

Psalm 51: When Just Saying Sorry Doesn't Cut It

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[0:00] Well, thank you all for having me in.

And certainly thankful for the years of growing up here! And being able to hear the word of God preached faithfully here.

! And how even myself, I was trained up here. And thankful for how the Lord works in people that would have no hope without Christ.

And by the way, that's all of us, right? We have no hope without Christ, and yet He chooses to use us to be the light, not only to each other, to remind each other of it, but to take that light to the world. I hope that you've been able to see us or come by and introduce yourself to us. We'd love to get to know you afterwards as well.

[1:06] But I'll introduce my family in a little bit afterwards if you come by. But hopefully you're able to be here this morning too. This morning we're going to be looking at Psalm 51.

And I'm thankful that in the midst of all of life, that Psalm 51 has been one of those psalms that I've kind of gone to constantly.

And it's been something that has probably influenced and changed my life forever. And so as I think about coming back to the church where you could say maybe it all started, I thought what would be better than maybe a psalm that has probably impacted me the most.

So if you turn to Psalm 51, if you're there, and let me read Psalm 51 for us, and then I'll pray and we'll get in the text.

Psalm 51 says, You only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

[2:41] Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth and the inward being, and you teach me wisdom and the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

[3:41] For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it. You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then will you delight in right sacrifices and burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will be offered on your altar.

Amen? Let's pray. Father, work in our hearts this morning that we might be able to see who you are all the more.

That we might understand who we are all the more. And that we might be able to seek you all the more. And recognize the freedom and promises you give to those who trust in you.

So Lord, break our hearts this morning. Work in us, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. As I think about growing up in this church, I'm tempted to be kind of horrified at all of the things and all of the ways that I might have acted.

[4:54] And yet I'm thankful for God's mercy in all of that, even as I come before you. Some, I'm sure, of you have stories that you could even share.

Just write those down, then throw them away and burn them if you could. But as you know, in a church like this, it was cool to see many children around.

Many of you have children. And even if you don't have children, I'm sure you get the blessing of seeing other people's children and them encouraging you and making you laugh, probably.

But as you know, with children, as they're growing up, sometimes they push each other a bit, right? Sometimes they're nagging each other. One of them might take something and then the other person's yelling and running after them with some kind of item in their hand, probably, or wanting to throw something at them.

Sometimes, well, lately we haven't had too much sun in Scotland, but here we've had plenty of it. So we've been getting sunburns and perhaps just hypothetically, of course, there might be some that like to slap the other person's back after a sunburn.

[6:06] Again, all hypothetical, of course. And as any good parent would, when you see this offending party go and do whatever they did, you tell that person that they need to say what?

I'm sorry. Yes, which obviously is always quite heartfelt, right? It's always deep from the soul that they go in and they share this, oh, I have wronged you, my brother, right?

We know what that apology looks like sometimes, right? It's, sorry, and then off you go, right? Or maybe saying, like, I'm sorry.

You know, like the deep, like, anger, the kindling going on there. And then sometimes it might be even so quiet that you don't even hear, like, did they just say something? Like, all right, then they're off, you know?

Here's the thing, though. So, I think, many times our repentance before God, even as adults, looks strikingly similar.

[7:17] Maybe you know you responded in an angry way, or you know you were selfish in a situation, and we don't have a parent there saying, all right, what do you say, right?

Go say sorry. How often in situations like that do we fail to go to our Heavenly Father because we think maybe it's just not a big deal?

Ah, I'll just say it real quick. He died for my sins. It's okay. Is it possible, whether maybe you're a Christian in here, maybe you've been a Christian for years and years, and you've been here, maybe you even trained me up.

Thank you for that. Thank you for your patience. Is it even possible that maybe either you or those even dabbling in Christianity, is it possible that we forget and don't realize that every one of our selfish acts, every grudge that we hold on to, every outburst of ungodly anger, every small bit there, that that sent Jesus to the cross?

Do we remember that? Maybe you're new here. Maybe this is the first time you've been here. Have you heard that our sin has that much of an effect or had that much of an effect?

[8:50] And what we find as we look at Psalm 51 here is that there's a man who knows he's done something wrong here. He knows that he messed up, and it's against God and others that he's messed up against.

And he goes to God not just to say sorry real quick, but to truly repent. He knows he needs to change.

And so he's had this change of heart and the way he thinks, a change of mind, and it changes the ways that he thinks about things and the things that he does.

And that's what repentance is. Repentance is a change of heart and mind that changes what I think and what I do. And the fact is that all of us have sinned before a holy God.

