

Session 6

The Joy of Repentance

Psalm 32; 51

Memory Verse

*God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit
within me.*

– PSALM 51:10, CSB



The Joy of Repentance

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God’s good character and powerful work in our lives deserves authentic worship.

CALL TO ACTION: Set aside time dedicated to the worship of God this week.

Introduction

Maybe there is a particularly moving moment you remember when the words of a praise song hit you and spoke into your life during a specific season. Maybe there’s a particular song that always seems to bring you straight to the throne of Jesus.

Worship like this is powerful and important, but it doesn’t fully represent what “worship” is. We worship when we respond to God’s goodness in our lives. God is always good, and He deserves to be worshiped not only for sending His son to die on the cross for our sin (there is no greater “saving act”!), but also for the ways He shows up in the everyday lives of His children. God steps in and works miracles. He shows up when we are at our lowest. He provides peace and calm when it makes absolutely no sense for us to feel that way. He opens doors we don’t expect and aligns meetings and conversations in a meaningful way.

Since worship is our response to God’s character and work, worship can take many forms. Meaningful worship happens in song at church on Sunday mornings, but it is not confined to this holy space.

Today, we’re exploring two psalms of David. David responded to God’s saving acts in his life in many ways including poetry, song, dancing, and an unfailing trust that God would take care of him. Worship is a lifestyle.

? What comes to mind when you think about worship?

? What examples of worship do we see in the pages of Scripture?

1. The Joy of Forgiveness (Psalm 32:1-11)

? What themes stand out to you in this Psalm?

? What of God was David responding to in this passage?

This Psalm is attributed to David, the famous king of Israel. Scripture describes David as a man after God's own heart, and he penned many psalms in worship to the Lord.

The category of "maskil" is assigned to 13 psalms in the Psalter and this is one of them. Scholars aren't entirely sure what a "maskil" was, but think it may be a memory passage, that may contain wisdom and instruction of some kind. In this psalm, we read about the joy that can be found in forgiveness.

The Hebrew word for "joyful" here is 'ashrey, which some translations translate as blessed. Both translations paint a beautiful picture of this interaction between David and the Lord (the specific relationship in which David described being forgiven).

Think about a time when you failed and it ate you alive. Maybe you had trouble sleeping. Maybe you wept. Maybe you withdrew and felt panic and anxiety over the uncertainty of what to do. How did you feel when you brought it to God and He took the burden away from you?

The Hebrew word David used here that is translated “forgiven” (v. 1) paints a picture of the burden of sin being lifted off a person. Have you experienced that feeling? “Joyful” and “blessed” seem like insufficient words to describe the experience of relief and peace when we turn things over to God. Jesus’s redeeming work on the cross means that our sins (past, present, and future) are forgiven, but when we sin, it separates us from God and plants a burden on our shoulders. We experience this feeling of a lifted burden when we surrender our sin before God.

If God were truly to take us to court, He would have a very long list of sins we could be charged with. But He doesn’t do that. Instead, He offers us forgiveness. God offered David forgiveness many times in His life, and we are offered a different kind of forgiveness in Christ.

The silence David had in mind in verse 3 referred to when we do not acknowledge our sin before the Lord. We know we have sinned, and yet, we make no move to confess it or seek forgiveness. What misery David described here! He used images of brittle bones, non-stop groaning, and strength drained like you have been out on the hottest Tennessee summer day (v. 4). The role of God’s hand in this instance is to convict.

Perhaps you can relate? Have you ever sat on your sin and suffered? Felt God convicting you, but weren’t ready to take a step yet? It feels heavy, hard, and miserable.

This must be how David felt in 2 Samuel 11 and 12, after he had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah. He didn’t confess his sin until the prophet Nathan confronted him.

This misery is always of our own making, but God offers peace, joy, and blessing on the other side, when we follow the actions David wrote about in verse 5. When we uncover our sins, and bring it before God in humble apology, He forgives us even though we don’t deserve it (v. 5).

When we sin, the best path forward is to bring it to God immediately (v. 6). God is the safe space for us in the turmoil and aftermath of our sin. We shouldn’t read these verses as meaning God always removes any fallout. We are delivered from our guilt, but not the consequences our sin has sown (and sin always has consequences). In

fact, David's sin with Bathsheba had disastrous consequences, and God didn't shield David from them. Still, God offers His peace, relief in knowing we are forgiven, and guidance on what next steps to take.

? How have you experienced the relief of receiving God's forgiveness in your life?

In verse 8, God takes over as the speaker and offers wise counsel. All true wisdom comes from Him (Proverbs 2:6). While "many pains come to the wicked" (v. 10), those who trust in the Lord enjoy God's faithful love surrounding them. This is worth being glad, rejoicing, and shouting for joy (v. 11)!

2. A Guilty Plea (Psalm 51:1-5)

? This psalm was written after David was confronted by Nathan for his sin with Bathsheba. What indicates David's repentance in these verses?

