

A Sinner Named David (Brokenness)

Psalm 51 & 2 Samuel 11-12

September 2, 2018

Please read Psalm 51:1-17 before reading any further in this transcript. David wrote Psalm 51 after the prophet Nathan confronted him regarding his sin of adultery with Bathsheba. In Psalm 51:17 David says,

“My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.”



The word “broken” brings all kinds of images to mind. Broken means in need of repair. It means something in our life is messed up. We live in a throwaway culture where, when something is broken, we tend to just buy a new one, where we might as well just buy the latest upgrade anyway! As we talk about “brokenness” today though, I’m not referring to something we can fix with super glue or duct tape. **Let’s define Brokenness as “an attitude of humility and honesty about our own sinfulness.”**¹ In my early years as a Youth Pastor we used to sing a song called, “Holiness (Take My Heart).”² The words begin like this: “Holiness, holiness is what I long for.” Then, the 3rd verse of the song says, “Brokenness, brokenness is what I long for; Brokenness is what I need, ...brokenness is what You want for me.” We had a student named “Timothy” who really didn’t like this song. He and I would talk about the theology of brokenness and he’d say, “No! That’s bad theology Pastor Jerry! We shouldn’t long for brokenness, we should long for forgiveness and healing.” Now, Timothy had a good point. But, what I don’t think he was quite grasping, in his young faith, was the full doctrine of sin. Is it really a good thing to be broken? According to Psalm 51:17, yes. Because, a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart is something God will not despise. He will accept that sacrifice from us above any other offering we try to bring Him. We are going to see that demonstrated today, as we look at the story of David and Bathsheba.

Please turn in your Bible to 2 Samuel 11. The context leading up to 2 Samuel 11 is pretty impressive. In chapter 5, David becomes king over all Israel and he conquers Jerusalem. In chapter 6, the ark of God’s presence is brought up to Jerusalem. In chapter 7, God promises that David’s kingly line would last forever. In chapter 8, David becomes famous by winning wars and gaining the rich plunder. In chapter 9, David shows kindness to Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, who was lame in both feet. In chapter 10, God gives David victory in an epic simultaneous battle with both the Arameans/Ammonites. This is the lead-in to 2 Samuel 11:1, “In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah.³ But David remained in Jerusalem.”⁴ The text doesn’t really tell us WHY David stayed home. But, it does make it clear, he stayed home “at the time when kings [are supposed to] go off to war.” There is a helpful acronym spelled “H.A.L.T.” The letters stand for:

Hurting
Angry
Lonely
Tired

Each of these conditions tend to impair our thinking. So, for example, we are told to count to 10 when we are angry, before we do anything we might regret. And, it’s been proven, that it’s just as dangerous to drive when you’re tired, than to drive when you’re drunk. Each of these four conditions impair our thinking in one way or another. The strategy behind this acronym is that whenever you are feeling one of these ways (hurting/angry/lonely/tired) you should HALT, you should stop whatever you are doing and take stock of your emotions. You should recognize that your defenses are down. That

¹ Brokenness is a purging of any self-righteousness. (*NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015, p. 1048.) This idea is echoed in **Romans 3:9-10**, “[We] are all under the power of sin. As it is written: ‘**There is no one righteous**, not even one.’”

² Take My Life (Holiness), Scott Underwood, Copyright 1994 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing (ASCAP) (admin. in North America by Music Services, Inc. obo Vineyard Music USA).

³ Pronounced “RAB uh.”

⁴ Read 1 Corinthians 10:12.

this may not be the best time to make an important decision. These are times when you want to pray, to get outside counsel, to keep your mouth shut, before you say something you'll regret.⁵

In David's case, whatever was going on in his heart and mind, it left him open to temptation. 2 Samuel 11:2-4 goes on to tell us, "One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful, and David sent someone to find out about her. The man said, 'She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam⁶ and the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her..." As we note the order of events here, the text makes it clear that David knew exactly what he was doing. After coveting another man's wife from his palace rooftop, then confirming that she was indeed another man's wife, he THEN sent for her and slept with her. How great would it have been if David had responded differently? Rather than gazing at the naked body of another man's wife and then sending messengers to go get her, David could have HALTed or he could have sent her... a shower curtain!⁷ One lesson for us here is that rather than abusing our power and position or taking advantage of someone else, we need to treat the opposite gender with dignity and respect.