We've all committed high treason against this holy king of the universe, claiming that our way is the best way every time we take things into our own hands.

[9:48] And the reality is that we deserve death because of it. Eternal separation from God, suffering, that's what we deserve. But what I hope you see in this text is much more than that, praise God.

That here, and maybe you hear this morning, or maybe you feel this morning broken. And maybe you're longing for hope.

And I hope what you see here is this matchless hope for the sinner. The sinner in Psalm here, and Psalm 51 here, who turned to the Lord. And so today, we're going to look at how just saying sorry

doesn't cut it.

We're going to look at what true repentance looks like. And I hope this morning we can encourage each other as we look at the word this morning. We're going to look at confessing, telling on yourself to God.

We're going to look at remembering, calling to mind what is true of me and God. We're going to look at apologizing, asking for forgiveness. We're going to look at worshiping, responding to our sin with acts of worship to God.

[11:02] And then we're going to look at seeking, asking God to restore us, build us up, and protect us. And I hope that in that process, what we learn is that actually, when it comes to saying sorry, it might be a little bit more than maybe we thought it should be on a regular day-to-day basis.

So let's look there, and we start in Psalm 51. Look there in your Bibles at the very beginning. You'll notice that the beginning of Psalm 51, there's this quote in the beginning.

And that quote actually goes back to 2 Samuel 11 and 12. Now, I'm just going to describe that quickly. I don't want to spend too much time going into that full story. But what you find is that King David is at home, and instead of going to war like his military guys did, he's there and he's perhaps even shrieking his responsibilities.

And in the midst of that, there is a woman of one of his soldiers. Her name is Bathsheba, and she is taking a bath. And he is seeing from the top of where he is, he's just looking out, and he sees Bathsheba.

And instead of turning away, he decides to continue to look, right? The slow spiral that begins.

[12:26] And that turns into David eventually calling Bathsheba over, and he commits adultery with her. And then, soon after, she finds out that she's pregnant.

Oh no, what happens now? So, what does he do? He sends for her husband, Uriah, to be killed at the front of the battle. If it wasn't bad enough, now he's committed adultery.

Now there's a child involved. And now he wants to send his friend to go get killed at the front of the battle. And now, because of that, not only is Uriah killed, but in the process of trying to get him killed, lots of other people from Israel are killed.

Lots of other military are killed, leaving families left without fathers. And finally, David takes Bathsheba as his wife. What a guy.

Finally, you get to the story where Nathan goes to him and tells him a story that symbolizes what David did with Bathsheba. And it's in telling this story that Nathan the prophet, he confronts David, and David is finally convicted of his sin.

[13:49] And this is his response as a song from his soul. And the first thing that we see, this first step of real repentance that we see David describe is this confession.

You see this in verses 1 through 4. He starts off with something very good for us to do when it comes to confession. He says, have mercy on me, O God.

He goes to God and he asks for mercy. He knows he's going before this holy judge, this one who is perfect. And he knows that this judge has something about him that we don't see a lot in our culture. This true love and mercy that doesn't compare to this world. David isn't just going here because he knows he's messed up and he's been found out.

He's not just going to relieve himself of this punishment. He hates what he has done because he knows that he's broken his relationship with God.

[15:00] And that was important to him. And as we think about what that looks like, I think sometimes we often just are sad because we get found out.

Or we know it's the right thing to do. Charles Spurgeon said, if I hate sin because of the punishment, I have not repented of sin. I merely regret that God is just.

I think so often maybe the reason why we're sorry is because we know it means something else later on. It means that life might be a little bit uncomfortable, whether you're kids or adults.

If we don't hate our sin because we've offended God, we're missing something. And so asking for mercy is an appropriate start for confessing your sin.

And we don't like admitting we are wrong. Can you remember the last time you admitted you were wrong? Sinfully or otherwise? If you can't, perhaps you should listen closely to what David is pointing out here.

[16:09] How much do we forget about the mercy that was poured out on us? In fact, every day. Every sin deserving instantaneous death.

And yet here we are at Maranatha Baptist Church. As Jonathan mentioned, 4663 Travue Road. And I think that's important that we get to be here this morning hearing about the mercy of God. If you've never turned to Christ, it's a blessing to be able to hear about the mercy of God.

Thankfully, it's the word of God. And that the power is not through me.

It's the word. And we can look at this and we can say, look, if we haven't trusted in Christ, confession is a good place to start saying, I need your mercy, God.

And if you haven't followed him, if you don't go to him, and if you don't confess to him, you won't receive the mercy that you will need.

