

When Saying Your Sorry Isn't Enough
Psalm 32
October 3, 2021

When you were a child, did your parents ever break up a fight between you and your brother or sister and then (while holding you face to face with each other), say the crazy words: **“Now tell your brother you are sorry!”?**

As if you were sorry for the HATEFUL, ANGRY THINGS you had just said to them! So through GRITTED TEETH, you would say to the brother you have just been trying to beat the tar out of, **“I'm sorry!!!!!!”**

Then, my mom would let go of us and walk away like everything that was wrong in the world had just been made right! - WW 3 had ended because we had said we were sorry to one another. All of our problems had been solved because we had been forced to stand face to face and say **WE WERE SORRY!**

The strange thing is that I don't ever remember ACTUALLY BEING SORRY - I may have been sorry I didn't win the fight - OR I may have been sorry that I got a spanking before I was forced to say I was sorry - OR I may have been sorry that I didn't get my way - BUT I certainly wasn't sorry for what I had tried to do to my brother - AND I knew he wasn't sorry either!

Let me say something right up front this morning - Saying your sorry isn't the same thing as REAL REPENTANCE! - Let me take it a step further and say this: **Being sorry isn't necessarily the same thing as repentance at all!**

King David was sorry that he had SLEPT WITH BATHSHEBA, the wife of Uriah. He was sorry long before he ever EXPERIENCED REPENTANCE over what he had done!

He was sorry because of the MESS HE HAD MADE. He was sorry because of the corner he HAD BACKED HIMSELF INTO. He was sorry because of the HORRIBLE DECISIONS he was being forced to make now that Bathsheba was pregnant.

But, he was a long way from repentance! Repentance did not find its way into David's heart until he was confronted by a PROPHET named Nathan - The prophet USED A STORY about a poor man who was taken advantage of and robbed by a wealthy man.

The poor man had ONE LITTLE LAMB - Nathan described the lamb AS A PET to the family. He said it was almost like a daughter to the man.

The rich man had a guest come from out of town. Instead of KILLING ONE OF HIS OWN sheep (of which he had plenty), he went and took the little lamb from the poor family and slaughtered it in order to feed his guest. The rich man had plenty, but he chose to take from the man who only had one!

Nathan's story made David furious at the INJUSTICE THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE. David was ready to put the rich man to death - Justice must be exercised!

It is at that moment that Nathan LOOKED EYEBALL TO EYEBALL with the king and uttered those revealing words, **You are the man!**

It was in that moment that David went FROM BEING SORRY to experiencing true, heart-felt repentance. At that moment, he went from being a man DESPERATELY TRYING to find a way out to being a man with a broken heart - a man now desperately trying to find his way back to the God HE HAD BETRAYED for a moment of pleasure!

And in the aftermath, King David pinned Psalm 32 - The Psalm we have before us today - a POWERFUL PSALM that expresses the heart of a BROKEN, REPENTANT man.

It is a Psalm that reveals to us THE CHARACTERISTICS of a repentant heart. It helps us see the difference between a man who was sorry for the mess he had created and a man who is desperately trying to find the forgiveness of God.

This morning let's explore 5 characteristics of TRUE REPENTANCE from this incredible Psalm. Here is the OUTLINE of those 5 truths we are going to find:

- Real Repentance demands honesty about our sin
- Real Repentance involves verbal confession
- Real Repentance is best with right timing
- Real Repentance brings necessary changes
- Real Repentance produces a restoration of joy

Psalm 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

“Oh, how happy is the person whose sin is forgiven!” - that is the way we could translate verse 1 - for there is nothing in this life that is MORE FREEING than to experience God’s forgiveness - TO KNOW that Our Heavenly Father no longer holds you GUILTY OF THE SIN we have committed.

Let me start there this morning. If you are WALKING AROUND TODAY with HEAVY GUILT from your failures of the past, do you know there is a way out from under that guilt? - The FIRST STEP is found right here.

The FIRST STEP is to be honest about your sin! Notice the words of David, **“And in whose spirit there is no deceit.”** The person who is UNWILLING TO BE HONEST about their sin will never experience God’s forgiveness. A DECEITFUL HEART is never a repentant heart!