After they slept together, Bathsheba returned home. A while later, she informed King David that she was pregnant. So David sent for her husband, Uriah, to come home from battle. Clearly, David is hoping that Uriah will sleep with Bathsheba and then assume that her pregnancy was with him, and not with David. However, Uriah is of noble character and he demonstrates loyalty to his fellow soldiers who are still out on the battle field. 2 Samuel 11:11 tells us that, "Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord's men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!"⁸ What an amazing contrast to David's attitude and actions! David, not to be dissuaded, tries one more time by getting Uriah drunk, but that doesn't work either. So, he goes with plan B. He writes a letter to the commander of his army. 2 Samuel 11:15 tells us, "In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." This plan works. Uriah dies in battle.⁹ Bathsheba is now a widow and after her time of mourning, David marries her and she gives birth to their son.¹⁰ So, everything worked out just fine. David's secret was safe. He had coerced and finagled his way through a huge mess. Pretty clever guy, right?

Ever felt clever about your own sin? We probably all have at one point or another. We think we've got everyone fooled. We may even be so bold as to think we have God fooled. It's our human nature to rationalize our sin, to justify it. We figure it's easier to cover it up, deny any wrongdoing, and lie our way out of it; even if we have to lie to ourselves.¹¹ But, the fact is, our sin lingers. It smolders. It eats away at us from the inside. David writes about this in Psalm 32:3-4, "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer."

I talked with an old friend this summer. We go way back to the 1990's. He confessed to me that he has been burying a secret sin for years. No one knew about it, except for him. It's a secret that has been gnawing at him, robbing him of joy, stealing away his intimacy with God. It's impacted his entire life. He just kept pushing it back into the recesses of his mind. But this sin kept coming after him, kept tripping him up, and holding him down. He finally called me up and said, "Jerry, I need help; I just can't keep living this way." So, we prayed together and came up with an action plan. Even now he is taking steps to face his own brokenness.

⁵ Oh, that David would have HALTed before he committed this sin with Bathsheba. Oh, that he would have confessed his sin sooner; that he would have HALTed before the adultery and before the murder.

⁶ Eliam = ih LIE uhm.

⁷ Contrast David's response with Joseph's in Genesis 39:10-12.

⁸ These words are SUCH a stark contrast to David's decision not only to stay home in his palace rather than going to war (verse 1), but then also to make love to another man's wife while the other soldiers were away from their families (verse 4). Surely, these words must have caused some level of conviction when David heard them professed so sincerely!

⁹ It's interesting to think about the fact that God could have given Uriah a mighty victory in this battle, but he allows war to take its natural course in this particular situation.

¹⁰ David may have considered this strategy in light of how he met and married his wife, Abigail. See 1 Samuel 25, esp. verse 39.

¹¹ Consider Genesis 3:12-13.

How about you; are you keeping silent about your sin? Does it feel like your bones are wasting away?¹² If so, I've got REALLY good news for you this morning. Ps. 32:5 goes on to say, "Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.' And you forgave the guilt of my sin." Rather than a cover up, choose confession.

For quite some time, David choose the cover up. But God loved David too much to let him get away with it.¹³ 2 Samuel 11 ends by telling us, "...But the thing David had done displeased the LORD." (v. 27) So, in 2 Samuel 12, the LORD sent in a prophet named Nathan. Nathan goes to David and tells him a story about some rich guy who had lots of sheep. But, even though he had lots of his own sheep, this rich guy decides to take some poor guy's one and only sheep. The rich guy eats the poor guy's sheep; he actually serves it to his dinner guests! Hearing this story makes David furious! 2 Samuel 12:5-7 tells us that, "David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, 'As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity.' Then Nathan said to David, "**You** are the man! ..." David was the rich man, with an entire harem, but still he slept with Uriah's wife. Nathan's word picture hits David like a ton of bricks. This accountability partner helped David see just how unjust and awful his sin with Bathsheba really was. All of a sudden, David sees his sin clearly for what it is. Praise God for Nathan! These were bold and courageous words for him to speak. It couldn't have been easy to confront the King of all Israel. David could have just as easily had Nathan killed as he did Uriah. But, he doesn't. David accepts this chastisement and recognizes God's judgment on his sin. 2 Samuel 12:13-14 go on to say, "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD.' Nathan replied, 'The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have shown utter contempt for the LORD, the son born to you will die.'"¹⁴ Even though David fasted and prayed for an entire week, 7 days later, David and Bathsheba's son dies. Here's an important thing for us to recognize: David's confession did not spare him from the consequences of his actions. Yes, it's true, Nathan told David that he himself wasn't going to die. But, David still had to face losing his son.¹⁵

David's confession did not spare him from the consequences of his own actions, but it did do something VERY important: it restored his fellowship with God. This was one of David's greatest concerns; to draw near to His God once again. We hear this in the words David writes in Psalm 51:11-12, "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation..."¹⁶ David could have kept trying to cover up his sin. He could have denied what Nathan was saying to him or chose to ignore it because he was the king. But, when God convicted his heart and stirred up his conscience, David knew that he couldn't hide from God. But, here's the thing, David didn't want to hide from God. He couldn't stand being distant from God any longer. The primary consequence of our sin is that it separates us from our God. The main reason for confessing our sin is to make things right with God; to restore our fellowship with our LORD and Creator.¹⁷ Any punishment we face and any restitution we need to pay is the right and just thing to do, and it is also the only way back, to being in close fellowship with God again.