[17:09] But if you're a believer, you know what God has done for you, and you've believed, you've said, I trust in him alone. We know something about our Lord.

Lamentations 3. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. Aren't we thankful for the mercy of God that's new every morning?

And when you confess your sins before God, I wonder how often we ask the God who poured out his horrific judgment for mercy.

A mercy that you could never deserve and never earn. And in verse 2, we see David asking God to thoroughly wash him. He says, I need you to cleanse me of this.

He recognizes that his sin has brought a separation between him and God. And you recognize also in verse 4, he says, even though I messed up with a whole bunch of people, he says, it was you and you only I sinned against.

[18:20] Right? Now, you read the first part here. Right? Against you and you only. And as we remember the story, it's like, really, David?

Only you? Only him that we sinned against? Right? It may be David overstated a bit. Right? Like, you let down your soldiers by not going to war with them. You let down Bathsheba and Uriah by committing adultery.

You forced the commander of your army to send this man in the front lines to be killed. And in the midst of that, you killed many other men just to make sure that Uriah got killed.

And then you put Nathan, the prophet, in front of you to confront the king. Which, by the way, prophets confronting kings, you can imagine at that time, didn't usually go well. Right? Confronting a king wasn't usually on the, like, bucket list.

I need to do that before I die. In fact, usually the next thing you would do is die. Right? And he sinned against everyone. Right? Right? And yet he goes to God, the law giver, whose moral code he broke, and he said, I know it's against you and you only.

[19:32] And while, and I think it's important for us to see, that he's the one that we've broken the law against. He's the one that we've done things against. We need to see that that's first.

And while it's very appropriate to go and say sorry to those that you have sinned against. Or that your sin has affected. And even try to make things right.

It's a very good thing. We must remember that the one who we've sinned against the most or first is God. We must go to the law giver, the creator.

And as we think about sin in our lives and what it looks like to tell on ourselves to God, you could say, are we all more concerned with how our sin has affected other people? Or how our sin has offended God?

I know what my answer is most of the time. Unfortunately. Have you told God about your sin lately? Have you gone before him?

[20:38] Have you ever told God about your sin lately? Is there something that you've been ignoring in your life that's been gnawing at you and you don't even want to admit it in your head?

Because then you know you're going to have to do something about it. Is it eating you inside? Go to him. He says his mercy is new every day. Confess it.

Can I just say even confess now if you need to? Right now, if you haven't done that, just feel free right now to tune out the next two minutes and just be ready to say, I want to confess this to you.

Because he's listening and he's ready with new mercies no matter what it is even now. First step to real repentance is confessing. The second step to real true repentance is remembering.

Calling to mind what is true of me and true of God. And we're very good at believing lies. We do this all the time. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we're not too bad.

[21:46] And David, what he's trying to remind himself of is he's calling to mind this truth about his condition before God. I was desperate. I didn't even start in the right way that I needed to.

Even while I was in my mother's womb, I was in sin. Verse 5 talks about. We were born into this sin. David knew that you can't bring something perfect out of something that is flawed. Romans 5 verse 12 says, Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin.

And so death spread to all men because all sinned. And while it's unfortunate that we started off in that condition, it's the fact that because Adam, we continue with that sin curse.

The reality is from day one, we were messed up. David didn't say that like this as he was like enlightening God in some way. He's just reminding himself of these things.

[22:55] But then he also remembers who God is. He wants to make it clear that Jesus, that God the Father, that all of the Godhead here is justified in whatever happens to him.

Because he deserves it and because the true God is a holy God. And that it's only through him actually that my secret heart, the deep, dark depths of my soul can be revealed to a point where he shows me what I've done wrong.

It has to be through him. And he delights in giving us that knowledge so that we can actually draw closer to him. But it's something you have to actually believe.

It's what you live off of. Job 38, 36 says, Who has put wisdom in the inward parts or given understanding to the mind?

Who has? It's the Lord. He gives us that. The thing that he was trying to hide in the deep recesses of his heart and mind, God brought it to light.

[24:13] And that was a good thing. And because God loves truth and teaches us wisdom, we can have a hope in that. In the midst of repentance, we can have hope.

So as he's repenting before God, these things were important enough for David to mention. And as Nathan spoke to him from God, David realizes that God was teaching him about the horrendous nature of his heart.

And so I guess I wonder, when we're saying sorry to God, do we tell him and remind ourselves what we know about ourselves first?

What we know of God? Do we remember that as we go to him? Do we remember the gospel as we confess that? Can I just say, it's important for us to remember the truth in our sin, but also remember who God is and his mercy in that.

