

## The Repentant Heart: A Turning Heart, Part 2

*The Repentant Heart*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 51:1-2  
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Let us remaining standing at this time and let us open our Bibles this morning to the book of Psalms, Psalm 51. If you're using a pew Bible, you'll find that on page 869 as we continue our series on this Psalm, Psalm 51, and we will have our attention focused once again this morning on the very first paragraph, it is verses 1 and 2 as a continuation of our study. So let us give our attention to God's word. Psalm 51,

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.

Thus ends the reading of God's word. Let us go to him in prayer now asking for his illumination this morning.

*Our heavenly Father, we do not approach Your word lightly but we approach Your word expectantly and we approach Your word in faith. Father, we ask that by Your Spirit You would apply this word to our hearts. May You, Father, cause us to see sin for what it is, to see Christ for who He is. Father, we pray that You would do Your good work by Your Spirit in penetrating through these hearts of ours. Regardless of how hard they may be, we know that You are more powerful and can penetrate even through the hardest of hearts. So Father, we call upon You and we are so grateful to be in Your presence as those who are the recipients of this word. For we pray it in Christ's name. Amen.*

You may be seated.

Well, we continue with our consideration of this Psalm of repentance, as it's often called, which provides for us a dissection of sorts of the repentant heart, which is the title of our series. David wrote this Psalm, as we have seen, after being confronted by the prophet Nathan after he had gone into Bathsheba. He was confronted by the word of the Lord with his sin. Indeed, we've seen that the matter of confrontation, the matter of exposure by God's Spirit through the word of God is the beginning of repentance, though certainly it does not constitute repentance itself.

As we saw last week, there are any number of places that one may turn from their sin but the element of true repentance involves only a turn in one direction and that is a turn to Almighty God. Indeed, any turning from sin that constitutes real, true repentance is a turning away from sin towards the Lord, and this turning away and turning towards the Lord shows us that repentance does not operate and does not occur in isolation but always occurs with its corollary which is faith. To truly turn away from sin in repentance is to turn towards God in faith, for indeed it's the same movement.

Well, what effect does this sin have upon us? And as we saw last week when we read Psalm 51, we need not only have David's sin in mind and not only sexual sin in mind but it is the Psalm of repentance for any heart that is destitute due to sin and is turning to God in repentance, and as we saw last week, our prayer is that these words will become our words as we turn to the Lord. But what does sin have, what effect does it have upon us? I think that we all can testify that sin weighs us down. When we're truly confronted, truly convicted by the Spirit, there is a weight that's even difficult to describe, isn't it?

We certainly find in Psalm 51 a man that's weighed down, don't we? We come to see what David is particularly weighed down with in our text this morning. He cries out for three things in verses 1 and 2, all of which are not unrelated. He cries out, "Blot out." He cries out, "Wash me." And he cries out, "Cleanse me." All three of these elements of his cry are related to guilt. David is particularly weighed down with his guilt.

Now brothers and sisters, is this not exactly what weighs upon us when the Holy Spirit penetrates our hearts and exposes our sin? We're weighed down heavily with guilt and its accompanying subjective emotion, shame. That is the order, is it not? Sin, the act. Guilt, the heavy objective reality that, "I am the man." And shame, the resulting heavy wrestling with the humiliation of that reality.

And what is our tendency, brothers and sisters? Our tendency is to hold onto it. "After all, it's no one else's but mine. It's my own sin yielding my own guilt that tortures my conscience. It's mine, after all." And what does our adversary want ultimately? Our adversary wants just that, for us to hold onto it, to wallow in it, to remain there so as to be paralyzed by it, to be incapacitated by it such that you do not really repent.

But do we learn so well from the repentant heart that we find in Psalm 51? Indeed, it is a heart that is turning away from sin unto God in faith with a plea for mercy, but this turning brings something with it. The repentant heart that turns to God brings with it the whole of its sin, the whole of its guilt, the whole of its shame unto God.

The repentant heart brings something with it, you see. That's what we find here in Psalm 51, and it's for this reason that we're given what constitutes David's plea for mercy. He says, "Blot my transgressions out. Wash me of this iniquity. Cleanse me from my sin." Why? "Because I can't do anything about it. That's why." Have you reached that point? "I can't do anything about it. I can't do anything about my sin. I can't do anything about this

weighty guilt." So the repentant heart turns to God and says, "You, O Lord, do something about it because I can't."

