

“A Lifestyle” (Repentance) (Gospel Sanctification II)
(Study 8 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)

The Scripture Passage (The Book of Psalms 51:1-12)

English Standard Version Translation (ESV)

The Psalms, Chapter 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, / according to your steadfast love; / according to your abundant mercy / blot out my transgressions./ 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,/ and cleanse me from my sin! / 3 For I know my transgressions, / and my sin is ever before me. / 4 Against you, 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. / 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me./ 6 Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, / and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. / 7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; / wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. / 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; / let the bones that you have broken 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 right spirit within me. / 11 Cast me not away from your presence, / and take not your Holy Spirit from me. / 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, / and uphold me with a willing spirit.

New Living Translation (NLT)

The Psalms, Chapter 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, / because of your unfailing love. / Because of your great compassion, / blot out the stain of my sins. 2 Wash me clean from my guilt. / Purify me from my sin. / 3 For I recognize my rebellion; / it haunts me day and night. / 4 Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; / I have done what is evil in your sight. / You will be proved right in what you say, / and your judgment against me is just. / 5 For I was born a sinner— / yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. / 6 But you desire honesty from the womb, / teaching me wisdom even there. / 7 Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; / wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. / 8 Oh, give me back my joy again; / you have broken me— / now let me rejoice. / 9 Don't keep looking at my sins. / Remove the stain of my guilt. / 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God / Renew a loyal spirit within me. / 11 Do not banish me from your presence, / and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. / 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation,/ and make me willing to obey you.

“Repenting of Our Repentance”: A Case Study

2 Corinthians 7:10: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.”

Psalm 51 shows us the biblical response of “repentance.” Repentance can evoke a negative feeling in many of us. (This is often because it is confused with “penance”- trying to feel as lousy as possible, beating ourselves up over our mistakes, and then trying to make up for them). In reality “the purpose of repentance is to repeatedly tap into the joy of our union with Christ, in order to weaken our need to do anything contrary to God’s heart” (Tim Keller).

Our misunderstanding of repentance can make it something we want to avoid or only do occasionally. But the reality we see in Psalm 51 is that the bad things we sometimes find ourselves doing are symptomatic of our human condition. Biblically, we “sin” because we are “sinners.” So, repentance becomes not only a necessary practice, but a continually necessary practice. This is a fact Martin Luther recognized in the first of his 95 Theses to reform the church: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘repent,’ he meant that the entire life of believers should be one of repentance.” So,

repentance is a lifestyle; but it is a lifestyle that we often confuse (hence our negative impression) and dismiss (hence our lingering guilt and shame).

So what does it look like to practice biblical repentance in real life? Perhaps it is helpful to practice a hypothetical situation (a case study) where we have wronged someone and try out both typical wrong reactions as well as biblical right ones...

Here's the scene: Your spouse or roommate is messy. She or he usually leaves clothes and dishes everywhere. She or he never cleans the bathroom sink. She or he often "borrows" your phone charger or car without asking and doesn't put them back in the same place, and "misplaces" an occasional utilities bill. You have stuffed your frustrations and anger with her or him until you see that person- in an unexpected burst of spring cleaning- throwing your favorite old sweater into the kitchen garbage. You lose it. You yell, and call him or her a "hypocrite." Then you slam the door on your way out of the house, trying not to get into another argument but also resolving to practice the silent treatment for the rest of the week...But then you calm down a bit and begin to replay what you just did right about where your subdivision meets the main road.

So we get to ask: *what do you do inside yourself?* (What do you do with yourself- how do you process what you are thinking and feeling? *What do you say and do outside yourself*- with your spouse or roommate?) And finally, *how do we find the power to realize and repent*, deeply and honestly? As we begin to answer these questions, let's try to be as specific as possible...

Realization versus Resentments and Remorse

Resentment says "I hate it when he/she does that! I would never have done that!"

AND

Remorse says "I can't believe I did *that!*...that's not what I am *really* like" or "I can't believe I did *that!*...I just can't forgive myself."

VERSUS

Realization says "I *did* do that. That *is* what I'm really like. I *can* believe I am like that!"

Repentance versus Reacting and Resolutions

Reacting looks like angry thoughts, dirty looks, and cutting words

AND

Resolution says "I promise to do better next time...I won't do *that* again!"

VERSUS

Repentance says "Lord, forgive me! *You* are my only hope..."

Remembering the Invisible Drama at God's Hand (Or How We **Realize** and **Repent**):
“He ever lives above,/ for me to intercede;/ His all redeeming love,/ His precious blood,
to plead [...] Five bleeding wounds He bears;/ received on Calvary;/ They pour effectual
prayers;/ they strongly plead for me:/ ‘Forgive him, O forgive,’ they cry,/ ‘Forgive him,
O forgive,’ they cry,/ ‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die!’/ The Father hears Him pray,/
His dear anointed One;/ He cannot turn away the presence of His Son [...] My God is reconciled;/
His pardoning voice I hear;/ He owns me for His child;/ I can no longer fear/
With confidence I now draw nigh,/ With confidence I now draw nigh,/ And
‘Father, Abba, Father,’ cry” (Charles Wesley, “*Arise My Soul Arise*”)

Group Prayer

Ideas for Communal and Personal Prayer (Choose 1-2 topics to share about and pray for):

1. What's one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
2. What's one *sin* you'd like to (re-)confess to God?
3. What's one *deed* in your life or community you'd like to praise God for?
4. What's one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?