David had A LOT OF EXPERIENCE with a deceitful heart. He had spent almost a year HIDING HIS SIN - trying to COVER IT UP - trying his best to GET AWAY with the adultery he had committed.

The cover-up got SO DEEP THAT IT ULTIMATELY LED to the murder of HIS SERVANT Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband!

A deceitful heart is all about GETTING AWAY with something. A repentant heart is all about BEING HONEST about something. It is all about UNCOVERING & TAKING RESPONSIBILITY for the ugliness in your life.

Is this easy to do? Absolutely NOT! But IT IS NECESSARY if my heart is going to be FREE OF DECEIT. Real repentance is only found in an OPEN & HONEST heart!

People often raise the question, **How can I know someone is being honest if they wait until they are caught to come clean?** Let me first point out that David didn't experience repentance until HE WAS CAUGHT!

My experience in life is that many of us DON'T REPENT UNTIL we are trapped. Maybe this is a reflection of the DEPTH OF OUR HUMAN DEPRAVITY. And honestly, this makes IT VERY DIFFICULT in the immediate to know if someone is SINCERE.

Often, ONLY TIME reveals the CONDITION of a person's heart! Someone can ONLY FAKE repentance for a time. Life has a WAY OF REVEALING whether REAL CHANGE has taken place.

But, when David was confronted, he did TRULY REPENT. We know this by the the OTHER EVIDENCES that followed. Look at verse 3.

3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

The second evidence that David had experienced true repentance is that **He made a verbal confession of his sin.** There is something about VERBALIZING THINGS that makes them more powerful.

When we say it OUT LOUD, it seems to carry more weight - Especially if we are PUBLIC with our confession - And by public, I don't mean we tell the WHOLE WORLD - but we do tell those whom we HAVE HARMED - those who have been DAMAGED by our choices.

David was first and foremost wanting to MAKE A CONFESSION to God. He saw the need for God to know that HE WAS DONE RUNNING & DONE HIDING. He was ready to agree with God about his guilt. He was ready to TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for the damage he had done to others.

David knew THIS TRUTH: before he needed the forgiveness of those he had harmed, HE FIRST NEEDED the forgiveness of God. For it was God who had DECLARED: **You shall not commit adultery!** It was God who had commanded: **You shall not murder!**

Yes, David had VIOLATED Bathsheba - Yes, he had MURDERED Uriah - But, it was God's Law that he had BROKEN & TRAMPLED OVER! So, before he would seek THE FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS, he would first CONFESS that he had BROKEN THE LAWS of God.

And, he did this VERBALLY TO GOD - **"I will confess my transgressions to the Lord."** This word confess comes from a Hebrew word that originally meant TO THROW SOMETHING. It came to mean to PUT SOMETHING OUT THERE - thus confession of sin is to PUT IT OUT THERE - to make it known! - TO THROW OUT those words to God: **Yes God, I have blown it!**

Before David confessed his sin, his LIFE WAS DRYING UP. The guilt of his sin was quite literally making him sick. He was experiencing the PHYSICAL EFFECTS of a spiritual problem. And wow, do we still see this today!

So many people today spend huge amounts of money PAYING A DOCTOR or a THERAPIST to try to solve a problem that is Spiritual in nature. PEOPLE ARE melting under the GUILT OF SIN. They are breaking God's Law and PAYING A HUGE PRICE for it.

AND, there is only one cure - It is CONFESSION - Agreeing with God that we have BROKEN HIS LAW. We must COME CLEAN to the real sickness in our life. The sickness is often the result of HIDDEN & UNCONFESSED sin.

But, David had a THIRD EVIDENCE of the repentance he had experienced - Look at verse 6.

6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. 7 You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah

We have all heard the phrase, **Timing is everything!** This is certainly true when it comes to repentance. When we sin and ACT CONTRARY to God's Word, we can rest assured that CONSEQUENCES ARE COMING.

