

13. Psalm 51

April 22, 2012

When you were a kid, you did something bad to your sibling or friend, and your parents or teacher forced you to apologize to them. So you reluctantly said, "Sorry." But in your heart, you were not sorry at all. You were thinking, "If I had a chance to do it again, I would do it without getting caught." Remember that?

Guess what? To our God, that kind of "Sorry" doesn't work, because He knows us better than ourselves and He sees what we are thinking way before it comes to our minds.

This morning, we find a genuine repentance from a man who should have known better because he was called, "A man after My own heart," by God Himself. When this man was confronted by his faithful friend for his sin of adultery, deception, and murder, without one single excuse, he immediately broke down before the Lord and repented thoroughly. Of course, I am talking about King David as many of you already know.

A. HAVE MERCY ON ME

Psalm 51:1-6 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.

The 51st psalm is the prayer of repentance David prayed. This prayer is a model of repentance – truly broken before the Lord.

I know that it is not very popular to talk about sin in our society where it is obsessed with sins of all kinds. Even within four walls of church buildings, people don't want to talk about repentance of their sins, rather they expect others and even God to accept their sins and let them do whatever they want to do.

I read an article of a pastor who was on his TV program prayed this prayer before their service:

"Welcome to our worship, we're going to worship the Lord together. Let's pray. O Lord, we deny anything that is negative, we deny anything that takes away our joy. We reject all thoughts of loss. We reject anything that would steal our dreams, our ambitions, our goals, and our desires."

And he went on and on with this kind of thing for rather extended period of time.

You may say, "Why do you think that his prayer was wrong?" In case you haven't noticed, our sin is very, very negative. It is so negative that it would take us to hell. Are we in an agreement on that? What that pastor said is that he and his church would ignore the negativity of their sins and just have fun in worshiping God. Do you think that God is pleased with their kind of worship? Definitely not.

You all know that I rarely talk about my grandson Micah to you guys. He is 15 months old now. He only has two emotions – happy or crying. When he doesn't get his way, he cries no matter how much he is loved by his parents and grandparents. But when we please him, he laughs so hard that people around him have to laugh also. After all, he is only a 15 month old immature baby, so we understand that he only has two limited emotional characters. But if Micah is 15 years old and acts in that way, his parents have some serious problems. I would take that boy out to the woodshed for a lengthy heart to heart conversation.

The same goes for Christians. There are many immature Christians who think that their sins are OK with God because they are Christians. No, our God wants us to repent from our sins and be right with Him. We cannot have on-going relationship with our Father when we hover over our sins in our hearts.

When we leave our homes to worship the Lord at the church on Sunday morning, we should come to grips with the reality of our own sinfulness. We need to come to confess things that are negative. We need to come to confess our weakness, inabilities, deceptiveness, disloyal, unloving, unkind, the fallenness of our flesh, and the constant recycling of our tendencies toward iniquity.

If you know any Christian or church that doesn't want to admit one's sinfulness and doesn't want to remove one's sins with true repentance to the Lord, either they are of the most immature kind or they are not Christians at all.

Look at what Isaiah the prophet said in his Book of Isaiah and read what apostle Paul freely admit in the Book of Romans:

Isaiah 6:5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Listen, the church never worships more purely than when it confesses its own sinfulness because that is the platform in which we enter into true worship in spirit and truth – recognition of our own sinfulness and our own unworthiness, at the same time, we acknowledge God's holiness, righteousness, justice, and His love for us.

According to 2 Samuel chapter 11, king David was leering at Bathsheba who was bathing on her house rooftop on one fateful evening. When the king inquired of her identity, the soft-footed servant reminded him that she was the wife of his loyal soldier who would give up his life for the king instantly. To David, it was not the love at the first sight, rather nothing more than total lust at the first and lingering sights.

It was not that David did not have a wife. As a matter of fact, he had one too many. He expected this fling to be nothing more than a one-night stand. He forgot all about what the Lord said to Moses and the Israelites:

Numbers 32:23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

Isn't it true that when we sin against the Lord, we become utterly moronic and don't remember anything that the Holy Spirit tells us not to do?