? How did David respond to God in worship in the midst of his own conviction?

This psalm is directly attributed to the time in David's life when he sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah. Nathan's confrontation of David happened in 2 Samuel 12. This psalm is one of the ways David responded (David often turned to the written word in his worship).

This psalm offers a prayer of restoration. David was brought low by his sin, and we are reminded of Psalm 32:3-4. In this psalm, David cried out to the Lord from the darkness of the valley (maybe the darkest valley of David's life).

Don't miss David's heart posture. He knew he had sinned, and he did not make excuses for it. He admitted that God was right to pass judgment (v. 4). David owned up to his mistakes and cried out to God for forgiveness knowing he didn't deserve it but God is gracious, faithful, and abundant with His compassion (v. 1).

This is the first step in handing the burden of our sin over to God. We must first acknowledge our sin in order to authentically take it to God and ask for His forgiveness.



What might be surprising about David's confession in verse 4? What does this indicate about all of our sin?

Note who David said he sinned against here. He sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah (and many other humans through his actions), but by choosing to sin in this situation, he also sinned against God (v. 4). When we sin against each other, we first sin against God, who calls us to love one another the way Jesus loved us (John 13:34-35).

Verse 5 has historically been interpreted in many ways by Bible scholars. One of the most common interpretations is that this points to the doctrine of original sin. We are born sinners and are sinners for our entire existence. In this verse, David emphasized the extent of his guilt. He didn't just sin in this one act, he had always been sinful.

3. A Prayer for Restoration (Psalm 51:6-19)

God desires a better life for us. A life of integrity. A life of faithfulness. God teaches us true wisdom.

Hyssop was a plant meant to be employed by humans in cleansing rituals (see Num. 19:18), and here David asked God Himself to purify him with hyssop. When David receives this cleansing from the Lord, David wrote expectantly of "joy and gladness" (v. 8), rejoicing where there had once been a crushed spirit.



Why do all people need to be washed clean of our sin?

How has God provided the ultimate answer to this need?

Here, David penned one of the most well-known verses in Scripture:

God, create a clean heart for me
and renew a steadfast spirit within me. —Psalm 51:10

David asked for a transformation of heart and spirit. This type of work only happens with the Lord. We can't do it alone, and in this psalm, David pled that God would stay with him. Not take the Holy Spirit away. Not banish him. He knew how necessary it was to walk through life with the Lord.

Why should God's forgiveness made available through Jesus lead us to continual worship of Him?

This passage is one of the many places that the Old Testament emphasizes God's heart for relationship (vv. 16-17). Our acceptance was never about our ability to execute a checklist of good things. God has always desired relationship with His people. Old Testament law made a way for sinful humans to have a relationship with a holy God, but the sacrifices were never the point. Relationship was. God has opened the door to a reconciled relationship with Him through the finished work of Jesus. Because of this reality, we have continual reason to worship.

Conclusion

In Psalm 32, David, fully aware of the weight and severity of his sin, worshiped in response to being forgiven by God. The limbo between sinning and surrendering that sin over to the Lord is turmoil. We feel heavy, drained, and weighed down. But, when we confess our sin to God (David recommended to do so immediately in v. 6), we enjoy the incredible relief of that burden being lifted. This forgiveness (when we absolutely don't deserve it), is worth worshiping over, and one of the ways David worshiped was to write this psalm.

In Psalm 51, we get further insight into the turmoil that comes because of sin. In this psalm, David openly acknowledged his guilt against God, and asked God to wash away his guilt and cleanse his sin (v. 2). He knew he couldn't achieve this alone. He required God's help. David could hope for forgiveness because he knew firsthand the goodness and fairness of God's character. God extends grace, is faithful to love His people, and faithful to extend compassion (even when we don't deserve it). Ultimately, David's hope was in the work of Christ, even before he knew it. The same is true for us.

Importantly, David reiterated the importance of relationship. Even when the sacrificial system was active and needed, the heart of the law was always about relationship. God desires a relationship with us, and when we sin, it separates us from God. We do well to remember David's words, adapt a humble, contrite heart posture, and confess our sin before God.

David worshiped in the midst of his own failure. God is always worth our worship as we see Him rightly and respond in reverence.



How can we worship in every season and moment of life?



Think about a time that God forgave you of a transgression. How did you respond? How would you like to respond in the future in worship?



What do these psalms teach us about God's character? How can we share this truth with others?

Memorize

*God, create a clean heart for me
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

- Psalm 51:10, CSB

References

- 1 Kevin R. Warstler, "Psalms," in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 844.
- 2 Christopher A. Beetham and Nancy L. Erickson, eds., The NIV Application Commentary on the Bible, One-Volume Edition, NIV Application Commentary (Zondervan Academic, 2024), 438.
- 3 Kevin R. Warstler, "Psalms," in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 844.
- 4 Kevin R. Warstler, "Psalms," in CSB Study Bible: Notes, ed. Edwin A. Blum and Trevin Wax (Holman Bible