Remember. And so he starts with confessing, and then he goes to remembering. And then the third step he goes to is apologizing. Actually asking for forgiveness.

[25:21] And I know we can tend to kind of mix up words here, right, confessing, apologizing. What's the difference here, right? Telling God what you did wrong or confessing is different than asking God to remove that guilt, asking for forgiveness.

We start our apology by recognizing he has the power to clean the slate. We see in verses 7 through 9, Purge me with hyssop, I shall be clean. We know it has to be him that washes me.

And David realized that he couldn't do it himself. No matter how much I try to do good things or try to be good or even try to convince myself that I'm good, there's nothing there without him.

It actually has to be him. Sacrifices weren't enough. Magic words are not enough. There's nothing that wipes the slate clean except him. God had to purge him to do a work in his heart and in his life to remove that guilt.

And as Christians gather every Sunday here, I'm thankful even as we sang so many songs how much gospel we got. We need to remember the guilt-removing work that Christ did for his people.

[26:38] Aren't we glad that God stepped into our world and acted in a way for us to be forgiven of our sins? That Jesus, the Messiah, that was long awaited by David actually, that he came many years after him so that he could be guaranteed salvation when trusting in him.

Jesus, as this willing sacrifice, taking punishment on that cross, dying the death we deserve, rising again the third day.

And we're told that if we confess our sins to him and believe in him alone for our salvation, we will be saved. That's good news. Because no matter how much of a dirtbag you feel like today, no matter how far ruined you feel today, you can know that if you trust in him, just as sure as he came back to life, you can be saved.

So if you're the worst sinner ever here, or if you think that you're the best person, you need it just as much. Repent and believe genuinely, and you can be saved.

And as we looked at verse 7 there, purge me, we know it's not just us going to him that he has to do a work in our lives.

[28:05] It's not going to be enough to do good things, or maybe we pray and we think that we're cleansing ourselves by praying. It's him alone. Let's not act like as we pray to God that we're washing that sin away, that that's our penance.

No, it's him. We can't rely on ourselves to say, I can wash my sins away. We go to him recognizing he has done it.

So we apologize, recognizing it's only him. And maybe you're at a point where you feel like your sin is just killing you inside, like the bones are breaking, right?

Like what he says here, he says, let the bones that you have broken rejoice. He's at a point where his soul is just all meshed up. He can't handle it anymore. But there's something that we need to remember, that if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That I will never leave you nor forsake you, he promises to his people, so that we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear, what can man do to me, because it's all him.

[29:20] And when we hear those promises, it brings this unique joy in us, that because there is a part of us that still mourns over our sin, we are joyful because we can know that we've been restored by Christ's blood.

That we have relationship with him. It's not just about being thankful for the big man, who did what we needed to do. No, it's I have a relationship with my Lord, and I can't wait to see him face to face someday.

And so in this process of David asking God to wipe his slate clean, and restoring this joy of his salvation, he goes to verse 10, and he says, one of my favorite verses in all of scripture, the one that I need to say the most, create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. And I wonder if we could be missing the joy of our salvation that comes when asking God to forgive us. Yes, God wants us to recognize our sin, but he doesn't want us to dwell on that.

He wants to wipe the slate clean and then have us dwell on the promises that we forget all the time. To remind ourselves of what he has done, and that it's not about us.

[30:42] And then too many times I'm tempted to short this process. How about you? I know that there's too many times where I don't go to him and recognize what I've done wrong, and I just say sorry.

Or I don't remember the complexities of what the Lord went through to save me from my sin, that it was at the cross, that as his blood shed. Do we remember at communion time, do we take that seriously and say, I get to participate in this because he died on the cross for me?

Could you be missing out on the process that God uses to stir your heart to stay away from evil? I would argue that if you don't clearly have in mind what you have done wrong and how you've offended God, is it really an apology?

Or is it some religious step that you say, I'm going to go ahead and do this, wipe that, done, confession is done, repentance is done, but has your heart changed at all? Especially if you don't even recognize what you did wrong.

Are we too busy just trying to be a good Christian and we forget what the Lord has done to allow us to have relationship with him?

[32:02] So the first step of real repentance was confessing, then remembering, and then apologizing because he wants our hearts. The fourth step then is worshiping.

We worship as a response to our sin with acts of worship to God. And it's good for us to praise God for the forgiveness that he's given us. Look at verse 14 and 15.

Some of us don't get here because we stick on the whole, I've sinned, I've sinned, I've sinned, and we can't get past that. What does he say? Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God.