When David found out that Bathsheba was pregnant with his child, he was going to cover it up by having her husband return to her for a short leave from the battlefield.

Bathsheba's husband Uriah had more integrity than the king expected and he didn't even visit his wife. So, the king had him to be killed in action and took Bathsheba as his wife. He thought that everything was covered up.

God sent His prophet Nathan to confront David with the piercing truth in 2 Samuel chapter 12. One thing we do not find is a typical excuse, nor a blaming game of any kind from David. He simply and honestly confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord."

He didn't call it a mistake like many people in 21st Century do; he didn't shift blame to Bathsheba even though she was not innocent; he didn't come up with an excuse that he was lonely at the top as a king.

Here are three aspects to David's perspective on his own sin:

1) David knew that his sin deserved judgment.

In v2-4, David used the words, such as, "iniquity, transgressions, sin, evil". He knew clearly that he was guilty of sin by every definition. And he also knew that God had to judge him.

2) He accepted all responsibility.

David didn't undo his confession by minimizing his responsibility.

3) Since He knew that he deserved judgment of God, he desperately needed His grace.

David appealed to God's grace and compassion, not justice, nor the law. He understood what he deserved.

Psalm 103:10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

B. PLEAD FOR DIVINE MERCY

Psalm 51:7-13 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

A true confession to God requires something really serious thing from us – our whole being. Because our holy God will not be content with a superficial "Sorry" like I mentioned at the beginning of this sermon.

David recognized not only God's holiness, but His power to cleanse his soul inside out. 'Hyssop' was a shrub that was used to apply blood of sacrifice and water in a purification ceremony. David was pleading to the Lord to purify him spiritually and ceremonially.

When we go to the Lord in the time of confession, we must pour out our hearts in this true confession, not haphazardly. This is what our gracious and merciful God is waiting for. Our holy God is, by nature, a merciful and forgiving God.

If you take v11 "Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me" out of context and apply it to the NT Christians, you can come up

with some crazy off-the-wall theologies. Because it is Jesus' promise that once we receive Him into our heart as our Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit makes a residence in our heart. That means that He is there to stay until the Lord takes us to heaven, not moving out of our heart and setting up a "For Rent" sign outside of our heart whenever we sin. If that is the case, He would be out of our heart the most of time than staying inside.

C. A BROKEN SPIRIT AND A CONTRITE HEART

Psalm 51:14-19 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation, And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise. 16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise. 18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, With burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

When we go to the Lord and we pour out our hearts in the time of confession, we can count on His immediate faithfulness to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. There is no probational period. Does it mean that we get off scot-free without any consequences? Absolutely not. We pay the consequences of our sins, but His forgiveness is a done deal.

1 John 1:9-10 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us..

The problem is that there are people today who think they have confessed their sin when they haven't. Far too many people think that to confess their sin is merely to acknowledge their sin. Therefore, they will sin, they will get caught, and they will say, "I acknowledge what I did. I confess that sin. That was a bad thing." Then they go out and do it again and say, "Oops, my bad. I did it again. I confess." That's not a true confession. They are simply recognizing what is obviously sin. We call it 'remorse', not 'repentance'.

Jesus' blood can cleanse any sin, but is powerless to forgive an excuse. Confession means to see sin for what it is and the way God sees it, to be sorry for it, and to turn from it.

Once our Lord forgives us from our sins, He no longer remembers them. If you tend to keep blaming yourself after you've acknowledged your sins to God, think about what you're doing. You are keeping alive the memory of your sins by your anger at yourself. To overcome this, focus on the Savior, not on your sin. Think about what He has done, not what you have done. Because Jesus forgives your sin, you can "forget" your sin. We should not try to remind God what He already forgot.

You don't have to live with a guilty conscience. In His mercy, God has provided us with a way to freedom through the waters of repentance.

Psalm 32:1-2 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) The church never worships the Lord more purely than when it confesses its own sinfulness because that is the platform in which we enter into true worship in spirit and truth.

2) Beware of a little compromise for that supposedly small sin. There is a trap behind that you may not be able to get out of without heavy cost from your life.

3) After you truly confess your sins to the Lord, remember that God has forgiven you, so move on.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.