The words "blot out" are the same as would be used of a scribe who turns his writing utensil around to its smooth side and smears over the tablet of clay so as to erase the stroke that was once there, removing it from the record. These words "wash me" were originally used in the ancient world for laundering, for laundering filthy clothes. To was to take that foul garment and take out its stains, and the same concept was applied to the idea of sin and guilt. Sin that makes one filthy is in need of being cleaned. And notice that David uses the word "thoroughly, wash me thoroughly." It means to "wash me again and again and again and then again. In other words, the stain of this filth, it runs deep, Lord. It runs deep and it's in need of a thorough washing. Wash it out, dear Lord." And of course, this is closely tied to this word "cleansing," one who is ceremonially cleansed so as to remove the defilement that keeps one out of fellowship with God. It is to cleanse one of the sin that makes one odious in the sight of God.

This is what David means when he turns to the Lord in faith crying out for mercy. It's crying out for God to take care of his sin and all that comes with it because he can't take care of it. Dear brother and sister, sin rightly weighs upon us, guilt and shame resulting from our sin. It should not cause us to collapse in on ourselves to deal with it, but should turn us outside of ourselves to him so that he may deal with it, you see.

Think it not noble to own up to your sin and call it your own by holding onto it, for that's not repentance. No, God calls us to have repentant hearts which is a heart that turns to God in faith, crying out for his mercy by handing over to him my sin. It's a casting of one's sin to him, the opposite of holding onto it.

The only way that shame is dealt with is my guilt being dealt with, and the only way my guilt can be dealt with is my sin being dealt with, you see. They're all connected which is why we find David coming to God with his sin. If we learn anything this morning, let it be this. We see David turning with his sin and casting it to God, bringing it to God and calling upon him to do something about it because I can't. Helpless. Oh, that we would learn that a truly repentant heart is a turning toward God but a turning heart toward God casting one's sin in his direction that I may have it erased, that I may be washed, that I may be cleansed, that the weight might be removed.

But there's a large, large question before us this morning, perhaps the biggest question that our text answers for us, and that is why? Why? Why should God blot out David's transgressions? On what basis should God wash David thoroughly from his iniquity? Upon what ground should God cleanse David from his sins? Watch this: does David appeal to his own character? Does David say, "Lord, after all, I'm a man after Your own heart"? Does David say, "Lord, look at how faithful I have been to You in going out against Your enemies, trusting in Your name, yea, even with the great Goliath. How faithful I've been in sparing the life of Saul so many times again, sparing Your anointed one. Have I not been faithful? How faithful I've been in showing kindness to the offspring of Saul, even little Mephibosheth." Does he says, "Lord, this incident with

Bathsheba and Uriah, it only happened once and I've never done it before"? No, David doesn't. On what alone grounds does David make his plea for mercy? "Lord, my plea has nothing to do with what's found in me but what can be found in You and that's why I come. On what basis should You show me mercy? You are full of lovingkindness and have a multitude of tender mercy." That basis. On that basis.

You see, he doesn't plea his own character, what do we find David doing? He's pleading God's character. David doesn't for a moment appeal to the Lord's mercy on the basis of David, he appeals for the Lord's mercy on the basis of the Lord. Do you see that? David knows something and David remembers something, something, brothers and sisters, that you and I need to remember often, we need to remember the one to whom we are bringing our sin. The mercy that we find in verse 1 is not mercy according to David, it is mercy according to the Lord.

So David says, "According to Your lovingkindness, show mercy." This actually is that word "chesed" that we've seen so many times again over the last year. That chesed love of the Lord, an aspect of the love of God that does not accent his emotion but chesed accents his loyalty. His loyalty, his steadfastness. "Have mercy, Lord, upon me according to Your loyal love for me."

And David says, "According to your tender mercies." Tender mercies. Did you know this is actually one word in the Hebrew that comes in our English language in two by necessity? And what's very, very interesting is that the accent of this word is on emotion. It is. It is an emotional term of warmth and loving compassion.

You may remember toward the end of Genesis, Joseph's story, where we find that Joseph has been speaking with his brothers who've sinned against him and he hasn't yet revealed to his brothers who he really is, that he's Joseph, after all, and we find that Joseph is, he's so intent on seeing his younger brother whom he dearly, dearly loves named Benjamin. He wants to see Benjamin. He hasn't seen him in so long and so he requires them, of course, to bring back to Joseph young Benjamin, and for the first time when they see one another after such a long time, Joseph looks upon baby Benjamin and do you know what the Scripture says? It says that Joseph's heart grew warm for his brother and his sought out a place to weep. That's the same word we find in our text this morning, brothers and sisters. "According to Your tender mercies, Your warm heart of compassion that loves me."