David pictures these consequences as a FLOOD OF GREAT WATERS. Like a WALL OF WATER headed for an unsuspecting town, so are the consequences of sin that come to a life of disobedience! It is just a MATTER OF TIME.

That is why there is a WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY where a person can COME CLEAN and confess his sins to God. It may not stop THE FLOOD OF REPERCUSSIONS that are coming his way, but repentance WILL BE EASIER before they arrive!

God is always willing to take back a BROKEN HEART - the problem is not on God's end - No, it is ON OUR END. The DEEPER we fall into the mess we have made, the more difficult it is TO CLIMB OUT! The more we HARDEN OUR HEART against God's conviction, the more difficult it is for us to HUMBLE OUR HEART!

This is why **Real Repentance is best with right timing.** Put another way, THE SOONER WE COME CLEAN, THE BETTER! There are two problems with waiting.

First, the longer we STUBBORNLY CLOSE OFF our heart, the more difficult it is to OPEN OUR HEART. Again, God is always willing to ACCEPT THE REPENTANT person, but the longer we travel down the road of rebellion, the harder it is for us TO GET BACK!

Second, the HEALING OF RELATIONSHIPS that are broken by sin are always EASIER TO MEND when repentance comes quickly and especially if it comes BEFORE WE ARE CAUGHT - We touched on this earlier.

Since we can't know the heart of a person, it is much more difficult for us to TRUST SOMEONE who seeks forgiveness ONLY AFTER they have been trapped. How much easier it is to RECONCILE A RELATIONSHIP when the repentance happens BEFORE the flood of great waters!

David throws in verse 7 as a RAY OF HOPE. He reminds even the person here today who is in DEEP WATERS OF JUDGEMENT, that we can be rescued. God can surround even that person with **SONGS OF DELIVERANCE!**

No matter HOW HOPELESS your situation feels today, if you come back to God with a heart of repentance, HE CAN DELIVER YOU. That doesn't mean he will TAKE AWAY THE CONSEQUENCES that are coming your way, but it does mean that HE WILL DELIVER YOU through them - or that He will at least PRESERVE YOU THROUGH THEM!

Verse 7 is FULL OF HOPE. It may not be a HAPPY VERSE, but it is a HOPEFUL VERSE.

8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. 9 Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.

Our next evidence of repentance is this: **Real Repentance brings necessary changes.**

True repentance ALWAYS INVOLVES CHANGE - Why? Because sin has led us in the wrong direction! We have been making choices that are contrary to God's WILL & PLAN for our lives; thus, to get back going in the right direction, there MUST BE CHANGE!

And notice this: God PROMISES TO INSTRUCT US in the new way we need to go. He guides us down the right path. He will get us going back in the right direction so that we can begin to ESCAPE THE FLOOD that may have overcome us.

The IDEA HERE is that we have TAKEN OUR EYES OFF the sin that had been enticing us, and now we have our EYES BACK ON GOD. We are again looking to HIS FACE. Now He can guide us with HIS EYES!

Have you ever had someone GUIDE YOU with their eyes? A good teacher knows how to do this with her students. A good teacher has developed THE LOOK! I call it the TEACHER LOOK.

If you deal with children, and you DON'T HAVE THE LOOK, you need to develop one! It is the look that COMMUNICATES A MESSAGE to the child. Some might call it the INTIMIDATION LOOK; I call it the NECESSARY LOOK!

It says to a child, if you don't want trouble, you need to MOVE IN THE DIRECTION I have asked you to go - this is usually a STERN LOOK - but it can also be a PLEASED LOOK. It is a LOOK THAT COMMUNICATES. It keeps someone moving in the right direction.

A GOOD TEACHER (or parent) GUIDES with their eyes! He or she doesn't always have TO SPEAK. They have a look THAT SAYS IT ALL.

But what is necessary for the look to BE EFFECTIVE? The child has to be looking at you, and if we are going to be guided by GOD'S LOOK, we have to be LOOKING AT HIM!

How does this happen? Well, we have to be moving TOWARDS HIM. We have to be SEEKING HIM in prayer. We have to be DESIRING HIS WILL. We have to be FACE TO FACE with Him in His Word!

