

Psalm 51: Repentance

08-20-19 PM

Psalm 51 is written by David in the aftermath of his sins over his relationship with Bathsheba. We are well acquainted with this sin from 2 Samuel 11, which tells the story of David's lust, adultery, lies, drunkenness and murder. We see the cascading nature of sin in David's attempts to cover sin in his own way. Then in Psalm 12 we see the great confrontation. The remarkable moment is when David is confronted; he immediately admits to his sins, and Nathan pronounces him forgiven.

Is this fair? David committed some terrible sins here; one might even see his adultery with Bathsheba as a form of rape (if he used his authority to bring him to her). Doesn't this seem worse than the sins of Saul, from whom the kingdom had been revoked over sin? Yet David is instantly forgiven for his transgression. Why is there this apparent discrepancy in justice? The answer is Psalm 51, which reveals the heart of David and the heart of repentance.

Let us first point to the forgiveness of God. God's forgiveness is dependent on multiple conditions. For us today, it is available because of the blood of Christ. If one is not a Christian, they cannot have the forgiveness of God. Second, even the Christian must meet two conditions. First, they must be willing to forgive others as they are forgiven of their sins (Matt. 6:14-15). Second, they must repent. That is the subject of our point here.

What is repentance? Repentance is a combination of two things: the regret of our sins and the commitment to cease to commit our sins. Note we use the word "commitment"; it is a committed attitude to ending sin, not necessarily the successful accomplishment of that action. This means that one may repent but still stumble. Without both the regret of our sin and the commitment to cessation, our behavior is NOT repentance. Regret alone (such as Judas or Esau) is not repentance; ending our action alone (such as the person arrested for a crime and imprisoned who can no longer commit crimes) is of itself not repentance.

David's repentance was successful at least in part because of the heartfelt sorrow for sin he expressed. David plainly acknowledges his sins here. He wrote Psalm 51 in sorrow for his sins; look too at his words in 2 Samuel 24:10-14. What David understood was that repentance is not a mechanical action; it is a matter of the heart. *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit* Psalm 34:18. David said *I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me*. David understood that he was no better than any other sinner. He declares that he *"will teach transgressors Your ways"* if he obtains forgiveness.

Do you want to be successful in your repentance? Repent like David. First, own your sin. You cannot sell a car that you do not own clear title to; so it is with sin. You need to accept total culpability before presenting it to God. Second, don't take your sins lightly. You may have dodged the bullet of consequences, but your sin was heinous to God. Never forget that the cost of sin is so high that it will cost the blood of the Son of God to remedy the situation. Finally, find sorrow for your error. Express it towards God. Then you have understood what David did.

Psalm 51 may be the most important Psalm in the book. It speaks to the most important action men take for forgiveness: the broken heart offering.