This is precisely what David says, "According to Your chesed, loyal love, according to Your tender, warm, compassionate mercies." You may not have noticed it yet but do you see what David's doing? He's actually drawing a profound comparison, or let me correct that, a profound contrast. David is saying, in effect – watch this now – he's saying, in effect, "Lord, my love for You has been found to be disloyal. Will You show mercy to me on the basis of Your love that is loyal? Lord, my love for You has been found to be cold. Will You show mercy to me on the basis of the warmth of Your love?" Do you see that contrast that's going on in the heart of David? He sees in God what he doesn't find in himself, a God whose love is loyal to perfection, a God whose love is ever-warm and

compassionate. In other words, "Lord, there's no reason in me for You to show me mercy but, Lord, find a reason to show me mercy and please find that reason in You."

Do you hear David? That's his cry, you see. This is the repentant heart that we see dissected before us. A repentant heart is a turning heart. It's a turning heart that casts its sin, a turning heart that knows the one toward whom I cast it, one who will show mercy according to his loyal love, and will show mercy according to his tender mercies. That's the one I'm casting my sin toward. And you see, that stirs the heart of the believer all the more to cast it, does it not, brethren? When you see how merciful and how gracious and compassionate and loyal and warm his heart is towards us, it causes us all the more to run to him. That's what it should do. That's what it should do.

And brothers and sisters, as we turn to him crying out for mercy on these grounds, guess what? He will show mercy. He delights to show mercy. You see, that's what makes God's grace so amazing. So amazing. We sing about amazing grace, do we not? But brothers and sisters, I ask all of us: have we really comprehended the freeness of his grace? Its freeness. Perhaps its freeness makes us strangely uncomfortable. Listen to this quote. One author puts it this way, "Grace is love that seeks you out when you have nothing to give in return. Grace is love coming at you that has nothing to do with you. Grace is being loved when you're wholly unlovable. Grace is a love that has nothing to do with the loved but has everything to do with the lover. Grace is irrational in the sense that it has nothing to do with weights and measures. It has nothing to do with intrinsic qualities or so-called gifts. It reflects a decision on the part of the giver, the one who loves, in relation to the receiver, the one who is loved, that negates any qualifications the receiver may personally hold."

That's free. Free. Almost uncomfortably free. And how can he so freely bestow such grace and love and mercy upon the unlovely and the undeserving? How in the world can he do this? Well, earlier in this sermon you may recall that it was said that our constant tendency is to hold onto the weight of our sin, for after all, it's not somebody else's, it is my own. It is my own sin yielding my own guilt. Well, God so freely bestows upon you mercy because Jesus Christ, his only Son, has said this, "That weight of your sin and guilt, it shall become someone else's and that someone else is Me." On the basis of the Christ who would come, God bestowed mercy upon David, and on the basis of the Christ who has come, he bestows mercy upon you and me.

Are you looking to Jesus, the one who is the "someone else"? Are you trusting and appealing to God through Christ Jesus? Do you see what he bears for you on the cross? Do you see the weight upon him? Wait, look closer. That weight upon him is your weight. But look closer. That weight upon him is all of your weight. All of your weight. Brother or sister, you need not bear the shame of your guilt for Christ has borne your guilt. You need not bear the guilt of your sin for Christ has borne your sin. You need not bear the weight, period, because he has borne the entire weight of it all. With a repentant heart, turn and bring your weight to him through faith in Jesus Christ and remember the one to whom you bring it, one who abounds in chesed love, who abounds in compassion and delights to show you mercy, and may that stir you all the more to come.

Let's pray.

*Our Father in heaven, O how we are humbled to hear of the freeness of Your mercy. Father, forgive us of holding onto our sin and all that comes with it. Help us by Your Spirit to turn and cast it all in Your direction, coming to You with it and pleading that You deal with it for us. And O Father, may the grounds of our plea ever be not anything found in us or done by us, but may we be overjoyed that Your grace, Your mercy, Your love is so free because we come to You with it on the basis of Your mercy to us in Jesus Christ, on the basis of Your love and compassion towards us in Jesus Christ. O may You find in Jesus all of the reasons that are needed to forgive. And Father, may we find in Jesus all of our reasons for coming to You in faith with a truly repentant heart. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Brothers and sisters, let us receive the blessing from the throne of God. 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.