O God of my salvation and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, because I can't do that myself, right? O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise. He says, I wanna worship my God. And I've experienced two tendencies with this. Either I just dwell on my sin and mope, or I'm just super apathetic, unappreciative of what God has done when I've been forgiven and what David appreciated with God is that in verse 13, he says, I know, and I wanna get to the point where I can worship you and not only worship you, but then also tell others about how they can have this freedom.

[33:24] And the reality check here is this. When we don't worship God for the forgiveness he has given us, we will tend to be apathetic and telling others about the forgiveness that they can have in Jesus too, right?

It makes sense. If we can't recognize what the Lord has done for us, why would we share it with other people? If it doesn't give us hope as we go in repentance before God, why would we go tell other people about it?

It's not giving me hope, why would I tell other people about it? How much do I not, and after apologizing to the Lord, say, man, the Lord has done amazing things for me.

Let me with my lips praise my God. And also let me tell others about how they can have a hope that goes beyond what this world can have. He goes and you recognize that he can't earn this forgiveness and he says, look, it's not gonna be through sacrifices.

In fact, in verse 17 he says, the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. It's not a physical act. It's my heart being broken before the Lord. A broken and contrite heart, oh God, you will not despise.

[34:32] That word contrite there is like, if you think of ash, just something absolutely pulverized, there's nothing that you can pick up. That is the status of us going before God.

And when we do that, he makes us into something good. And he puts this jar together that's broken and probably gross looking a little bit, and the light comes out of that and it produces such good. I wonder if in our worship we remember, but he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. I wonder if in thinking about our repentance before God, we remember that and say, look what the Lord has done for me.

And yet in the midst of remembering his forgiveness, David worshipped God, even though he recognized that Jesus was crushed for his sins, that the Messiah would one day come and that he would be forgiven.

[35:42] When was the last time you thanked God or even sang just by yourself, maybe it's just even in your head, saying thank you Lord for forgiving me.

If you struggle doing that, why? Why do you struggle getting to the point of worshiping and repentance? Are you above that? Is that just not you?

Are you seeing your sin before God in the right way, maybe? Do you see your sin at all? As David is going through this confession and remembering and apologizing and then worshiping, he's pointing his heart closer to the Lord and using truth to do that.

And in this last step of real repentance, he finally ends with seeking. He's asking God to restore him and his people. Asking God to restore us and build us up and protect us.

And as David was ending this process, being the leader of his people, he was asking God to restore and protect the people once again. He recognized that he did wrong. He committed adultery with this woman.

[37:02] He killed his friend. He broke the hearts of many in Israel. And now, what we find him doing is saying, Lord, please restore your people.

As we think through all of what the Lord has done in our lives. As we think through how God has forgiven us.

As we think through what it looks like even now as a church to say, what does it look like for us to go before God? And remember that together. Not being ashamed of our sin anymore because what's on us, we're marked with Christ.

Are we able to come together, encourage each other, show us what sin looks like, and then be able to say, look at what the Lord has done for me.

Look at how he has restored me. Look at how I can now go into this world being changed once again and go tell others about the good news that I've been given.

[38:16] Amen. I think too often we lose sight in the midst of beating ourselves up over sin or being apathetic of our sin and we forget what the Lord means to do in us.

what if he is using the sin in your life right now to help others be transformed by the gospel?

And as you tell people of the hope that you've found, others can then be transformed. I understand that there are people in here that have been sinned against.

that there have been people, I'm sure, that have things that they don't even like to think about. And the reality is that God can even use the most horrific things to help others with no better example of

that than Jesus, the innocent God-man coming and dying on the cross for us.
can he use all of what you've done in life in repentance to be able to show others in the church and others in our community who he really is?

[39 : 39] Have we really, do we really regularly practice the process of repentance in our lives?
Let's not shortchange it. Let's not be quick to just say sorry real quick.

Let's go and seek the king who has forgiven us and will one day enjoy no more tears, no more sin with him forever.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your love for us. Thank you for how you have given us life through your son, Jesus.

Thank you that we can have the spirit that seals us as we turn in repentance to you that we don't have to wonder if we're defined by our sin anymore but we have been stamped, all those who've called on you, we've been stamped by your blood and we can now understand and know that we're free.

So Father, I pray that all those here, if they haven't trusted in you, that they would. that they would see the beautiful thing that you did in sending your son to the cross and giving us life.

[40 : 56] And for those that have, that you would restore us once again as we come in repentance to you and that we might tell others all for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.