

SLIDE ONE

OK, we're going to continue with our series of sermons on the life of David. Last time we looked at David's life -- two weeks ago -- we looked at the fall of David.

We saw David -- now King of Israel -- lust after a woman called Bathsheba.

David then slept with B when her husband Uriah was away fighting the Ammonites. B got pregnant. D then tried to cover up the fact that he was the father of the child. He tried to do that by inviting Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, back from the battlefield, in the hope that we would take advantage of his break from the fighting and make love to his wife. And David hoped that, by doing that, Uriah would assume he was the father of David's child.

That squalid little plot didn't work, because Uriah declined to go home and he didn't sleep with his wife. David then resorts to murder. He orders his general Joab to put Uriah right on the frontline, where the fighting is fiercest, and then withdraw from Uriah so that he will certainly die. Uriah does die. David is guilty of murder. Lust led David down a truly disastrous path. It made him into a killer. And anyone who succumbs to lust is going to be in real trouble, we concluded.

But what I want to do today is to pick up David's life very soon after he has murdered Uriah. The details of David's steep moral decline are very lurid. But what happens next in the story of David and Bathsheba is truly extraordinary -- and we should spend a good amount of time looking at what happened after Uriah's death.

Now, today, we're going to do things a little differently. We're going to pick up our text from 2 Samuel right now and read it. In that text, we're going to look at what happened to David after he murdered Uriah and committed adultery with Bathsheba. We're also going to look at a Psalm that David wrote just after he was confronted with his wrongdoing -- that's Psalm 51.

As we read the Psalm, I want you to look out for its dominant theme. When we are done reading the Psalm, I am going to ask you what you think the dominant theme is. So read carefully.

So let's go straight into our first text, 2 Samuel, chapter 11, starting at verse 26 and reading through to verse 14 of chapter 12. This is on page _____ of the red church bibles.

*PS 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.*

*PS 51:2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.*

*PS 51:3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.*

*PS 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right when you speak
and justified when you judge.*

*PS 51:5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*

*PS 51:6 Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.*

SLIDE FIVE

*PS 51:7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

*PS 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.*

*PS 51:9 Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.*

*PS 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*

*PS 51:11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.*

*PS 51:12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

*PS 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will turn back to you.*

SLIDE SIX

*PS 51:14 Save me from bloodguilt, O God,
the God who saves me,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.*

*PS 51:15 O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.*

*PS 51:16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

*PS 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.*

*PS 51:18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper;
build up the walls of Jerusalem.*

*PS 51:19 Then there will be righteous sacrifices,
whole burnt offerings to delight you;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.*

OK, that's Psalm 51.

So, tell me what the dominant theme of the Psalm is -- somebody. What is David doing in that Psalm?

Repentance. OK, I am glad that you can see it.

I wanted you to spot this. I wanted you to see for yourself that we cannot look at the life of David and not cover the subject of repentance in considerable depth. No preacher can do David and leave out repentance.

SLIDE SEVEN

Ok, you can't beat up on me now for picking this unpopular subject -- repentance. It's unavoidable! You can see that!

Repentance is unavoidable in the Bible -- it crops up all through the Old Testament, and it sits at the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ -- it is an unavoidable part of God's plan to save and redeem the world -- each one of us.

And yet we do all we can to avoid repentance.

Think of the gospel -- we find it so easy to celebrate and talk about and embrace so many key parts of the gospel -- God's love, Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross, forgiveness, redemption, the glorious advance of God's Kingdom, the sending of the Holy Spirit, freedom from the tyranny of sin, eternal life, the abundant life. We love those things -- we could talk about them forever. I could preach about them again and again.

But what about repentance? We hardly talk about it.

What's more, we don't do it very well.

But repentance is at the very core of the gospel. The gospel doesn't make a shred of sense without repentance.

Repentance is the very first word of the Gospel, as Jesus preached it. Jesus was the perfect and perfectly complete preacher, and he never left it out. In fact, he made repentance the first instruction of his glorious message of the Kingdom.

Matthew 4:17: *"From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."*

Mark 1:14: *"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Repentance was part of the good news! It sits at the heart of the gospel.

Jesus told his disciples to preach repentance, so he's asking many of us to do the same: Mark 6:13: *"They [the disciples] went out and preached that people should repent."*

Repentance is even the last word of Jesus' gospel. Luke 24, 45-47

"Then he [the resurrected, pre-Ascension Jesus] opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Christianity without repentance doesn't exist. Christianity without repentance is not the faith that Jesus proclaimed.

PAUSE

Now, most of us know -- somewhere up here -- that repentance is important. We know its there -- we know its necessary. We know that it has to be done.