If we are, He will guide us. But, unfortunately too many of us are like a HORSE OR A MULE. We are constantly looking away. We are so easily DISTRACTED BY OTHER THINGS. We are EASILY PULLED in the direction of this world. It GRABS OUR ATTENTION and we get our eyes off of OUR LORD.

David says of these folks: **they have no understanding** - to be blunt, they are LIKE DUMB ANIMALS. Many people don't have enough SPIRITUAL SENSE to come in out of the rain! God is forced to PUT A BIT in their mouth.

Which raises the question: **Where does Spiritual Sense come from?** Well, you are in the right place - Learn God's Word - This is the place to start - then simply ASK GOD to teach you - ask God to INCREASE YOUR UNDERSTANDING - to give you that SPIRITUAL SENSE you need!

If you force God, He will TUG YOU AROUND by the bit. He will make your LIFE MISERABLE until you follow His Will - but isn't that a TOUGH WAY to live life - A BIT CAN BE quite painful - but some need it if they are going to find the RIGHT PATH to follow.

The horse and the mule have ONE OTHER PROBLEM according to David - they will only COME AROUND THE MASTER when they are forced to be there. Does this describe the way you treat God and His Church?

Do you get up on Sunday mornings and RELUCTANTLY COME down here? It is your OBLIGATION! **"I have to go GIVE GOD HIS HOUR! - I don't want to but I will. I have to GIVE GOD HIS OFFERING - I don't want to, but I will."**

Here is the sad reality - God will take that kind of relationship from you - He loves you that much - but the REAL QUESTION you should be asking is this: **What blessings am I missing out on simply because I am keeping my distance from God?**

From where you have POSITIONED YOUR LIFE, can you see GOD'S EYES? Are you at a place where HE CAN GUIDE your life? Are you allowing Him to MAKE THE CHANGES in your life that He desires to make? **Real Repentance brings necessary changes!**

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. 11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

David makes a SOBERING DECLARATION in verse 10. **Many sorrows await the wicked.** Life in this FALLEN WORLD is difficult enough, but when you CHASE WICKEDNESS, it gets even more DIFFICULT & TRAGIC.

When the FLOOD WATERS of sin's judgement overcome a person, the aftermath can be HEART-BREAKING - not just to that person, but to the INNOCENT LOVED-ONES as well - those who are left picking up the pieces of a broken life. Sin leaves a DEVASTATING PATH of destruction!

You may get away with SINFUL CHOICES for a season - but at some point, the BILL WILL COME DUE - the SORROWS THAT FOLLOW WICKED CHOICES will eventually arrive.

Yet, MERCY IS WHAT FOLLOWS those who trust in the Lord. Mercy is a WONDERFUL CONCEPT. It means that I deserve DEATH & HELL, but instead, I get GOD'S FORGIVENESS. I deserve God's judgement - but, instead, I get GRACE & KINDNESS. Mercy is an amazing thing!

When was the last time you chose to SHOW SOMEONE MERCY? Sure they deserved AN ARGY OUTBURST, but instead, you chose to treat that person as God HAS TREATED YOU!

There is no more POWERFUL WITNESS to God's presence in your life than when YOU SHOW MERCY to an undeserving soul.

And that brings us to THE FINAL EVIDENCE of repentance in our life: it is JOY! **Real Repentance produces a restoration of joy.**

GOD'S GRACE & FORGIVENESS has one by-product that is ALWAYS PRESENT: JOY!

Joy is difficult to define with words. The HEBREW word translated Joy meant **A FEELING YOU HAD TO SHOUT**. That is why it is translated "**Shout for Joy**". It was an overwhelming FEELING OF PEACE & HAPPINESS that you just could NOT KEEP QUIET. You were simply TO OVERWHELMED by it!

1Peter 1:8 Peter described the FORGIVENESS & GRACE of God this way - **(Jesus) whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.**

The forgiveness offered to us through Jesus PRODUCES A PEACE in our heart that is so powerful that Peter calls it INEXPRESSIBLE AND FULL OF GLORY!

