says essentially, "I see the sin as deserving of justice. Pure unadulterated justice." David says at the end of verse 4, "That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge." In other words, "No one can find fault, God, with Your judgment. The punishment that I deserve from You is just. To condemn me would be r-i-g-h-t, it would be right. To condemn me would be just."

You know, it's kind of a cliché of sorts that we hear from time to time where you ask a Christian, for instance, "John Doe, how are you doing?" And the response comes back, "Well, I'm doing better than I deserve," regardless of what trial he or she may be going through. While it is somewhat of a cliché, there's a lot of truth in that statement, isn't there? "I'm doing better than I deserve. If you were to look purely at what I deserve, I'm doing very very well." The same is true of one who denies hell if one who denies hell does not understand sin as an infinite offense against an infinite God that is deserving of infinite punishment. Hell exists because of what sin deserves. Sin is an infinite offense against an infinite God and deserving of infinite punishment, and we find David just saying very directly here that, "God, You're in the clear and You're blameless when You judge me."

Now confessing all of these things to God, brothers and sisters, it's very important that we end on this note because there's a word in our text here that is immensely encouraging and it's the first word in verse 3, he says, "For." For. You see, David is pointing back to verses 1 and 2 where he cries out for mercy. In other words, "It's because I'm acknowledging my sin before You, it's because I'm acknowledging that this sin is mine and it ultimately is an offense against Thee and Thee only and I'm deserving of Your just judgment that I'm turning to You, the offended one, and crying out for mercy." That's why the word "For" begins with verse 3. He turns with this cry of mercy to the only one who can grant it, the one whom he has offended.

We have seen in our study of Psalm 103 particularly, that oftentimes the word "mercy" is distinguished from the word "grace." They're very intimately related but often when we speak of grace, we're talking about God giving to someone something that they don't deserve, whereas when it comes to mercy, we find that God is withholding that which someone does deserve. In other words, when we find David in verse 1 saying, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord," he is essentially crying out, "Withhold. Withhold. I acknowledge that I am justly deserving of punishment but I'm calling upon You, the offended one, to withhold that which I'm deserving of. Withhold and stay off Your wrath and punishment that I acknowledge I am worthy of receiving. I'm begging for favor that I have no claim to. Please withhold from me what I deserve for I am undone. I acknowledge my sin. It's against Thee and Thee only."

But when the repentant heart turns to the Lord along with David here and cries out for mercy with a heart of true repentance, turning in faith to him, what is received by the one who turns in true repentance crying out for mercy? They receive mercy. But why? Why ultimately is there mercy to be extended to us? Brothers and sisters, we receive mercy because there's one that did not receive it. We are extended mercy, withholding from us what we do deserve because there is one who did not receive mercy and that is the Lord Jesus Christ who took upon himself the full weight of all of our sin, all of our transgressions, let's call it what it is, all of our evil, all of our sin and iniquity, transgression. He bore it all and God would not have mercy. So the full weight of that wrath, that deserving justice that is ours was poured out upon him not because he was a sinner but because he took yours and bore it. "I'll make it Mine." And God did not withhold his wrath.

He did not withhold his wrath upon his Son so that you and I, brothers and sisters, can run to the Lord for mercy and find it. Isn't that beautiful? Brothers and sisters, there's only one reason that David right this moment is in glory with the Lord, it is because our Lord Jesus Christ took upon himself the weight of David's adultery. He took upon himself the weight of David's murder. And he took upon himself every sin of David's mind, every sin of David's thoughts, every sin of David's intentions, every sin of David's will and David's words and David's actions. That's why he's in glory, it's because God did not have mercy upon David's son, yet David's Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, do not tarry. Run to the Lord for mercy and you will find it as you run to him in faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who has borne your sin. Do not say, "My sin is too great," because his mercy is greater. Do not say, "My sin is too vast, it's too weighty, it's too great. He'll have nothing to do with me." Guess what? He came for you. Perhaps one way to put it, "Is that too great a sin?" He died for that one too, brother. He died for that one too, sister. And that other one that you're thinking about, he died for that one too. There's no sin that is too great, that outweighs his mercy. His mercy is victorious.

Do not stay in that disposition of, "I am not worthy." Come not because you're worthy and certainly don't withhold from coming because you're not worthy. Come because Christ is worthy. Christ is worthy. The Lamb of God has taken upon himself the full weight of your sin. Come in the name of Jesus. Come in Christ by faith and you'll find mercy abundant and you'll find a God on the other end who delights to shower his mercy upon you. He delights to bestow and to continue to bestow mercy after mercy after mercy. Does that not even stir your heart all the more to run to him?

Sometimes it's hard to know when it comes to repentance. Is it the ugliness that I see of my sin that causes my feet to run to the Lord? Or is it by seeing the vastness, the ocean vastness of his mercy that stimulates me to run? Do you know what? It's both. It's both.

Brothers and sisters, he has granted you access to a throne of mercy. As we saw even this morning in our Sunday school class, what is it that you find the lid of the ark of the

covenant called? A mercy seat. A location of mercy. Why? Because there's blood. There's blood that is taken upon Christ himself, your sin. There's a fountain of mercy that's never going to go dry. You keep coming. You come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism interestingly answers the question, "What is repentance," with these words, "Repentance unto life is a saving grace whereby a sinner out of a true sense of his sin and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience." You see, you find both elements there. True repentance is seeing one's sin as sin and grieving with great hatred over it, and that can cause your feet to run to the Lord for mercy. But it says "and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ." It's a view of the greatness of his mercy that encourages me to run as well.

So brothers and sisters, let us this morning based upon our text from Psalm 51, let us with David call sin what it is, own it for ourselves that, "It is my sin and it's ever before me, and it's against You that I've sinned and You're just to condemn me. But I run to You for mercy because in Christ Jesus He has borne the justice that I deserve." Oh brothers and sisters, let us run again and again to the throne of God that is a throne of mercy that you cannot exhaust.

Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ who has granted us an inexhaustible font of mercy. Father, we pray that by Your Spirit You would help us to see sin for what it is. Help us not to treat it lightly or call it by some silly little label that is just a detour from coming face-to-face for what sin really is. Lord, may we see it always in light of the one who was offended ultimately and, O Father, let us run to You again and again for mercy. Cause our hearts, Father, to have a repentance that is unlike Saul's, that is at bottom dishonest and insincere. Give us, Father, hearts that reflect what we find here in Psalm 51, a heart that is wholly honest and sincere before You and says, "Truly, I have sinned in Thy sight." And cause our hearts to turn and find through Christ an ocean of mercy. We pray this in His name. Amen.

Well, congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, receive now the benediction from the throne of glory. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace both now and forevermore. Amen and amen.