And if we do it, we do it half-heartedly, begrudgingly -- kind of like taking the trash out, or -- my favorite task -- changing the kitty litter. We hold our nose when we do it -- and we do it quickly -- we want it to be over as quickly as possible.

And that's not right. **PAUSE**

We need to re-learn repentance. We need to put it back at the heart of the gospel we claim to believe in -- the gospel we received from Jesus.

Stuff has happened recently that makes it painfully clear that we don't really get repentance.

And that's sad -- and damaging. Because repentance plays an amazingly important and regenerative role in our lives. We see repentance as punishment, but it is the only way to peace. Peace in our lives and peace with God.

When we look at David and this incredible Psalm we see so clearly what real repentance is. We see the road to peace in these texts, but we also see that we have to re-learn repentance.

I want us to see repentance as God sees it. It's too important to do in a hurry..

So I want us to approach this as if we are re-learning the basics of repentance -- today and the next time I preach. I'm taking two Sundays because we can't rush this subject. It's too important and too overlooked. **PAUSE**

And I think we'll be surprised by the fruits of repentance.

You know, the biggest leaps in my life have come about because God has been gracious enough to put Nathans in my life -- and call me to repentance. Repenting is scary and kind of embarrassing. It's painful. Repentance is dying to sin -- and the death throes are not fun and they are not easy.

But as painful as it may be, repentance is very effective. Boneheads like me need Nathans to speak truth and demand repentance.

One of the Devil's big lies is that repentance is something grim -- something desgined to humiliate and make us feel terrible about ourselves. Too many of us believe that lie. In fact, repentance is an incredibly positive process. The benefits are massive.

Repentance paves the way to the blessings of the Kingdom. It paves the way for an uncluttered relat with God -- and a close relat with God is the thing our hearts really yearn for more than anything else.

Now, one or two of you here today may not actually consider yourselves Christians or followers of Jesus Christ -- and the word repentance may frighten you. It did me. But you know how great it is to say sorry to someone after you've done s/ting wrong to someone. You know how good it is to mend a relationship. Well, it's the same feeling -- only much deeper and much bigger -- when we say sorry to God and agree to turn from the things that hurt him.

Repentance doesn't come naturally to the human character. So we have to learn it -- and relearn it and relearn it.

There are two main aspects to repentance that we have to understand better and improve in. I want to look at the first one this week, and the second one next time I preach.

+ The first aspect is the need to take full responsibility for our deeds. That's the first step of repentance. We're going to look at that today. How we have to take ownership for the bad things we do. How we can never lay off the blame.

+ The second aspect of repentance I want to look at is how to actually turn away from sin. Repentance means turning away from sin and turning toward God. Next time, we'll walk through the actual turning process. So often, people don't really get that, either.

But today, I want to look at how we **have to** take full responsibility for the things we do wrong.

If we don't take full responsibility for all our sin, we'll have all sorts of sin in our life that we don't even think we have to repent for. We're sitting around at square one expecting other people to repent for us -- and that ain't going to do us any good at all. And I want to zoom in on this need for full responsibility because so much of our culture is aimed at telling us that we're not guilty for our deeds.

But if we play the blame game, we lose. Each person has to repent for the sin he or she has committed.

Think of Nathan going before David. He tells David this story about the rich man and the poor man and the lamb. David boils with anger at the rich man -- and Nathan turns to him says: "You are the man!" He's saying: "David, you are the guilty party. Yes, you. No one else."

SLIDE EIGHT

That for us is the most important sentence in today's text.

"You are the man." God stands before us and sees all our sin -- everything we say, do and think -- and he says to us: "You are the man. You, Peter Eavis, are responsible for your

sin. It is your problem, not anyone else's." And that is a truly life-changing message for human beings.

Eugene Petersen comments on Nathan's assertion: "You are the man."

Petersen writes: "God's word, however it begins, and however long it takes to get there, always ends up direct and personal: me, you. The word of God is not about somebody else. It is never general, abstract truth, but always personal address. The biblical revelation is never a commentary about ideas or culture or conditions; it is about actual persons, actual pain, actual trouble, actual sin: you, me; who you are and what you have done, who I am and what I have done."

Taking the full blame for our deeds is one of the most important things we can do. Just how good we are at taking responsibility will determine just how free we become, and how close to God we become.

Anointing or cleverness or looks or wealth or charm --none of those things will bring long-term peace into your life. Repentance is absolutely guaranteed to do that.

But to repent, we have to take the full blame for our deeds. The thing is, we're so good at blaming other things, other people. But David and his Psalm show us that the blame game won't work.

