

Repentance and Pardon

Lesson Scope: [Psalms 6, 32, 51](#)

Lesson Focus

As a creature made of dust, man must contend with the reality of his carnal nature. On the other hand, God, the merciful Judge, requires holiness.

The sin mentioned in these psalms was committed by a man who lived under the Old Covenant with its inherent weakness. Unfortunately, sin is not limited to saints under the Old Covenant. Saints under the New Covenant and the control of the Spirit of God must yet today crucify the carnal nature and its bent toward wrong.

While the path of turning from sin is not easy, it is the only right way. The blessed encouragement for all who turn from sin is that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).

Although David's sin was grievous in God's sight, the steps that he took to find full restoration were the right ones. Underscore in your teaching the attitudes of meekness, humility, and openness that David expressed. The father heart of God reveals an aspect of His nature that we can never fully comprehend. God pardons man out of love and compassion, not out of duty.

The purpose of studying these three penitential psalms is twofold. It instructs us regarding the guilt, condemnation, and reaping that must follow wrong choices. It is not our aim to unduly condemn David, who was likely no more human than we are. His failure should warn us to search our own hearts.

David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he failed. Although we should not expect sin in the church, we should be humble enough to admit that none of us is beyond the possibility of failure.

When a sinner becomes conscious of his sin, he experiences fear and turmoil. This guilt prods him to repent and find God's pardon and peace.

Lesson Aim: To emphasize truths related to genuine repentance.

Theme Verse: [Acts 3:19](#). Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Lesson Text

Conviction

[Psalm 6:1-8](#) ¹ O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. ² Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. ³ My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? ⁴ Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. ⁵ For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. ⁷ Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies. ⁸ Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

Confession

[Psalm 32:1-7](#) ¹ Blessed *is he* whose transgression *is* forgiven, whose sin *is* covered. ² Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile. ³ When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. ⁴ For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. ⁵ I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. ⁶ For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. ⁷ Thou *art* my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Cleansing

[Psalm 51:1-17](#) ¹ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. ⁴ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. ⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, thou desirest

truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. ⁹ Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. ¹² Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. ¹³ *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. ¹⁴ Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. ¹⁵ O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. ¹⁶ For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Questions for Study

Conviction

1. Describe the role of the conscience.
2. In what ways has God been merciful to us?

Confession

3. Describe David's existence before he confessed.
4. What attitudes must accompany confession?
5. What changes will follow genuine repentance?

Cleansing

6. What is required of man in order to be cleansed? What is God's part?
7. Compare the blessings of pardon with the results of trying to hide sin.
8. What cautions must we take to stay free from sin?

Analyzing the Passage

All of the penitential psalms may have been written after David's sin with Bathsheba. Penitence is sorrow for sins or faults, or a sad and humble realization of and regret for misdeeds.

David's conscience did not give him any peace. His bones being vexed (Psalm 6:2) refers to trembling inwardly, being alarmed or agitated. He realized he had an urgent need, because, if he died, he could not change his fate (Psalm 6:5).

Imputeth (Psalm 32:2) means "set down to one's account." God writes

"not guilty" on the record of the truly repentant. "My roaring all the day long" (Psalm 32:3) was the weight of guilt that drove David to confess and forsake his sin.

"Truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6) speaks of honesty and transparency. A heart that is right produces right actions. Hyssop (Psalm 51:7) was an herb whose leaves were used in ceremonial cleansing. The sacrifice was transferred to the transgressor by sprinkling blood with a bunch of hyssop. Broken bones (Psalm 51:8) may refer to the pain of punishment and the scars that are left even after sin is forsaken.

Principles and Applications

Conviction

1. The one who has sinned must cry out to God for mercy (Psalm 6:1-4). Jesus is coming! Are you ready? Committing sin makes one unprepared to meet His Maker. What urgency there must be in beseeching God to respond, not in wrath, which is our due, but in love and mercy! Thank God for a conscience that sounds the alarm when we have transgressed God's commandments.

2. God alone can deliver the soul of the repentant (Psalm 6:1-4). How God's heart must grieve to see men sin, especially His own people. God does not owe us anything but judgment when we sin. We deserve to die, because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "But God, who is rich in mercy" (Ephesians 2:4), graciously reaches out to all who meet the conditions.

3. The Lord hears and answers the prayer of the truly repentant (Psalm 6:7-8). "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin" (2 Chronicles 7:14). God has been very gracious to us, allowing us to repent before judgment falls, thus proving that He is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9).

Confession

4. Sins bring guilt, shame, and unrest (Psalm 32:1-4). Even the world admits to this fact when, at the sight of Christian people, they wish for more adequate "fig leaves" to hide the sin of immodesty. Many who heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost "were pricked in their heart, and said . . . , Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Yes, guilt and shame are painful, but they are also a part of "the goodness of

God [which] leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4).

5. Forgiveness is for those who acknowledge and confess their sin (Psalm 32:5). Confession is a path that begins with a meek, repentant attitude, expressed in prayer to God. It follows up with a confession that is as public as the sin that was committed. Failure to take full responsibility for one's sin shows a lack of genuine repentance.

