

A Guide for Repentance

Have mercy upon me, O God; according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. – Psalm 51:1

(A reading of the entire 51st Psalm is recommended)

One of the hardest things to do is repent. Refusing to repent is what keeps so many souls out of heaven. For believers, lack of repentance hinders our walk with the Lord, keeping a barrier between us and His fulness of blessing and countenance.

The man after God's own heart, King David, taught us how to repent. Psalm 51 is a veritable manual on this spiritual necessity. When confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his sin with Bathsheba, David, as King, could have ordered the execution of the prophet. But he wisely permitted the Word of God to smite him in the inner man, and under inspiration of the Spirit, penned a doctrinal treatise on how to find restored fellowship with an offended Maker.

When our sin comes to light, we must be penitent. The sacrifice the Lord requires is a broken spirit and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). If there is no sorrow for our sin, there can be no removing its influence from our progress.

This godly sorrow will stem from the God-given gift of guilt. It is in the inward part that God desires truth and in the hidden recesses where he makes us to know His wisdom (Ps. 51:6). The modern professing church has adopted so much secular psycho-babel that we often fail to recognize that the emotion of guilt is the gift of conscience that God has given to act as our compass to find our way back to His grace.

Being weighed in the balances and found wanting, we must own our guilt externally to God – we must confess our sin, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is no one else's fault that we have offended a Holy God. We dare not justify our actions a moment longer. This is "my transgression", "mine iniquity", "my sin". Only by this verbal humiliation before the throne of God can we expect to receive restoration.

This all stems from a holy desire within to be reconciled and re-aligned to our good God. Our sin has defiled us before Him and exposed us in His courts. We must be washed and cleansed (Ps. 51:7) so that we may enjoy both the pleasure of His countenance and power for His work. A clean heart and right spirit (Ps. 51:10) will re-invigorate us to His divine purpose and plan for us.

What a wonder that once we confess and forsake our sin, He restores to us the joy of our salvation and continues again to uphold us by His Spirit (Ps. 51:12)! God takes no pleasure in hiding His face from us – He was waiting all the time to purify us and continue our transformation into the likeness of His dear Son. He will now, yet again, so graciously condescend to use us when we open our lips to shew forth His praise and teach transgressors to their conversion (Ps. 51: 13, 15). How remarkable that He loves us so!

We all stumble in many ways. Let us resolve to keep a short list of our sin. If we are not frequently approaching the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, something is off in our spiritual life. Victorious living starts with humility and recognition of our weakness and faults. May our good God continually keep our hearts tender and right before Him. – D. Murcek