If we don't blame ourselves, we may blame other people

Think of all the people David could have blamed. Israel's enemies, the Philistines, or the Ammonites for putting him under such great stress. He could've blamed his wife, Michal. We know he had problems with her.

He could have blamed Saul. He's dead now, of course, but Saul's persecution of David would have left scars on David for many years. David had plenty of people to blame for his disgraceful behavior.

But David doesn't do that. When he repents, he takes full ownership over his own sin. It's his -- no one else's. Look how many times he uses the word "my" in the first verses of Psalm 51.

SLIDE NINE

*PS 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out **my** transgressions.*

*PS 51:2 Wash away all **my** iniquity*

*and cleanse me from **my** sin.*

*PS 51:3 For I know **my** transgressions,
and **my** sin is always before me.*

David is taking ownership over his transgressions. If you're a husband and you've looked at pornography in the last month, don't blame your wife. "You are the man" Stop. You -- and you alone -- are guilty for that. If you are a wife and you've started to develop this habit of flying off the handle at your family on the smallest provocation. "You are the woman." Stop! You -- and you alone -- are guilty for that.

Now, when I talk about our need to take responsibility, I don't want those of you who've led really tough lives to shut down. I am not saying: "God doesn't care what you've been through -- just pull yourself together and behave yourself."

I am not saying that. Many of you have been through appalling times in your lives. You know the lasting pain that comes from being treated brutally or being abandoned or never being loved or looked after. I am not discounting that or removing it from picture. God understands that pain can help cause transgressions. Jesus recognized that the awful things people do can often cause other people to sin. And Jesus knows if that has happened in your life. He does.

But this is the key point to grasp here: we won't ever break free from stubborn sinful patterns of behavior if we see ourselves as victims first and sinners second.

We have to see ourselves as sinners first -- fully responsible for our actions. All our actions. And we have to see ourselves as victims second.

Once we stack things up like that -- sinner first, victim second -- the easier it will be for God to come and heal us and free us from the slavery of victimhood. Why?

Well, when we are in the habit of repenting, we don't quench the wonderful work of the HS,

God has sent His Spirit to go to work on the wounds that have may have been inflicted on us. So when we sin -- and make no attempt to repent -- there's a good chance our wounds will get bigger and more painful.

2/ We also blame our circumstances for our sin -- instead of ourselves

Wartime life wasn't easy for David. He was blessed in many ways, but his life had taken some serious knocks. David lost his beloved friend -- Jonathan -- in the wars. That must've hurt like heck. War wears even the strongest, most brilliant men down. It must've had a negative impact on David. We've seen what it does in our time to leaders.

Churchill drunk like a fish when he was PM of England during WW2. The exhaustion of fighting that war took its toll on FDR. LBJ couldn't even bear to fight for re-election because of the Vietnam War. George W Bush -- look at a picture of him today and compare it to one from 2000 -- there's a big difference. David could easily blame his wartime circumstances for his sin. He had plenty to get stressed about.

And stress is a big part of all our lives.

When stress builds up we reach out for whatever feels most soothing at the moment. It might be sex outside of marriage, or booze, or drugs. And we use stress to justify our sin.

But when David wrote Psalm 51, he realized that he couldn't blame stress. He realized that all his strength had to come from God.

Ps 51 shows us that God provides for us in stressful times. God will be there to prevent sin from flaring up in and engulfing our lives when we're weak, exhausted, fearful or overburdened.

SLIDE TEN

Verse 10:

*PS 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a **steadfast spirit** within me.*

Steadfast is the key word there. Keep me steadfast as I get tossed around by the waves of life.

We can't blame life's circumstances when we know -- as David did -- that we can always go to our Father, who is so much bigger than our circumstances.

We also blame the church for our sin -- instead of ourselves

Sometime, church members are guilty of abuse -- and shd be held to account -- they shd be blamed for the harm they cause. I am not talking about that here.

No, I am talking about the habit of using the church as a scapegoat. So often when Christians sin they go out and look for reasons their church is to blame.

These are some of the things people say: "No one in the church was around to help me when I was in trouble." Or when someone does come and help and points out that things aren't right in our live, the reply often is: "Don't be so judgmental, so unloving." If someone lovingly approaches a person about their sin as Nathan did, another reply is this: "What about your life, you're hardly perfect. You have no right to speak into my life."

Did Nathan sin? Sure. Was that relevant at this juncture in David's life? No.

David doesn't say to Nathan. "Get lost, dude, you have no right to speak into my life."