6. Songs of deliverance flow from the lips of one who has been delivered (Psalm 32:6-7). What greater evidence of a renewed heart can there be than the sincere songs of peace, joy, and freedom that contrast to the awful load of sin?

Cleansing

7. The truly repentant recognize that all sin is ultimately committed against God (Psalm 51:4). Sin is a heinous affront to God's holiness. If it has influenced others, it is also a reproach to God's people. God has set the standards of righteousness. Therefore, He alone can acquit and pardon.

8. Man must reckon with his inherent sinful tendencies (Psalm 51:5). We cannot change the fact that we possess a fallen nature, but we can subdue it with a holy resolve and the power of the Spirit. "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

9. God has the ability to thoroughly cleanse from sin (Psalm 51:7-10). We rejoice in the fact that we have been made "whiter than snow." We serve a great and forgiving God. Although He is the Author of the highest standard, He can and does remove our sin from His thoughts.

10. Those who truly repent become an example and testimony to others of God's saving grace (Psalm 51:13). In testifying to others, we do well to meekly confess that "all have sinned," including us. We also offer hope and inspiration by the change—by the difference they can see in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our goals for life.

11. God will accept a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:16-17). We must humbly rely on the strength of the Lord and guard ourselves against evil influences that will pull us down. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh" (Hebrews 12:25).

Important Teachings

1. The one who has sinned must cry out to God for mercy (Psalm 6:1-4).

2. God alone can deliver the soul of the repentant (Psalm 6:1-4).
3. The Lord hears and answers the prayer of the truly repentant (Psalm 6:7-8).
4. Sins bring guilt, shame, and unrest (Psalm 32:1-4).
5. Forgiveness is for those who acknowledge and confess their sin (Psalm 32:5).
6. Songs of deliverance flow from the lips of one who has been delivered (Psalm 32:6-7).
7. The truly repentant recognize that all sin is ultimately committed against God (Psalm 51:4).
8. Man must reckon with his inherent sinful tendencies (Psalm 51:5).
9. God has the ability to thoroughly cleanse from sin (51:7-10).
10. Those who truly repent become an example and testimony to others of God's saving grace (Psalm 51:13).
11. God will accept a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 51:16-17).

Answers to Questions

1. Describe the role of the conscience.

The conscience convicts us of the wrong we have done by reminding us of God's holy standard. We feel condemned because we have transgressed God's laws. The conscience gives peace only when we deal with our sin.

2. In what ways has God been merciful to us?

God has not rewarded us according to what we deserve. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23), and thus our just due before we were saved was death. The same applies to sin committed when we are children of God. God could have sent judgment before we repented.

God is merciful to have allowed us the privilege of a godly heritage. We cannot estimate the value of having been taught the principles of right and wrong.

3. Describe David's existence before he confessed.

He was miserable because he was tormented by guilt. He had no rest because his conscience constantly reminded him of his failure. In this way God kept bringing David's sin to his attention.

4. What attitudes must accompany confession?

We must understand the awfulness of sin and abhor what Satan had made to seem attractive, especially as we see the results. We must be humble, contrite, and submissive. We have no justification to offer, on-

ly a readiness to be taught and to learn from our foolish ways.

5. What changes will follow genuine repentance?

We will make wrongs right with those our sin has influenced. We will be more diligent in focusing on God's Word and on prayer.

Abhorring sin will mean doing whatever it takes to avoid it, even if this means taking a different route to work or entirely avoiding a certain place of business.

Denouncing sin means boldly telling the world about Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 7:11).

6. What is required of man in order to be cleansed? What is God's part? Man must desire cleansing. He must confess his own weakness and proneness to err.

Only God can pardon and wash away sin "as far as the east is from the west." Our souls have rest in knowing all is well with the Lord.

7. Compare the blessings of pardon with the results of trying to hide sin. Because David confessed and made his wrongs as right as he could, he experienced joy and peace. God's blessing enabled him to go on with life, growing, and taking heed of his way more carefully. To hide sin means living with the corroding effect of guilt and shame.

8. What cautions must we take to stay free from sin?

We must understand how prone we are to sin, avoiding the places and people that raise temptation. We must seek fulfillment at home with our families rather than in the world's recreation. When business takes us to worldly settings, we must do our business and leave.

We must associate closely with those of "like precious faith," who can give us support and encouragement. And we must do not draw from the world's cisterns, but from God's well of living water.

Summarizing the Lesson

God has graciously provided for our initial redemption from sin. He also provides a door that is open for us to return when we fall. None of us is beyond the possibility of failure. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

He looked beyond the present experience of the wicked to the big picture and considered the end result of a life lived without God.

Research Guide

1. Study the chapter titled "Repentance" in Doctrines of the Bible.
2. Meditate on Ezra 9:4-15 and note the key elements of repentance that Ezra expressed.