The fact is, David sinned. And, the fact is, once David was confronted and saw his sin clearly, he confessed. He didn't make excuses, he didn't blame someone else, he didn't qualify his confession in any way. I know that it's tempting, in Christian circles, to hide our sin. To pretend everything is fine and to deny our weaknesses. It seems more acceptable to put on a polished veneer each Sunday morning and act like we don't struggle with sin. But, privately, we all know that sin is a very real struggle. As Christ-followers, we need to choose a theology of brokenness; an honesty about our

¹² Psalm 32:9 tells us, "Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you." In other words, if the Lord is convicting you, don't be like a stubborn mule!

¹³ Laurie Polich, *Creative Bible Lessons from the Old Testament*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005, by Youth Specialties, p. 67.

¹⁴ Which of us, as parents, wouldn't rather die ourselves than cause the death of our own child. What a painful punishment David had to endure!

¹⁵ According to 2 Samuel 12:10-12, David also had to face all the calamities that would come out of his own household. You can read about these in 2 Samuel 13-18. They tell the story of Amnon and Tamar, which we talked about two weeks ago. There is also the whole struggle between David and his son Absalom who goes on to betray his own father and tries to overthrow his kingdom.

¹⁶ Contrast this verse with 1 Samuel 16:13.

¹⁷ See 1 John 1:5-10.

fallen condition and our daily need for God's grace. What will it take for us to finally come under conviction and to invite God to cleanse us from our sin?

Earlier we read a beautiful prayer in Psalm 51:10-12, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." Isn't that word "RESTORE" beautiful? It's so great to realize that God doesn't toss us out when we mess up. When he sees the entire front end of our lives all dented and caved in, He moves toward restoration. He doesn't check with the insurance company to see if he can just total out the car and collect the payoff check. In fact, He doesn't even consider that an option. God restores us when we admit our brokenness and our desperate need of His grace.



Do you need to turn back to God today? Don't keep covering up your sin; choose confession. Consider once again Psalm 51:17, "My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise." Confession requires humility.¹⁸ It also requires honest communication with God.¹⁹ As we read earlier in Psalm 32, our instinct is to be silent about our sin. But confession calls us to speak up about our sin.²⁰ The fact is, God forgave David's sin. His sin of coveting his neighbor's wife. His sin of adultery. His sin of MURDER.²¹ It's significant for us to realize that, other than totally rejecting God, there is no sin that God can't or won't forgive.²² So, if you think your sin is beyond the reach of God's grace, then think again!

Earlier this week, I read something that stopped me in my tracks: there is something wonderful about sin. You heard me right; there is something WONDERFUL about sin!²³ **"The most wonderful thing about sin, is that it makes you so desperate, that all you want is God."**²⁴ A writer named Anna Wishart summarizes "brokenness" well: "The reason brokenness is beautiful is because of how God can use it in our lives. It is something that can draw us near to Him. Brokenness can make room for a contrite heart and repentance to bring us back into fellowship with Him when we have miserably failed. It is not lovely in and of itself, it is not the end of the journey, it is not a cute hashtag to put on a picture of a dirty house. It's not a word to use when you want to feel 'authentic.' Standing alone, it is messy and sad. No, the beauty in spiritual brokenness is found in where it brings us.

True brokenness is a tool by which God brings His wandering sheep back into His loving arms. So Lord, break me.²⁵

*This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
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¹⁸ God despises pride and a lack of humility. Consider the words from David's son Solomon in Proverbs 6:16-19.

¹⁹ See Gene A. Getz, *David: God's Man in Faith and Failure*, Ventura, CA, 1983, p. 149.

²⁰ James 4:6-10 is a clear call to humble repentance, "But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.' Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."

²¹ The culturally appropriate penalty for murder should have been David's death. See Leviticus 20:10. Perhaps this points to a bit of an irony in Uriah's statement in 2 Samuel 11:11, "As surely as you [David] live, I will not do such a thing!"

²² Read Mark 3:28-29 and the helpful article at <https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-unpardonable-sin/>

²³ Consider Romans 3:20, "...through the law we become conscious of our sin."

²⁴ Read more from Anna Wishart in her article, "The Meaning of Brokenness: Being Broken in the Sight of God" at <https://e360bible.org/blog/the-meaning-of-brokenness-truth-about-being-broken-in-the-sight-of-god/>

²⁵ Ibid.