What was the equivalent of the church in David's time? The nation of Israel, of which he was what -- the King! On earth, there was no one higher than David for Israel. But even though he's King, he receives Nathan and he listens to him and humbles himself before him and repents before him. He submits to the "church" member who speaks truth -- he doesn't attack him or blame him or others.

And then in Ps 51, David is actually prays for Israel to prosper and be built up:

SLIDE ELEVEN

Verse 18, David prays:

*PS 51:18 In your good pleasure make Zion prosper;
build up the walls of Jerusalem.*

David's concern is Israel -- and the equivalent for us today is the church. When we sin, we damage the church, so our urge should be David's -- which is to pray that the people of God, the church, will prosper, despite our shortcomings. And we should embrace our brothers and sisters in Christ when they speak truth into our lives -- like Nathan.

Finally, and, I think, most seriously, some of us blame God for our sin instead of ourselves:

Sometimes, the cry of our heart will be: "Lord, why have you given me a life that stinks. If you'd given me more chances, I wouldn't do the bad things that I do."

But David doesn't blame God. In fact, he does the exact opposite. He assumes that all sin is a sin against God.

SLIDE TWELVE

Verse four of Ps 51:

PS 51:4 Against you, you only, have I sinned

That doesn't mean David hasn't sinned against Uriah and Bathsheba. It means that all sin is sin against God.

If I am too harsh with my daughter, or fail my wife in a big way, that is a sin against Phoebe and Victoria -- but I also sin against God. And that should wake us up a bit... a lot. God is always the other person in the room when you sin.

If you have unforgiveness against someone, you have sinned against the person and against God.

While we're talking about blaming God, I just want to touch on Satan.

Some people blame the Devil for their sin. Now, we know that Satan does all he can to ensnare us in deeper and deeper sin. But we also know that we can call on God to resist him. But how are we going to call on God if we blame him? The Bible makes it clear that when we submit ourselves to God, we are in position to resist Satan. And we can't submit ourselves to God if we blame him for our sin. James, chapter four:

JAS 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

So if we can't blame other people for our sin, if we can't blame Satan, or life's circumstances, or the church and certainly not God -- who are we left to blame for our sin?

Ourselves.

And that's exactly where we should be. That's the healthiest place we can be.

You know, it's the most wonderful place we can be.

And you know why it's so wonderful?

When we do take full blame for our sin before God, we are then able to disown it.

Let me say that again: When we do take full blame for our sin before God, we are then able to disown it.

That is one of the miraculous upside down truths of the Kingdom. By owning up for our transgressions before God, He will allow us to disown them.

How does that happen? What happens is that we, quite literally, give our sin to Jesus. It's no longer ours! The writer of Hebrews puts it this way:

SLIDE THIRTEEN

"Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people"

And when we give our sin over to Jesus, we can enjoy that peace that can only come from God.

We gain forgiveness from God. The blood of Jesus cleanses us.

In Psalm 51, David calls out to the Lord in such pain:

SLIDE FOURTEEN

Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Many of us here today are crying out in our hearts: "Lord, wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

The HS has already been convicting some of us of sin we need to take ownership over and repent for. I think he wants some of us to do that now. And I wouldn't be surprised if its stuff that's been festering in your life for a while. If its something stubborn, I want you to think very seriously about getting prayer when I ask the HS to come and move powerfully among us. It's through God's grace that we are called to repent. Romans says his KINDNESS leads us to repentance. You are safe in the hands of the HS. But don't pass over the opportunity to repent to a fellow believer -- just as David did.

Jesus, when you told the disciples about the HS, you told them that he would come to, quote: "convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."

So, Holy Spirit, come now and do that to us -- convict us of our sin. Reveal to us the righteousness of God in this place. And Jesus, we thank you for the blood that you shed on the cross -- the blood that purifies us. Father, release the work of the HS in this place.

I felt the Lord told me I couldn't preach on repentance and then ask you to repent, if I didn't repent myself. I want to repent before for these things:

1/ My pride. The feeling that I am better than other people. That pride leads me to have a hard heart, and I can't care for people properly because of that. That is a huge flaw for a pastor. I repent of that. I am sorry, Lord.

2/ My materialism and the poor stewardship of my finances. I have desired material things over God. I repent of that. I have spent my income badly and not worshipped God in my finances.

3/ I repent for not looking after my wife, Phoebe, properly during this pregnancy. I have put her and the child, my whole family, actually, after so many other things in my life. I am sorry for that. I am sorry, Lord.

Father, wash me clean with the blood of Jesus and give me a broken and contrite spirit. I am sorry. Forgive me, Lord.