You show me a person who has GENUINELY UNDERSTOOD just how much God has forgiven them, and I will show you a person who has a difficult time worshipping God without being BROUGHT TO TEARS. Or I will show you a person who just has TO SMILE OR THEY WILL BURST!

I remember one afternoon I was driving home; it was a beautiful Spring afternoon and I had my window down. As I was driving home, I was thinking of all of the ways God had BLESSED MY LIFE - All of the PAIN HE HAD SPARED my life from by saving me.

I was just about to BURST WITH JOY when I just let out this shout! Well, at that moment, I WAS SITTING at a red light. After my outburst of Joy, I looked over at the guy sitting next to me - He was JUST STARING AT ME like I was crazy! - I just SMILED & THOUGHT . . . I wish I had TIME TO EXPLAIN!

When David experienced God's forgiveness, it brought back to his life THE ONE THING HE WANTED MOST - it brought back the Joy of GOD'S PRESENCE. This was what he had lost WHILE HIDING HIS SIN.

David HAD EXPERIENCED God's presence in his life from a VERY YOUNG AGE. When he LOST IT because of his pursuit of sin, his JOY HAD DRIED UP - His heart became LIKE A DESERT - it had been a LONG SEASON OF BARENESS for David.

But now HIS REPENTANCE had caused that joy to return. He was OVERWHELMED that God would forgive him. It blew his mind that after all he had done, God would STILL LOVE HIM. God's amazing Grace caused him to REJOICE IN A WAY that he never thought would be possible again!

Please understand, God's forgiveness DID NOT END THE SUFFERING that would come to his life because of the choices he had made! He would have many, many LONG, HARD DAYS of pain and regret. He had done some terrible things. There was a STEEP PRICE to be paid, but at least he would pay that price with A JOY IN HIS HEART!

Of all the men and women whose lives are recorded in the Bible, David is one that most of us can relate to - Not because he was a GIANT-KILLING NATIONAL HERO - Not because he was a writer of BEAUTIFUL SONGS - not because he went from being on THE ISRAELI Most Wanted to being King! - NO, most of us will never relate to these things.

What we can relate to is HIS HUMANITY. Oddly, we can relate to him because of HIS FAILURE. We all understand JUST HOW EASY it is to

make bad choices. We know what it is to MAKE DECISIONS that in the moment seem so right, but in the end, ARE SO WRONG.

I believe many here today will IDENTIFY WITH David in one of 3 ways:

1. We identify with his MOMENT OF FAILURE. You also have made a LIFE-ALTERING bad decision - One that you have REGRETTED FROM THE MOMENT IT HAPPENED.
2. WE IDENTIFY in his COVER-UP. You may be there RIGHT NOW - Desperately trying to HIDE THE TRUTH from those around you - And the guilt is slowly destroying you.
3. We IDENTIFY In his FORGIVENESS. You have come clean - You have EXPERIENCED REAL REPENTANCE - Yes, you are still dealing with the consequences of your decision, but you have FOUND GREAT JOY in God's Amazing Grace!

If you are the THIRD, well then you have really enjoyed the morning. If you are TRAPPED IN BOX 1 OR 2, let's just say every morning is tough right now! The guilt & the stress of trying to STAY HIDDEN are overwhelming!

It is time to come clean. And I want to give you that opportunity this morning. Don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to come down front and humiliate yourself in front of everyone - though one day you might need to take that step.

This morning I'm simply going to invite you to BE HONEST WITH GOD. God's Word has become the PROPHET NATHAN TO YOU this morning. You & Nathan have looked at each other EYEBALL TO EYEBALL today through this Psalm. And he has said to you, YOU ARE THAT MAN (or that woman).

Now, the only question remaining is HOW WILL YOU RESPOND? Will you be like David and finally COME CLEAN? Will you begin to TAKE RESPONSIBILITY? Today will you start MAKING THE CHANGES necessary to clean up your mess?

Or will you GO ON HIDING? Will you go on COVERING THINGS UP? OR Will you respond while the Prophet's eyes are STARING AT YOU? The choice is yours - This is YOUR MOMENT - How will you respond?

Let's Pray.